



# Conceptual & Collaborative Arranging

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# What is “Conceptual Arranging”?

- The problem: “How do we make sure that the audience and our group have a great time?”
- Structure first!
- All about building strong, powerful *moments*.
- Moments can be anything memorable!
- If our arrangement can link some great moments together, it will be easier for the audience and the singers to become invested in the arrangement.
- If the singers like the arrangement, they’ll want to sing it!
- If we focus on trimming the fat from our arrangement, we can better focus on our strengths as a group.
- This means a more positive rehearsal experience, a better performance and even more applause!

# Levels - Nick Jonas

Arr. Erik Fredriksen,  
Nitsan Shai



## LEVELS - Nick Jonas

Arr. Erik Fredriksen, Nitsan Shai

Intro: Half time, show off Tim and JP (2 VP)  
Nitsan gives Pitch (E natural)  
Leo/Garrett guitar slides up  
“Levels” like the song

Verse 1: Like the song  
Just VP & Kyle, add Bass  $\frac{1}{2}$  through

Pre-chorus 1: Add an ensemble part every line

Chorus 1: “oo” on pad, opens to Ah,  
Build into drop



# The Structural Document

- Write up the structure with words.
- Once we have a structure, we can focus on “implementing” our ideas, rather than writing and orchestrating simultaneously.
- When you focus on big ideas, it becomes easier to write interesting, deliberate and fun individual parts.
- You can start to push past fundamental writing blocks with a new frame of reference.
- Always think benefits:
  - Will the audience be intrigued?
  - Will the singers have fun?
  - Will the arrangement be bearable to rehearse?
  - Can I remember my part?
- We can really focus on using and celebrating the a cappella group as an “instrument”
- Focus on the 4 (equally mixed-ish) parts of an A Cappella group’s sound:
  - Solo
  - VP
  - Bass
  - The Ensemble (everyone else)
- Everyone doesn’t need to sing all the time!
- Homophony with solo/holding the same vowel can be very powerful because singers can focus on articulation and dynamics.
- Set up your choreographer for success by handing them great moments!
- You can balance your interesting and experimental ideas with comfortable ones; it makes both even better!

# Levels - Nick Jonas

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Nitsan Shai



Verse 2: “WOAH!”, funky chords, “Supernatural” & “All this heat keep rising” moments.

Chorus 2: 2 backup soloists, the rest on pads “ah”

Bridge: Similar to the intro, with accents from the ensemble.

Chorus 3: Chorus 2 with snare on 2 & 4.  
2 backup soloists briefly do their Own thing.



# Collaborative Arranging

- Google Docs to collaborate
- Process
  - Sharing ideas
  - Split up who arranges what
  - Implement separately
  - Critique
  - Bring it all together
- Why?
  - Lowers individual burden
  - Older arrangers can help newer arrangers
  - The arrangement has a lot of variety



## Implementation: What do I focus on?

- What are the strengths of my group?  
How best can I utilize them?
- What are the weaknesses of my group?  
How best can I avoid/subvert them?
- Is the voice leading good?
- Is it singable? (Can people learn it when you sing it to them?)
- Is it worth spending the time to learn something difficult? (Is it too hard?)
- Is it fun?
- Is the score clear?

## An example of critique

m9: beats 3 and 4, I like this better but I think the baritone part is too low; I'd have "lucky cuz" on an Ab3 (a 6th above), and leave the rest of the line the same. This way you have the harmony without pushing the bari's too low.

m15: This is a lot of parts, too many to be reliable, and it's all really high (you have 3 tenors doing sirens and 3 more people singing really high in that bari part + T2 part combined). I would make each trio a duo and move it down.

m19-20: Love this moment. I'd specify that the Ah should be really bright with a pronounced but small vibrato so that it's clean; that's what we're good at.

**Ian**

bam bam bam.

**JP**

Go hard AF  
(Kick on 1, Snare on 3)

**Nitsan**

Bass "Sh"

**Erik**

Inward Scream Erik to T1

**Ian**

Punchy

**JP**

Kick + Roar Outward snare

Kicks Outward snare

**Nitsan**

Cymbal swell with hit

Inward snare with cymbal decay

Cymbal swell with hit

Inward snare with cymbal decay



## Closing thoughts

- A good arrangement allows and encourages your A Cappella group to fully commit while performing.
- Moments give your singers clear ideas for them to commit to.
- If the moments line up with the song thematically, your group can go HAM.
- We can ponder these ideas regardless of the context (ex. Competition vs. your personal spring concert).

## Originals - Cellophane Boss 2017





# THANK YOU FOR COMING

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<https://www.erikfredriksen.com/a-cappella.html>

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