

CONTINUUM ENCYCLOPEDIA OF  
POPULAR MUSIC  
OF THE WORLD



VOLUME II  
PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTION



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CONTINUUM ENCYCLOPEDIA OF  
**POPULAR MUSIC**  
**OF THE WORLD**

VOLUME II:  
PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTION

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 **continuum**  
LONDON • NEW YORK



#### 4. Personnel

Sondheim worked in collaboration with one single orchestrator, Jonathan Tunick, while in Bernstein's case collaboration sometimes shaded into participation, so that for his shows *Candide* (1956) and *West Side Story* (1957) his name appeared among the credits for the orchestration.

The contribution of the orchestrator to the character and reputation of a particular piece of music has sometimes been a subject of dispute, as happened most famously in the case of George Gershwin's 'Rhapsody in Blue,' first performed by Gershwin with Paul Whiteman's band in 1924. Following his first attempt at an extended, 'serious' piece, the one-act 'jazz opera' *Blue Monday* (1922), which had been orchestrated by Will Vodery, Gershwin studied orchestration, but nevertheless 'Rhapsody' was orchestrated by Whiteman's arranger Ferde Grofé from a two-piano score. Sensitive to rumors that Grofé's role had extended beyond that of orchestrator, Gershwin made a point of informing ASCAP in writing that he was the sole composer of 'Rhapsody'; Grofé himself, while inclined to disparage Gershwin's suggestions for the instrumentation of the piece, 'never claimed to have done more than orchestrate it' (Schiff 1997, 11). The fact that Gershwin did not subsequently make his own orchestration suggests that Grofé had had the foresight to negotiate the sole rights to orchestrate the piece (Schiff 1997, 11).

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DAVID HORN and STAN HAWKINS

#### Producer

The producer of a recording is generally considered the final arbiter of aesthetic judgments throughout the recording process. Prior to the advent of electrical recording, however, the producer's role did not exist. In large part this was because the recording process itself was relatively straightforward, involving the live performance of a piece of music onto a recording medium.

A recording, once made, could not be changed. Sound engineers played a critical role insofar as they made decisions regarding the placement of musicians and recording devices within a studio, but they made those decisions on the basis of their understanding of the mechanics of recording; they were not involved in aesthetic matters. At that time, an 'A&R' (artist and repertoire) person was analogous to a producer. The former's responsibilities included booking studio time and ensuring that musicians were hired and appeared on time, contracts were drawn up and enforced, the performer's career was progressing (musically and financially) and suitable musical material was on hand.

The advent of tape recording and multitrack recording meant not only that the recording process became more complex, but that there was a need for its supervision. The easy manipulation of sound via equalization, reverb, layering of tracks and the like, as well as the ability to splice and edit takes, not only opened up new creative avenues and opportunities for experimentation, but also meant that myriad decisions had to be made before, during and after a recording session – decisions that would have a significant impact on the finished recording. A&R people, generally not well versed in recording techniques, were less likely candidates than sound engineers to take on that role, simply because of a lack of understanding of the process. In many cases, therefore, producers have come from the ranks of sound engineers; Phil Ramone, for instance, began his studio career as an engineer, as did Bruce Swedien and Alan Parsons. There were exceptions, however, and some A&R people also made the transition to producer, most notably George Martin, the Beatles' producer. Producers continued to rely routinely on sound engineers, as their new role meant that they were unable to attend to all the details of the recording process.

Producers assumed a role not unlike that of a film director, supervising the step-by-step process of creating a product, organizing and guiding a team (musicians, engineers, guest performers and so on) to bring about its realization, remaining aware of the overall goal (a difficult task for those with specialized roles) and assembling the final product. As the recording process became more complex (industrially as well as technologically) in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the role of a producer evolved to that of overseer of the entire recording process for a given recording project. The seemingly simple matter of bringing musicians together to make a recording, for instance, was forever changed by multitrack recording. Musicians no longer needed to be in the same place at the same time to record together, and it became part of a producer's job to manage and keep track of the fragmented recording process.



At the same time, tape recording and associated technologies reduced the expense of audio recording, allowing independently owned recording studios (such as Sam Phillips' Sun Studios in Memphis) to create professional recordings. The owners of such studios often acted as producers, and over time a producer's role became one not only of a decision-maker and organizer, but of an active participant and collaborator in the recording process, much as George Martin played an active role in the realization of the Beatles' recordings. Producers are, in fact, credited alongside musicians in the notes accompanying almost every commercial recording, according them a status akin to that of the artist (Phil Spector, having achieved great acclaim and notoriety, is the most notable). In some instances, such as that of Alan Parsons or Bill Laswell, producers are musicians in their own right. It is not uncommon for some musicians to act as producers of their own (and others') recordings. For example, the songwriting team of Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, responsible for numerous hit rock 'n' roll songs in the 1950s, became involved in production because they sought to make records of their songs as they wished to hear them.

In some cases, a producer will have a long-term relationship with a performer (as George Martin did with the Beatles, or Brian Eno with U2), a record label or a recording studio. Often, producers will be hired for individual projects. But even those who regularly work with the same artists, label or studio find that their role varies from one recording project to another, depending on the performers' desires, the recording studio and/or equipment chosen, or evolving musical styles and tastes. Nevertheless, several of the producer's responsibilities are common to most recording projects. Performers, as well as record labels, rely on a producer to be an objective listener and to assist with making decisions concerning musical arrangements, performances, even songwriting and the choice of music to be recorded. A producer is also relied upon to make decisions about which recording studios and types of equipment are most appropriate for a particular project. The most vital functions, and the ones for which producers are most often chosen and by which they are most often judged, are the ability to motivate performers to produce their best and the competence to determine the appropriate sound of a recording before it is issued. Usually, diplomacy and tact are requisite, since a producer's idea of how a recording should sound can run counter to that of a musician and/or songwriter.

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STEVE JONES

#### Sideman

A sideman is a musician (male or female) who is an ordinary member of a band but has no leadership or vocal duties. In the language of the symphony orchestra, a sideman is a rank-and-file member. However, with regard to jazz bands, dance orchestras, big bands, show bands and, by extension, rhythm and blues or soul bands, the term 'sideman' is universally used to describe the constituent musicians. Most musicians' unions in the United States and Europe distinguish leaders and star soloists and vocalists by setting out different rates of pay for them, whereas sidemen are paid the minimum union 'scale' rate.

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