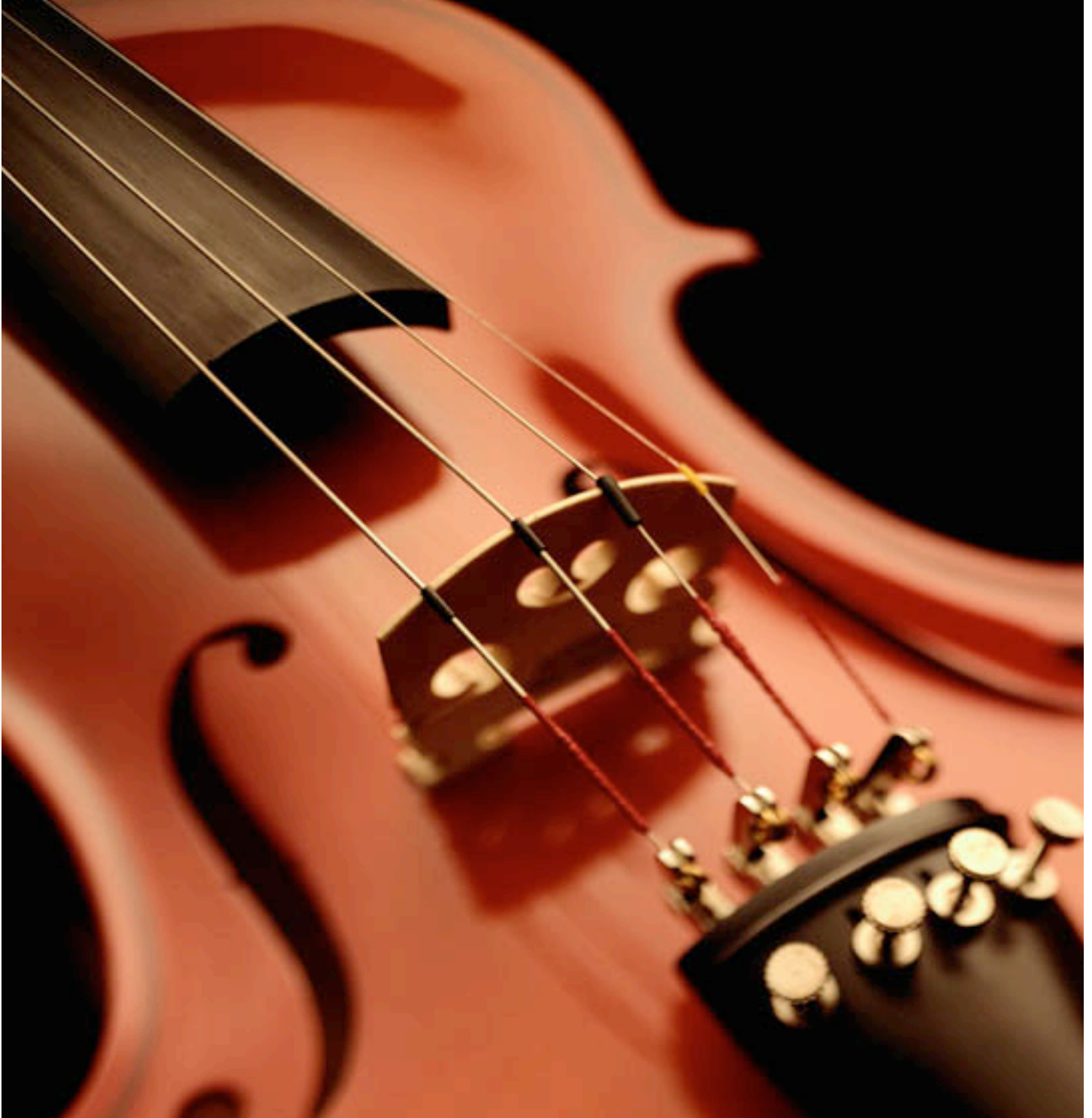


PROFESSIONAL

Orchestration



IN THE CLASSROOM

Using Professional Orchestration™



Having a student's piece performed and critiqued by the player turns the classroom into a meaningful orchestration learning lab.

An uncommon classroom approach

Professional Orchestration's approach for either classroom or private use is based on how the great composers taught themselves. So rather than have a student do a series of exercises which they turn in for a grade, the student, who is most often a composition major, must *compose*. Weekly. Before you conclude, "that would never happen in our school," read on to see our approach. It's not as radical as you might think.

The component parts

The component parts of the *Professional Orchestration* classroom experience include:

- The Concert Series MP3 Audio Package
- *Professional Orchestration Volume 1: Solo Instruments and Instrumentation Notes*
- *The Professional Mentor™* for Volume 1
- *The Professional Orchestration Composition Guide*
- *The Professional Orchestration Strings Position Booklet*
- Master Audio Package

- Recording Workshop

The Concert Series MP3 Audio

One of the issues orchestration teachers face is actually getting the student to sit in the library to do their assigned qualitative listening. A typical student response is that they hate being tied to the computer. To get around this, working with George Olvik and the team at eClassical.com, we created the Concert Series downloadable MP3 audio package which a student downloads directly to any computer (Mac or PC), and from there to an iPod, cell phone, or any other MP3 player.

In the Classroom.

What the student gets is a series of 20-minute length concerts (on average) for each major orchestral instrument. The assignment is to listen to one concert a week based on the instrument being studied and written for that week.

And since the concert is in the MP3 format, the student can

listen and learn anywhere without feeling tied to the computer - a practical solution for a class that

can be small or large.

Professional Orchestration Volume 1

Professional

Orchestration Volume 1 is subtitled *Solo Instruments and Instrumentation Notes*.

That's because historically that's what books used for the traditional one semester of

orchestration cover, but with this exception - the earliest texts by Kastner, Berlioz and Rimsky-Korsakov all had full page/full score examples by which the student learned the technique being taught within the context of a full score. This required score analysis

which the student also learned compositional technique.

Every *Professional Orchestration* volume follows this results driven learning method.

Each week the student focuses on a single instrument. The instrument is presented with score examples in the low, medium, high and very high ranges so the student learns the sound of an instrument in each register and of equal importance, how orchestral writing for that solo instrument can change by register. There is another side benefit here which for electronic scoring is knowing what an instrument sounds like, and of equal importance, what it *doesn't* sound like.

Part of the homework is for the student to reduce to concert key, each of the four examples. We've found this takes about 20-30 minutes when done with pencil.

Unless the student is an absolute master of Finale or Sibelius, we don't recommend trying to do score reductions in either program because it's too time consuming and draws

the student away from the real learning issues of score reduction and writing their assignment.

This is a *critical* success step that *can* be taught in the classroom.

The Instrumentation Notes are just that, Here, again, I've followed Kastner and Berlioz' approach by giving the student enough information to know how to write effectively for each instrument. But the notes do have a source. In my research, I found the one orchestration book Ravel used - Widor's *Technique of the Modern Orchestra*. The original is nearly 100 years old. So working with studio musicians from Local 40 in Los Angeles, all of the notes have been revised for today.

What hasn't been done is going through and repeating the history of each instrument. No one did that better than Forsyth so I felt no need to reinvent the wheel.

The Professional Mentor™

The Professional Mentor is a vastly non-conformist work by someone who was a child of the '60s! *Down with exercises! Compose! Make Music! Create!*



from

Compose! Make Music! Create!

The Professional Mentor first teaches the student how to do score study. It's a multi-step process where the *Eight Keys to Learning Professional Orchestration™* are applied. This is the first stage of learning score reading and it's also the order of each volume in the *Professional Orchestration Series*. Next comes transposing to concert key followed by reducing to six staves, a grand staff each for the woodwinds, brass and strings.

By the conclusion of the semester, the student has done 48 score reductions and by now has built critical skills needed for self-teaching.

If they've kept an observation list of the techniques discovered during analysis, the student leaves class armed with compositional/scoring techniques.

Up next is the poem selected for that instrument. Once the work is written, it must be prepared for performance with either hand notation in ink or from a notation program - whichever the student has the greatest ability in.

For Fall 2009, I've added one extra measure to the *Professional Mentor* and that's videos of each poem being read aloud with graphic background to help give the student the feel of the poem to be scored.

Once written, the next step is getting the student work performed by either instrumental majors within the school, other teachers, or bringing in local musicians to sight read the work

which can also include talented local high school students

Now, should musicians not be available in your local geographic area, there are ways around this. Many, many musicians use the Mac. You can PDF the part and email it so the student work can be performed and critiqued live over iChat or even Skype. And now there's iGoogle. With Skype, even on the PC, you can do a video session. So even if your school lacks the players internally, you can still find musicians to play the student's work. *Make* the technology work for *you*.

For some, requiring a student to write two-minutes of music per week for a solo instrument only (no accompaniment) seems daunting. Yet, Haydn, who learned counterpoint from the Fux book (*Gradus ad Parnassus*) routinely wrote two-minutes a day for his symphonies, which he typically wrote within a two-week period. In the present way of teaching orchestration, a student comes to class having had at least four semesters of harmony and starting in the Junior year, two-part counterpoint ending with florid, where the student applies previous lessons to writing on demand first in two-parts, then three-parts, and finally, four-parts before moving on to imitation, canon and fugue.

If a student has mastered two-part florid counterpoint to even a small degree, the student can knock out two minutes in a day, much less a week.

At this stage in college, the teaching objective is pushing the

comp degree major to prove to him or herself they *can* do two-minutes a day, and live to tell about it!

With *Professional Orchestration*, the facts gained in harmony and counterpoint must now be deployed to demonstrate skill.

The Professional Orchestration™ Composition Guide

This is new for Fall 2009. Separate from the *Professional Mentor*, the *Composition Guide* is a resource of quick helps including teaching about harmonic figuration.

The Professional Orchestration Strings Position Booklet

This is 4-color document showing all the string positions for violin, viola, cello and bass. Using it, a student can check to make sure passages, arpeggios, and the three types of stops are playable.

One observation. This is a great booklet for guitarists because it shows them how to apply their knowledge of guitar fingerings to the strings. Berlioz was a guitarist and his string writing was exceptional.

Master Audio Package

The Master Audio Package is one more tool that brings the concert hall to the student. Here, the student gets the complete work the example from *Professional Orchestration Volume 1* was pulled from. Available by digital download only. Since the audio is in MP3 format, the student can download and play the audio on most any computer and MP3 player. Again, this enables the student to listen and learn nearly anywhere.

Enter the Recording Workshop

The Recording Workshop

The Recording Workshop, part of the *Professional Mentor*, is where the student learns to create MIDI mockups of his work. In the standard two credit hour class, there won't be time for this, but we include it because MIDI mockups are an industry expectation and in many cases, this is where the beginning composer will get his or her first works performed. So the student needs to know this, especially with the many excellent orchestral libraries on the market that can now work with both Finale and Sibelius.

The Recording Workshop feature follows the weekly compositional process by providing the MP3 and MIDI file of the MIDI mockup of a composition for solo instrument. All of the examples were realized by composer Jay Bacal for the Vienna Symphonic Library's *Vienna Instruments*. The mockups were done of well known works for solo flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, French horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba, violin, viola, cello, bass, and harp.

By the time students have studied Mr. Bacal's work, they now have the beginning foundation on how to do a quality MIDI mockup for the entire orchestra, since they've now learned this skill week-by-week, instrument-by-instrument.

Live performance MP3s of each work realized by Mr. Bacal are available on iTunes.

Only *Professional Orchestration* covers this vital aspect of applying orchestration principles electronically.

The Overall Goal of the Professional Mentor

Aside from attuning the student to discipline of producing a work weekly, the long range goal of the *Professional Mentor* is to enable the individual composition major to leave school with a portfolio of 13 solo works to use to launch a composing career and possibly their own publishing company.

Depending on the resources available at your school, if each student composition is recorded, the student also graduates with a demo reel of their music.

The Final Work

Many courses require that a student turn in a final work for orchestra. I was a student in one of those courses. Even after the basic semester's work, I was totally unprepared to write and orchestrate a final work.

This is one reason why I emphasize that orchestration is really instrumentation for the first semester and that an actual orchestration class building on these materials is needed for a second semester at the conclusion of which the student should be in a position to compose and orchestrate a short work running two - three minutes in length.

If this is not the case for your school, the *Professional Orchestration*

approach has the student reduce a minimum of 48 excerpts from which a set of scoring techniques emerge that a student can use to create a final orchestral work.

MORE RESOURCES

Here are a few more tools assembled to make your teaching life easier.

Professional Orchestration Sketchbooks

Using a slightly longer paper length, we've created two types of orchestral sketchbooks: ruled and unruled. Both are 16 stave and are a great tool for writing and for students doing their score transpositions.

The Professional Mentor/YouTube Videos

We've assembled on the Alexander Publishing site a collection of live orchestral performances on YouTube covering a majority of the works excerpted in all the *Professional Orchestration* books. This is one more way we bring the concert hall to the student and enable our Mobile Educational Initiative which enables the student to learn almost any place.

Seeing is understanding.

The Alexander Publishing Online Library

The Online Library contains a strong links area for each orchestral section and individual instruments within the section. This is always "in process" and by Fall 2009 will be even more expansive with our coverage of world and ethnic instruments.