



Jim Hall's musical style has been in a state of continuous development throughout the course of his career, a career that to date has spanned more than five decades. But just as with advances in technology, medicine, and other fields, Jim's evolutionary twists and turns in this last decade have been swift. With each new concert tour and recording (nine new CDs since 1991) we get to see yet another facet of this man, this musician, this amazing artist who I get to call my dad.

*By Arrangement* was originally conceived to be marketed as an album of standard "jazz ballads" composed by fellow "jazz artists." But external contrivances soon gave way to the creative muses as my father once again reaffirmed his belief that the act of creating music should not be a commercial endeavor. "My goal is always to have the music stay interesting—for me, for the listeners, and for the other players too." Instead of limiting himself to ballads, and rather than simply choosing the best known tunes, he went in search of compositions that would not only be familiar, but would stand up to close scrutiny and reinterpretation.

Then came the real challenge: transforming the work of fellow artists (and friends) into vehicles for self-expression while remaining true to each song's original intent. He stripped away the assumptions and cultural expectations of prior performances leaving the music bare so that he could create unique arrangements that focus on the shapes and sounds of each individual song. The results are rich, varied, unusual...and also very accessible. Don't ask whether this is jazz or chamber music, classical or contemporary. Dad will tell you that it's "just plain music," but there is nothing plain about it.

One of the most unusual things about Jim's treatments lies in his choice of instrumentation. The string section used on three of the selections is made up solely of violas and cellos, not counting the single upright bass that is part of the rhythm section. By omitting the high range afforded by violins, Jim creates a darker sound and texture that intrigued these twelve players drawn largely from the ranks of the Orchestra of St. Luke's.

The four brass orchestrations also have an atypical configuration: one flugelhorn (Tommy Harrell), two trumpets (Lew Soloff and Jamie Finegan), one French horn (Alex Brofsky), two trombones (Jim Pugh and Conrad Herwig), and a tuba (Marcus Rojas). Jim uses this palette of sounds to create unusual contrasts and textures that are at times lush, sensuous, feisty, playful, and even dissonant.

The remaining two selections are vocal arrangements. Again omitting the soprano range, the original charts called for twelve male voices. But when The New York Voices became available and expressed an interest in his project, Jim rewrote the vocal parts, thinning them slightly and condensing the harmonies into four parts. Peter Eldridge, Lauren Kinhan, Darmon Meader, and Kim Nazarian are the perfect four to sing all the perfect 4ths and 5ths found in these arrangements. With a little overdubbing, the results are rich and vibrant.

Rounding out the complement is Jim's ever-steady rhythm section with Scott Colley on bass and Terry Clarke on drums, plus three special guest artists: Joe Lovano, Pat Metheny and Greg Osby, playing one track each.

**Goodbye** is one of the selections featuring a guest artist. Many will recognize the melody, but this bossa-nova-tinged treatment bears little resemblance to what was once Benny Goodman's theme song. The strings, through a generous use of rubato, provide an elastic backdrop for what's happening between Jim and Joe Lovano as they collectively take you through the variety of moods and flavors embodied in this Gordon Jenkins composition.

Pat Metheny is the featured artist on the familiar John Lewis composition, **Django**. In what one violist referred to as "an unraveled tango," the strings use pizzicato to achieve a vibrancy and excitement of sound, creating a seamless fabric in which to clothe the two guitars. This is the first-ever recorded collaboration between Jim and Pat, but not the last.

**October Song** is a portrait of fall moods opening with a single melody line on guitar that mirrors the dawning of a cloudless October day. One of the two original Jim Hall compositions on this recording, this one is a strings-only affair and the only cut on which the bass and drums sit out entirely. Somewhat British sounding, à la Vaughan Williams, this arrangement has the feel of a vocal chart written for strings with feature spots for Jim and a brief solo by violist Louise Schulman.

The other Jim Hall composition is titled **Art Song**. Orchestrated for brass and rhythm, this euphonious tune in waltz time, opens with a duet by Jim and Tommy Harrell on flugelhorn and features solos by both. Clear, pure lines are juxtaposed with chords that are both lush and abstract. The tuba adds a mysterious quality in spots, but it's the soft, gentle, lyrical swing that puts me in mind of the lullabies of my childhood.

On **Whisper Not**, by Benny Golson, Alex Brofsky opens with a modified melody line on French horn accompanied by Scott Colley on bass. When Jim takes over the melodic line, the tuba steps in to provide a harmonic counterpoint, and these two lines together foreshadow the interplay between the guitar and brass chorus that continues throughout the piece.

Again leading off with a horn, Thelonious Monk's **Ruby My Dear** begins with whimsical flair. Accompanied only by guitar, Marcus Rojas opens with the melody on tuba. The interplay expands to include Jim Pugh on trombone, and when the ensemble joins in at a brisk walking tempo the arrangement takes on distinct Monk-like flavor. On this tune, Jim takes a zany, free-flowing approach, and even uses a harmonizer pedal to bend some notes. You can hear this clearly at the end on the brief reprise of the intro.

Jim and Paul Desmond played and recorded together quite a bit over the years, so you might say that Jim had the insider's advantage when creating the arrangement for Desmond's composition **Wendy**. The solo guitar opening provides no hint that this tune is based on the changes to "For All We Know," but you can hear traces of it in the brass chorus. Paul wrote this tune for a lady friend, but if arrangements were to have titles of their own, this one would have to be called "To Paul With Love." Paul's spirit is alive and well in this very personal tribute to a close friend.

Jim first heard **The Wind**, a composition by pianist Russ Freeman, on a Chet Baker recording in the early '50s. In 1955, while working with the original Chico Hamilton Quintet, Jim wrote an arrangement of it for the group. This new arrangement takes a more impressionistic approach, using The New York Voices to create a haunting mood. Alto saxophonist Greg Osby adds the spice that keeps this lonely ballad from becoming banal.

Some years ago, Gene Lees wrote lyrics to the popular Bill Evans tune **Waltz for Debby**, later recorded by Bill with Tony Bennett. While Jim's arrangement makes passing reference to those lyrics, again the voices are used more for texture, this time suggesting a child's world at play. The treatment is fanciful and bright.

The prevailing mood at these sessions was a mixture of adventure and humor that can only be achieved in the spirit of collaboration. Humor can be found in the treatments themselves—you have to chuckle at the idea of twelve grown men shouting on a tune called "Whisper Not"—as well as in those classic moments when the star of the show, transported by the sound of his own arrangements, forgets that he's there to play. But it is Jim's unique treatments of familiar compositions that mapped the adventure undertaken by the performers and an array of support personnel.

In keeping with the spirit of collaboration and the physicality of sound, my father believes in maintaining visual and physical contact in the studio. He avoids isolation booths at all costs, and this creates a major challenge for engineer Jack Renner, a challenge that once again Jack surmounted with apparent ease. Michael Bishop added a little mixing magic and the result is close to perfection.

It's always about getting the right sound and the right feel. Jim depended first on copyist Brian Camelio to get the right notes onto the page. Then Jim called on string conductor Paul Hoffsteter, long-time friend and vocal conductor Bill Appling, and trombonist Jim Pugh for assistance in interpreting the charts. Coordinating all of these people, dealing with unions, rehearsal halls and studios, and then being there in the studio to support the music itself, is no small feat. Dad's long-time producer, John Snyder, does this job admirably.

Jim's staunchest supporter, and probably the single most important person on all of his projects, is his wife (my mother) Jane. I know from personal experience that you can't do any better when you need an idea or an extra pair of ears.

So, with a little help from his friends, and Mom, it seems that my father has become a multi-hyphenate—one of those people who are so talented that they have multiple titles. Last year he let the world in on a secret he's had all along, he is a *composer* as well as an accomplished musician. Now he's let us in on another secret, he's an *arranger* too. So I guess that makes him a Musician-Composer-Arranger...at least for now. I expect that he has more surprises in store.

— Devra Hall