

WRITING SIMPLIFIED PARTS

by Vince Corozine (ASCAP)

The ability to write simplified parts or to edit existing parts that are too demanding for the student, are valuable skills for a school music director to acquire. Often the limited technical ability of certain students will necessitate that a simplified part be written in order to assist the student with the music to be played.

Here are a few suggestions for writing simplified parts. Each part should:

- Blend well with the ensemble.
- Make sense melodically. The more singable the line, the easier it will be for the student to learn.
- Be rhythmically appealing, and in some way be related to the melody.
- Reflect the spirit of the composition, in style and substance.
- Be technically playable, and keep each instrument in its strongest sounding register.
- Follow the principles of good voice leading.
- Fill in or reinforce the basic harmony. (The safest notes to double in tonal music are the first, fourth, and fifth of the major scale key.)
- Make a musical contribution to the composition.

The more singable the line, the easier it will be for the student to learn.

The following is a piano piece by Frederic Chopin (1810-1849)

Chopin, Op. 35

The image shows a musical score for Chopin's Op. 35. It is a piano piece in 3/4 time, marked with a tempo of quarter note = 110. The score is written for piano, with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano). The right hand plays a melody with a long, sweeping line, while the left hand plays a bass line with a steady, rhythmic pattern. The piece is in a major key, and the overall style is characteristic of Chopin's lyrical and expressive piano music.

First, note the steps that are involved in transcribing this piece for concert band:

- What is a suitable and workable key for the band? (Bb major is a more comfortable key for young players)
- Analyze the chord structure (Basically I and V7 throughout)
- What is the prevailing style of the piece (Obviously it is *legato*)
- How does one achieve the legato style with woodwind instruments? Does one write arpeggios as Chopin did? If so, what instruments would be capable of playing them?

- Realizing that the band does not have a sustaining pedal, like the piano, one must find another way to sustain the tones, yet keep the eighth notes moving.

Instrumental ensembles do not have a sustaining pedal; therefore one must find another way to sustain tones.

Here is a solution arranged for the following instruments:
 Flute, Oboe, 2 Bb Clarinets, Alto Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, and Bassoon.

To illustrate, here is a simplified part written for a beginning clarinetist. Notice that the clarinet does not play above the break, and difficult skips are avoided. Observe that the clarinet part reinforces the melody, which makes it easier to play, and uses only five notes, all of which can be played with the left hand.

Editing the Score and Parts

The main purpose for revising or editing a score is to obtain a satisfactory balance of sound within the ensemble, resulting in a more gratifying performance. The need for revision or editing may be necessary for one or more of the following reasons:

- Incomplete instrumentation (no Tubas, F Horns, low strings, low reeds, and so on).
- A lack of technical ability resulting in a weak-sounding section.
- An insufficient number of players.
- Impractical or defective scoring of the music.

CUEING

Periodically certain parts must be reinforced to allow a particular musical line to project. Sometimes a line must be lightened in order to achieve an acceptable balance within the ensemble. (i.e.: omit Tubas if Bass Clarinets are present in soft passages).

This process is known as *cueing*, where one instrument is able to adequately play a musical line originally intended for another instrument. (i.e. substituting a tenor sax for a weak baritone horn player; substituting an alto saxophone for a missing F. horn; substituting a muted trumpet for a missing oboe; although it is sometimes more advantageous to substitute a clarinet for an oboe part, particularly if the musical line is to be played *legato*.)

Sometimes a line must be lightened in order to achieve an acceptable balance of tone.

Especially notable is that cueing usually occurs during rests, where the cueing instrument does not play. The cued notes are usually smaller in size than the regular notes and the stems point in the wrong direction. The instrument for which the notes are cued is identified in the cued part.

Cueing serves the following purposes. It:

- Helps the player enter correctly and to keep their place in the music.
- Allows the player to supply the notes of an instrument that is missing from the ensemble.
- Enables the player to double the notes of an instrument that may be in short supply or is weak-sounding.
- Assists in the coordination of rhythmically complex and difficult rhythms.

The choice of what instrument to use for cueing depends on its closeness in timbre, strength, and character to the missing instrument.

The following instruments are the most likely to be missing or in short supply in school instrumental ensembles: oboe, English horn, E-flat clarinet, alto clarinet, bass clarinet, piccolo, bassoon, trombone, tuba and F. Horn. In addition, the orchestra will usually be limited in the viola, cello, and string bass sections; and the jazz ensemble may be lacking trombones, bass, or baritone saxophone.

Here are suggestions for cueing instruments:

Instrument	Cued for
Bassoon	Horn, clarinet, tenor saxophone
Baritone Hone	Tenor saxophone, cello,
F. Horn	Alto saxophone
Oboe (Eng. Horn)	Muted trumpet, clarinet
Violas	Violin 3, cello 2
Baritone Saxophone	Baritone Horn, Tuba
Alto & bass clarinet	Tenor saxophone
Clarinet	Cornets, F horns, Baritone horn, bassoon

E♭ clarinet	Flute, piccolo
Tuba	Baritone saxophone, bassoon
Trombone	Tenor saxophone
Mallets	Piano
Violins	Clarinets, piano

For this reason, an arranger must understand that some school groups will be lacking some of the above mentioned instruments and one must cue these musical lines for other instruments.

Unfortunately, the constant doubling of instruments results in a loss of transparency of texture and creates a dense, pungent sound that does not allow the individual instrumental colors to emerge.

The constant doubling of instruments results in a loss of transparency of sound.

BEGINNER PARTS

Thus, arrangers should be encouraged to provide special parts for beginners for every section of the ensemble. These specially written beginner parts will enable the band or orchestra to increase in size and to achieve a better balance of instrumentation, resulting in a fuller sound.

Beginner parts should mirror the rhythm of the melody, as students find it easier to play the rhythm of a well-known melody than to count out whole notes. Initiative can also be taken on part of the arranger to challenge the better players by providing a more demanding part for advanced players. This could include playing the part up one octave as in the case of the violins, or asking an advanced clarinetist to arpeggiate a passage. However, one must make sure that the added part fits the style of the music, and is not merely a display of one's technical proficiency.

A beginning part for a B♭ Clarinet for *The Star Spangled Banner* follows:

Spirited

Transposed

Bb Clarinet (Simplified part) uses only four different notes, and mirrors rhythm of melody

One further observation is that parts for beginners should keep the clarinets below the break, and give the trumpets and baritone horns, a minimum of notes that utilize the valve combinations of 1-3, 2-3, and 1-2-3. These notes tend to be played sharp and require the use of the third finger compensating valve. Trumpets should also be kept within the treble clef; and one should avoid writing parts for trombones that require notes in 5th, 6th, and 7th positions. String parts should be written in first position, and viola parts should be written for the third violins.

One way to simplify a rapid moving passage is to divide the part among two equal instruments, and overlap the musical lines. Notice the effectiveness of the next musical example, when rescored for two flutes. This example could just have just as easily been written for two Bb clarinets one octave lower.

Editing, cueing, doubling, reinforcing, thinning, and eliminating are all terms that music teachers are familiar with. Everybody wants their ensemble to sound full and resonant and one can achieve this goal by experimenting with some of the suggestions offered.

*Vince Corozine is the author of the highly successful music book, *Arranging Music for the Real World* with CD by Mel Bay Publications, Inc.

Readers may contact Vince with questions about arranging music at: Norvin1@hotmail.com. Web page www.vincecorozine.com

