

About Orchestrating the Melody Within the Woodwinds & Brass

With the release of *Professional Orchestration 2B*, I've completed the *Second Key of Professional Orchestration*, which is orchestrating the melody in each orchestral section. With the full page/full score examples, this represents nearly 1,300 pages of orchestration instruction just for this single technique.

As with 2A, each technique is organized by the low, medium, high and very high registers.

In considering the Woods and Brass in comparison to the Strings, you should realize that they are instruments that have been in transition over time in terms of development, quality of construction and fingerings. Construction includes the quality of the wood used for the double reed family and the clarinets, metallurgy of the keys, and with the flutes, the metallurgy of the actual instrument.

One of the most dramatic aspects of development within the brass are the valve trumpets and French horns allowing for the performance of chromatic intervals. These weren't completely adopted for common use until the 1890s, just before the Twentieth Century. Consequently, what kinds of brass parts were written and how they were written changed over a period of two hundred years.

Another consideration is that while the strings are non-transposing (other than the basses which sound an octave lower than written), the winds and the brass have many transposing instruments. These include (but are not limited to) the Alto Flute in G, Clarinet in B \flat , Bass Clarinet in B \flat , Clarinet in E \flat , Clarinet in D, English Horn (in F), French Horn (in F), Trumpet in B \flat , and the Trumpet in D.

To complicate matters, there's the Viennese Oboe and the French Oboe (which have different sounds) and the Viennese Horn and the French Horn (which is really German, not French).

Into this fray come sample libraries which have recorded several of these instruments including some no longer in common or in frequent use like the Bass Trumpet, Wagner Tubas and the cimbasso.

The Bass Trumpet was heavily used by Wagner since he had a hand in its design and was heavily used in his *Ring* series. The Bass Trumpet in C is played by a trombonist while the Bass Trumpet in E \flat is played by a trumpeter.

The Wagner Tuba combines aspects of the Tuba and the French Horn. When not available, it's replaced by the Euphonium, which is often called the, "cello of the tubas."

This, however, is how it stands with the symphonic orchestra use of these instruments.

Then there's concert band usage. One instrumentation of the concert band includes:

2 Flutes
Oboe
Bassoon
3 Clarinets
Bass Clarinet
2 Alto Saxes
2 Tenor Saxes
1 Baritone Sax
2 French Horns
3 Trumpets
2 Trombones
1 Baritone Horn
1 Tuba
Timpani
Snare Drum
Bass Drum
Crash Cymbals
Suspended Cymbal
Orchestra Bells
Chimes
Bass Drum

A variation on this organization is composer Stephen Melillo's *Band of The Third Millennium* where he was the first to incorporate two synthesizers with the concert band by adding PAD Bass and harp to the ensemble.

The concert band is an ensemble that wasn't standardized until the 1950's by conductor Frederick Fennell of the Eastman School of Music. Comparing the concert band to the

symphony, one composer described it as, “one fine Oldsmobile.” Whereas accessibility of the symphony is very hard for composers to come by, having their music performed by concert bands is far easier since they exist in both high schools and colleges.

For the study of orchestration technique, study scores exist in plentitude for quoting. For concert band, this is not as easy since virtually everything outside of Sousa marches are under copyright. But those wanting to extend their scoring view further would do well to order concert band study scores from Stephen Melillo’s *Stormworld* (www.stormworld.com) where both score and CD are available. Many of Mr. Melillo’s pieces are also available for download on Apple iTunes.

I mention this because in going through these combinations, it should always be kept in mind that the techniques taught in this volume aren’t “classical” and restricted to “classical” writing. Rather, they’re techniques that can be applied to any style or genre of writing depending on the imagination of the composer.

Historically, remember that woodwind and brass writing has evolved as the instruments have evolved. You can hear this by listening to any Mozart symphony, then *Night on Bald Mountain* by Moussorgsky, followed by *Images* by Debussy. In under two hours you’ll hear what words cannot begin to express. Extend your education by an extra forty-five minutes to include Stravinsky’s *Firebird* and my teaching point is more than made.

Many of the techniques in this volume are used in jazz bands, especially when the sax players double other woodwind instruments.

Given the merger of music and video, many students of this book will no doubt want to explore the possibilities of film or dramatic scoring. To this end, I’ve included examples from those works in the public domain that contain techniques used by many well known film composers. For A-list film writing, there are two different sized woodwind ensembles. There’s the standard 2 Flutes, 2 Oboes, 2 Clarinets and 2 Bassoons. Then there’s the Wagnerian woodwind section with “threes” of everything so that a triad can be written and doubled.

The standard French horn section is four. If budgets are available, and it’s an action score, six is common. Sometimes eight French horns are used, but often six is the limit.

Now, MIDI mock-ups.

The technology is at the place where there are many excellent electronic woodwind and brass libraries. Consequently, you’re not restricted in the number of different types and sizes of ensembles you can write for. If it’s your aim to record your music, then be aware that from a recording perspective, you’ll often need two libraries to avoid an issue called *phasing* when doubling instruments. By using two different libraries, you’ll achieve a much more realistic sound.

As in 2A, you’ll find that I list the examples in a chart at the head of the chapter with a brief analysis. The balance of the chapter is then organized by presenting the examples in the low, medium, high and very high registers.

In closing, I need to make one teaching point to bear in mind as you go through the techniques in this book. The strings have a homogenous sound, so they blend easily. But because the woodwinds are all different sounding, they don't blend the same way the strings do. When you double instruments in unison, one instrument will predominate in a certain range, whereas in another range, the other instrument predominates.

As usual, it's my prayer that this volume will be a great blessing to you.

Bon voyage!

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