

# 2 THUMBS UP!

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Professional Orchestration 2A, *Orchestrating the Melody Within the String Section* meticulously covers 63 different string techniques all of which you can learn by sequencing them.



## BioShock Composer Garry Schyman on Professional Orchestration Volume 2A

By Garry Schyman, Composer, BioShock

Nothing for me, as a composer for film, television and games, is more exciting or satisfying than writing for and working with an orchestra. I simply love it and I was fortunate when I started working to be able to regularly write for and record with live players.

I first learned orchestration when I studied composition at USC. However, as I look back, my studies were fairly basic and were more about instrumentation than true orchestration. The books that were presented to me as a student and those that I've read since were lacking in my

opinion. I have found my greatest learning tools have been score study and first hand experience writing for live players.

In recent years I have completely embraced the digital age and find experimenting with and writing with samples to be extremely useful. This was something that was not available to me when I was in school. However, samples can be deceiving and do not necessarily represent what real players will sound like when recording. If a composer does not truly understand how to write for an orchestra they may make poor use

of this expensive resource or be disappointed in the recordings they make with live players. The only answer to a composer wishing to write orchestral scores either for various media or for serious expression is to either truly learn orchestration or to hire an experienced orchestrator. Even a good orchestrator, will have difficulty making up for poorly conceived orchestral sketches. Not to mention the expense of a good orchestrator which could be used to hire a larger orchestra.

In today's world for the commercial media composer

# ...a step-by-step process for learning how to orchestrate.

**Garry Schyman**

there are fewer opportunities than ever, when first starting out, to work with orchestras. Therefore understanding how to write for them, so that when the opportunity comes along, is more critical than ever.

That said when I was first introduced to Peter Alexander's books on orchestration it was a bit of a revelation to me. I have since been mesmerized by what he has done and I only wish he had accomplished this 25 years ago when I was first starting out. In essence he has demystified the subject by presenting a step-by-step process for learning how to orchestrate.

The wonderful thing about this book is that by presenting the techniques necessary for good orchestration in such a highly organized fashion he will save the student literally hundreds of hours of hunt and peck score study. Furthermore, the scores provided with the techniques are full page providing the context for technique being presented. Many of the scores include samples from 20th century writing and the techniques covered are consistently relevant to film and TV scoring. In addition to the scores, Mr. Alexander offers an affordable audio package of companion MP3 recordings of the score examples in the book giving the student everything they need to understand what the technique will sound like.

What is particularly effective and what is strongly suggested by Mr. Alexander is for the student to use the provided scores to create mock-ups with their samples. Should the student do this and then import the MP3 of the actual orchestral recording he or she will obtain a real sense on how to take the best possible advantage of their samples to truly emulate the orchestra. I have tried this process and it will not only help the student truly understand the technique and remember it, but will build the students recording skills and test their sample libraries for their strengths and weaknesses.

I am aware of no orchestration book (nearly all of which were written well before the age of samples and digital work stations) that has these features and benefits for the student.

I would highly recommend this book to any student or working professional wishing to learn or expand their knowledge of orchestration. If you intend to work professionally the skills imparted by the studies presented here will be of enormous benefit and will give you a professional advantage for your entire career.

*Garry Schyman  
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Garry Schyman is a graduate of the University of Southern California with a degree in Music Composition. After USC, Schyman studied under the tutelage of the great 12-tone composer and teacher George Tremblay.

