

# All About Alexander Publishing's *Professional Orchestration*<sup>TM</sup> Ultimate Learning Package

*By Peter Lawrence Alexander*

**I**magine a complete learning solution for orchestration that lets you customize and personalize *what* you need to learn *when* you want to learn it. Well, that's exactly what the Alexander Publishing *Professional Orchestration*<sup>TM</sup> *Ultimate Learning Package* does, and here's why.

There are basically five groups of people who want to learn and improve their musical skills when working with electronic scoring.

**The first group is the most common of all – and that's those who create music for personal fulfillment.** You write because you love it. It's all about the doing and the finishing. And thanks to great orchestral sample libraries, you can hear immediately what you've just created anytime 24/7.

**The second group is those who want to go professional.** This means that you *also* love what you do, but enough so that you're willing to make the investment in yourself and go for it.

Just within the last year the *entire* concept of film and TV scoring has changed. There are more opportunities to write locally for industrial films, documentaries, and even programs in the States for PBS. With video production costs down, we now have an entire new genre of dramatic scoring coming, and that's for original web dramas. And then there's games, along with the local need for jingles and TV spots.

So the opportunity to earn good income at home is very high. But having said that, here's the thing. Now that prices are way down, *lots* of people have the *same* libraries. So to stand out, you need an edge. The applied knowledge you get from *Professional Orchestration* is that edge.

**The third group are involved with worship music.** For some, there's no higher calling than creating music to God. Thanks to music technology, no matter where you live, you can create with the same professional sound packages they use in Hollywood – with the caveat

that you have electricity to power the computers. So the same professional sound you hear in the movies, you can now have in your worship music, whether it's live or recorded.

**The fourth group is the music teachers and music grads that just want to key their music into music notation programs, but not sequencing programs.** In the U.S., there are literally hundreds of thousands of graduates and faculty who want this. The good news for them is that just within the last few weeks, all three major notation programs can now take advantage of sample libraries like *EastWest Quantum Leap Gold* and *Platinum Bundles*, *Symphonic Choirs*, E-MU's *Modern Symphonic Orchestra*, IK Multimedia's *Miroslav Philharmonik*, and others.

**Then there's the fifth group.** This group has just discovered what's out there. They're mesmerized and overwhelmed. And because they're new to music technology aren't aware how drastically prices have dropped in the past 24 months. So everything looks excessively expensive.

Now, regardless of which of the five groups you're in, everyone, bar none, are regulated by the same *law of learning*. And it doesn't matter if you're in the Ukraine or Yonkers, Hawaii or Hollywood, New York or London, or even the Island of Malta. The inviolable rule for learning is simply this: *what ya gotta know, ya gotta know*. And there's absolutely no exception to this rule.

For example, whether you're a professional racecar driver or a parent driving their kids to after school events, everyone has to know what PRNDL is. If you don't know that, you can't drive.

When producing your music with computers, there's a common knowledge and a common learning curve that all must know and go through.

**Regardless of what group you're in, if you decide to produce your music on the computer, certain things don't change.**

The specs needed to run the software don't change. They're the same for everyone. The learning curve for a junior version of a software program is the same as the professional version. The need to understand something about how the computer operates, including the operating system, doesn't change. The need to understand MIDI basics doesn't change. The need is to understand and have some basic skills with recording and mixing music doesn't change.

So no matter what group you're in, we're all bound by the need for this base of common knowledge.

Now when it comes to electronic orchestration, there's also a base of common knowledge that binds us all together with this exception. There are those who are happy just having the orchestral sounds, and for them that's enough.

Then there's a second group who have this can-do achieving spirit. For them, pushing keys and getting a sound isn't enough. They want to go to the next step with an efficient learning solution that's a balanced approach between writing for live players (should the occasion arise) and writing electronically. They want to have the peace of mind to know that even with a limited time schedule, that the time investment they make, will give them back a return that they can hear and be proud of.

It's for this group that the *Professional Orchestration™ Ultimate Learning Package* was created.

## **What You Get**

First I'm going to tell you about the core package, then the Goodies.

### ***The Core Package***

There are three parts to the core package: the book, the audio package and the workbook.

### **The Professional Orchestration Book**

Simply put, *Professional Orchestration* is the first orchestration book ever to come out of Hollywood. All the orchestration notes were checked and edited by studio musicians who must be able to play anything on the spot. The book itself is oversized at 8.5 x 11. In fact, of all the orchestration books on the market, *Professional Orchestration* is the biggest. Now at first, that doesn't seem like a big deal until you realize that a full orchestral score is a big document with a lot of information on it. The smaller you reduce it, the more difficult it is to read. So 8.5 x 11 is the optimum size to work with reduced scores and still be able to read them, and fit it in a bookshelf.

Unlike other orchestration books, *Professional Orchestration* teaches with full page/full score examples. And there's an historical reason for that. When studying a specific instrument, other books teach using one line excerpts from scores. While that approach saves space, it doesn't let you see the example in context so that you know what the rest of the orchestra is doing while that instrument is playing. When you consider that the great composers, from classics to film, studied from full scores, you realize that's a very serious drawback. We've solved that problem using full page/full score examples.

There's also another huge benefit for our approach. With the full page/full score example right in front of you, you can key the example into your music production software and hear it played back.

But that's only half the good news.

The other half is that with the *Ultimate Learning Package*, your audio package are digital rights management-free MP3s, that you can import into your program (provided the program does that). So now you hear the live-recorded orchestra, which you can now compare to what you just keyed in.

But that's not all.

By doing what the industry calls MIDI mock-ups, you also build up your hearing and keyboard skills. Since you've imported the MP3 of the live orchestral performance into your sequencing program, you can now learn how to phrase on the keyboard to sound more like a live orchestra player.

You also build important recording skills for setting volume levels, panning and much more.

So with one package, you boost your orchestration, keyboard, recording and MIDI mock-up skills. You can only learn this with the *Professional Orchestration Ultimate Learning Package*.

**The Professional Orchestration Audio Package: DRM-free MP3s** – The problem most everyone faces is this: they hear in their head what they want to write, but can't yet identify the instrumental combinations they're hearing. So how do you overcome that problem? It's done with a team effort that combines score analysis with audio. The eye sees, the ear hears, and so the mind knows. Both work together to train your musical imagination. And there's a huge benefit that comes with this that's rarely talked about. And that's taking fear out of the writing process. So when you can identify what you're hearing, not only can you create without fear, but you can also create more efficiently. That's because you know what you want and how it's going to sound before you write it or record it. And that's a *huge* edge.

There's another reason why we bundle audio with the book. For more than 30 years I've studied how the great composers taught themselves. In fact, the *Professional Orchestration Ultimate Learning Package* is modeled around what I discovered. One of the key success points, again something rarely discussed, is that professional composers are social people. They go out to concerts and listen to lots of different kinds of music. So not only are they hearing the music of other

composers, they're also keeping their ears in front of the orchestra so that the sound is always fresh in their minds.

Here's how our audio package mimics this experience.

**No snippets and why.** The audio package, which we licensed from eClassical.com, contains the majority of the book's examples with this understanding – instead of getting a little snippet that runs a few seconds, we give you the entire movement the example is found in. That's why you get roughly 12 hours of music downloadable in a zip file. *Professional Orchestration* is the only orchestration book with this teaching approach.

**Why MP3s?** This actually came from customer feedback while we were running the first online class that taught orchestration from a more traditional, college perspective. Originally, we packaged audio using an online service that everyone really loved. It was and is a tremendous resource. But what we discovered from both customers and students in our online *Professional Orchestration* class was that they didn't have the time to sit in a fixed place with their computer and listen. I talked to professors at other schools, and found that they were having the same problems with listening programs they had set up for their students. They practically had to force the student to sit and listen.

So how do we build in the audio training, which is so important to the study of orchestration and composition, if you don't have time to listen?

The obvious answer was to get the examples in an affordable MP3 format so that you could listen on the go and not feel trapped by sitting next to a computer. With the portability MP3s offer, listening time is far more efficient because with portability, you can learn anywhere. And it reinvigorates the whole learning process, too.

That's why having MP3s that are DRM-free is so important. When you download legal files from the various MP3 sites, many times they have a mechanical copy protection built in that limits where you can play and hear whatever MP3s you downloaded. So you're still restricted. But not with the MP3s we licensed from eClassical. You can play these MP3s on any computer, iPod, other MP3 player, your cell phone, even some game control boxes! And if you have a car CD player that reads MP3s, your commute becomes your study hall.

Learning in music is no different from any other subject. You learn by repetition. So with the *Professional Orchestration™ Ultimate*

*Learning Package*, you can do this repeated listening, on a variety of media players, to build this inner skill, anytime *you* choose.

Again, this is a huge edge.

### **The Professional Mentor™**

The *Professional Mentor* is the new workbook for *Professional Orchestration*. Because *Professional Orchestration* can also be used at the college level, I need to explain how workbooks are used academically, and then I'll explain our teaching approach, which is enormously practical.

Academically, the two major orchestration books besides ours come with separate printed workbooks that are about \$25 each. Because the *Professional Mentor* is a PDF digital download, we just pass it on to you. But if you want the printed version, which we'll have Fall 2007, that's also about \$25.

Each of the other workbooks has exercises that you turn in for grading. At the end of the semester you turn in your final project, which is a work for orchestra. Unfortunately in many academic situations, you don't get to hear your final project performed.

Now here's how the *Professional Mentor* is vastly different from the other workbooks. In summary, if you follow the lesson plans in the *Professional Mentor*, within a few months, you'll have created a complete CD of your own original compositions, along with a minimum of 13 publishable works. That's a huge difference.

When we really coldly define what you're being taught in the standard one-semester orchestration course, what you're learning is instrumentation, not orchestration. With instrumentation, you're learning about the mechanics of the instrument so you can write effective playable parts. And that's what all the major titles do. They teach instrumentation.

So how are we different with *Professional Orchestration* and the *Professional Mentor*?

Unlike our academic companions, the *Professional Mentor* is setup to give you a complete home study course that you can customize and personalize to your own learning needs. True to our common sense teaching approach, you also have material for each lesson to build your MIDI mock-up skills. There are lessons for each major instrument. You have the MP3s and examples for score analysis. What we have next is what pushes the *Professional Mentor* ahead of the pack. Rather

than take a “pop” quiz or turn in an exercise, you write an original composition for each instrument. The composition is your test because it demonstrates whether or not you’ve really studied the material. Then, with your orchestral sample library, you record your work.

Unless you sign up for a *Professional Orchestration* online class, there’s no time limit. So you can start where you are. Of course, going through the *Professional Mentor* is completely optional. But what can put you ahead of the pack is that if you opt to do the work, you end up with 13 or more publishable works, and a demo CD of your music. By comparison, the poor college comp degree major graduates with nothing to show for his effort but exercises, and in many cases, a non-performed orchestral work.

As my British friends point out, you end up with a “show reel” while the other fellows have nothing.

So if you do the work, *you* have the edge.

### **The Goodies**

Now we get to the goodies that happen to be part of the *Professional Mentor*. First, there’s a separate concert package coming available from eClassical that for a nominal fee provides MP3s to listen to for each solo instrument. So you have 13 concerts in all.

We’ve also added our Strings Positions booklet that’s in four color.

But the next goodie is huge.

It’s one thing to do a MIDI mock-up. It’s another thing to have someone guide you in the process and to build your confidence. In the world today, there are really only a few who are real masters of creating MIDI mock-ups. One of those masters is composer Jay Bacal who’s created a number of works for solo instruments commissioned by the Vienna Symphonic Library for their new Vienna Instruments.

With the permission of both the Vienna Symphonic Library and Jay Bacal, we’re able to include 13 works mocked up by Jay for each solo instrument covered in the *Professional Mentor*. You get the MP3 and the MIDI file to import into your sequencer so you can see exactly how Jay phrased and edited each instrument. Again, this is a huge edge for you.

## **Wrap Up**

I appreciate the time you've spent with me looking at the *Professional Orchestration Ultimate Learning Package*. The great thing about how we teach is that it's a common sense approach for where the world is today with music technology. With the *Professional Mentor*, you can personalize and customize a complete home study learning plan that fits your schedule. Or you can dip-in as you need to. It's the only orchestration text that teaches how to take advantage of today's technology with MIDI mock-ups and recording. And I wrote it with you in mind.

To order, just go to [www.truespec.com](http://www.truespec.com) or call us at 1-804-733-6122.

Thanks,

*Peter Alexander*