



SCHOOL ORCHESTRA

Bass and Viola Music for the Young Student Orchestra

by Michael Watson

As a bass player and teacher I have been asked by other music teachers what music I would recommend for the orchestra to keep the basses challenged. I also have a concern for keeping my young viola students challenged and motivated. Many young viola parts do not provide a chance for them to play melody or even worse do not provide as much challenge as the other parts. The following are a few guidelines and suggested pieces.

Many arrangers in the early part of the twentieth century and a few more recent arrangers created bass parts that are at best simple outlines of the chord structure or simplifications of the cello part. The viola parts are simple inner voice parts in quarter notes with little melodic interest. While some young players do not mind getting easier parts than their peers in the other sections, most would prefer more interesting and rewarding parts.

In order to select interesting parts look for:

- Composer/arranger gives melody to each section at least once in the piece.
 - Bass part requires some shifting (most modern method books have bassists shift into 3rd position very early).
 - Viola part has similar rhythms to the melody and/or an interesting rhythm that contrasts with the melody
- Elliot Del Borgo, Richard Meyer, Mark Williams and Doris

Gazda are composers/arrangers who usually give every string instrument the melody at some point in the piece.

Some of the pieces that my viola and bass students have enjoyed playing are: *Basses Loaded* from *Rounds for Strings* by K. Swayze; *Fancy Fiddles* by Mark Williams; *Four Royal Dances* by Eric Ewazen; *La Rejouissance* from *Royal Fireworks Music* by George Frideric Handel; *Linus & Lucy* by V. Guaraldi, arr. B. Cerulli; *Rite at Stonehenge* by Elliot Del Borgo; *Rondo Joyoso* by H. B. Fisher; *Sahara Crossing* by Richard Meyer; *Shadow Dance* by Richard Meyer; *Stringtown Stroll* by Doris Gazda; *The Syncopated Clock* by Leroy Anderson, arranged by Bob Cerulli; and *Bach Brandenburg* arrangements by Merle Isaac.

This is a very limited list. Please feel free to contact me to suggest others. I would like to include a more comprehensive list in the next issue of *String Notes* and on the www.mnsota.org website.

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