

ALL-STATE: NEW MUSIC READING SESSION

RECOMMENDATIONS PART 2

compiled by Faith Farr

The New Music Reading Sessions are always an important part of the MNSOTA All-State Teachers Workshop. Here are the comments and suggestions from the August 2013 workshop compiled by Connie Aiken, Douglas Neill and Paul Boese. Where comments disagree, it's because the teachers have different students in mind!

** means recommended. Recommendations for Levels 1-2 and 3-4 were published in the fall issue of String Notes.*

Mixed Levels

J.C. Bach/arr. McCashin, *Allegro*. \$55.00. Gr 4. Shifting in 1st violin; very long. Good introduction to classical style and brush stroke bowings. Too difficult for middle school, but... Fun piece to play; will have whatever group can play it in the high school enjoying it!

Patrick Doyle/arr. Longfield, *Brave*. \$55.00. Maybe 8th grade—nice for a pop tune, violin and cello solos. Celtic-like middle part, boring bass part. This was not written with string needs in mind—odd bowings, etc. Students who know and love the movie will like it, but the music itself is only marginally memorable in my view.

arr. Mark Weston & Douglas E. Wagner, *Christmas Toys on Parade*. \$48.00. Gr 2½. Horrible 2nd violin part, not so great viola part. Nice selection of tunes but arrangement is not workable with kids. This piece works well for 7th and 8th grade. It could be well received if you get staff involved in the performance. *Toy Symphony* would be better.

*Jeff Frizzi, *Dance Rhythmico*. \$35.00. Good teaching piece, consider for 8th grade—short and rhythmic. Maybe for contest, has some bowing spots. 6th grade piece—right in their wheelhouse, but...too boring to capture the average 6th grader's attention.

*arr. Thom Sharp, *Dancing King Wenceslas*. \$48.00. Gr 2, should be 2½. Fun to play, all parts interesting. Consider this piece for the 8th grade holiday concert. I didn't write anything for this piece—only OK. The melody alone might be better!

*Deborah Baker Monday, *Dies Irae: Fantasia*. \$55.00. Gr 3. Adds historical element. Very nice arrangement, rich harmonies, consider for 8th grade, everyone has opportunities to be expressive. This is a neat piece, and Monday handles technical issues well for young orchestras. It would need some explanation—maybe play the students a recording of *Symphony Fantastique* and explain the history of the chant.

*Vince Gassi, *DNA*. \$45.00. Gr 1, good for 4th and 5th grades, interesting parts. A piece that would probably work. Technically perfect for late 5th grade or early 6th grade. Neat idea, D and A, but the kids would go, "Cool!" after the first reading, then get bored with it.

*Michael Hopkins, *The Frog Prince*. \$42.00. Yes! Clever and funny, Gr 1+, good for 6th grade elementary tour. All parts have interesting writing and narration part that is funny. I like pieces with narration—this one would be appropriate for early 7th grade. I think the students would find this to be a lot of fun—they like programmatic stuff, and this would fit that bill!

G.F. Handel/arr. Cerulli, *Hallelujah Chorus*. \$57.00. Gr 3½. 1st violin shifts lots, same as original but incorporates the choral parts. Similar to Frost arrangement but with better bowings. This would be best performed by a high school group, but it would take the right situation—like no available choir. You can't go wrong with Handel's best.

*Vance Zuehlsdorff/ed. Law, *Labyrinth*. \$50.00. Gr 2+. Maybe use for 7th grade, like *Halo*. Exciting, good rhythms and contrast, driving and aggressive; might be a concert opener. This piece may be marked easy, but I believe some of the rhythms call for 7th or 8th grade. This is the kind of dramatic piece that kids enjoy!

Leroy Anderson/arr. Wagner, *Themes from Leroy Anderson's Irish Suite, Part 2*. ME. \$63.00. With winds—we didn't read it. This piece will only work with winds—holes in the arrangement without them, and no remedy in the string parts. Not something that would hold the kids' attention.

arr. David Bobrowitz/ed. Law, *Loch Lomond*. \$40.00. OK arrangement, but seems disjointed in how variations connect with each other. The old arrangement that I have at school is better. This piece would work for the 7th or 8th grade orchestras in the middle school, but... The students

would like it better if they didn't have to face it! This is a very nice arrangement. It would be another good piece to teach expression.

W.A. Mozart/arr. Baker Monday, *March No. 1 in D Major*. \$52.00. Gr 4. OK for high school, adds col legno bowing for 2nd violin and viola. Not very Mozart-y. As with other Monday pieces, this works well for strings. It might be a bit beyond 8th grade, but they might be up to the challenge. Mozart always gets positive reviews as part of a varied concert! This was an interesting arrangement that could be played in middle school. We all were questioning the col legno section.

Franz Schubert/arr. Cerulli, *Marche Militaire Op. 51, No. 1*. \$48.00. Gr 2½ — style is harder than 2½, should be at least a level 3. Some ½ position and tricky rhythms and bowings. This is a good arrangement, strong as Schubert arrangements go. The students will like it, but there are already good arrangements of this piece!

Richard Meyer. *Minotaur*. \$60.00. Gr 4. Nice concert piece for high school, too long for middle school attention span, solid writing, strong ending. Richard Meyer always writes well for string orchestra, and the technical issues are appropriate for young high school, but... This piece seems a bit overblown. He took a mediocre idea and constructed an entire piece around it. Meh.

W.A. Mozart/arr. Hoffman, *Overture to The Magic Flute*. \$50.00. This would work well for 8th grade—technical issues are not too challenging. Kids will like the work, especially when the story is explained with the music.

arr. Brian Balmages, *Rest Ye Merry, Rock Ye Very*. \$50.00. OK arrangement but doesn't meet our program needs around the holidays.

James Curnow, *Sagebrush*. \$40.00. Has percussion also, OK piece, not super exciting. Western feel—not an arrangement that my kids would love (in contrast to

Viola Country). This is a pretty good piece for late 6th grade or early 7th grade, and a good stylistic break from most of the other works. Again, as part of a varied program, this piece would fit well and be enjoyed by the students! Violins get all of the work. This piece could be used in an elementary ensemble that has strong violins but maybe not much else.

Keiko Yamada, *Samurai*. \$40.00. Hard driving, elementary or 6th grade. Asian culture feel, singable melody. Good string writing, understands young string playing issues. This will be the kind of dramatic work 6th graders will really get into—on this kind of work they fell like they're playing movie music!

Michael Story, *The Tell-Tale Heart*. \$48.00. Nice 1st, 2nd, viola but cello, bass do very little, not balanced parts. Could be a good connection with literature classes. I didn't write anything for this—not sure why—it must not have been memorable in any appreciable way! It has a middle schoolish appeal. It would be a good opportunity to incorporate visual art. It would also help players to find appropriate colors and mood in telling this classic story.

Eclectic Styles

Alan Silvestri/arr. Moore, *The Avengers*. \$45.00 ME. Decent for high school, hard for middle school. OK arrangement as far as movie music goes. Too difficult for 7th grade; not enough of a payoff. Decent bass part, but the music isn't memorable enough.

Bert Ligon, *Cascade*. \$59.00 M. Awkward, even hard for teachers to read. Rhythmically difficult without much interesting material. Too difficult for 7th grade; wouldn't grab their attention. It would be a stretch technique-wise.

Terry Rendall & Werner Thomas/arr. Moore, *The Chicken Dance*. \$45.00 E. Gr

2. Already used at my school. Fun for an elementary tour. This would be great for 6th grade; gotta get my colleague to play his accordion! It wouldn't teach anything new, but that's OK here. The kids would love it.

Matt Turner, *Chicken Foot Transplant*. \$50.00 ME. Jazz that is playable with some optional solos. Chromatics, a bit repetitive. The 8th grade may handle it. I like the idea, but it wasn't executed with the needed flare for middle schoolers.

Richard Meyer, *Chins and Pins*. \$42.00 VE. Gr 0.5. Musical conversation between upper and lower strings. Cute, nice for elementary. 6th grade could handle it well. Good idea again—trade off between violin/violas and cello/bass. Hence chins and pins. But the music isn't as good or attention getting as the concept.

***Richard Meyer, *El Gato Pizzicato*.** \$42.00 E. *The Cat* piece—with special effects. Funny and fun to play. Maybe for 5th grade. Cute, 6th grade handles it well. Not Richard Meyer's best. Kids might enjoy it.

Jeff Frizzi, *Goblin Boogie*. \$40.00 E. OK for the Boogie part but 2nd violin has a very limited range. OK for 5th/6th grades. This could be great for the October concert with 6th grade. The boogie style will catch the kids' attention.

***Bob Phillips, *Jingle Basses*.** \$45.00 VE. Maybe for 6th grade holiday concert; bass gets the *Jingle Bells* at the end; fun arrangement, better than the one we use now. Bob Phillips is a creative arranger. Too easy for 6th grade at Christmas, but might be worth it anyway.

arr. Victor Lopez, *Last Friday Night (T.G.I.F.) / Edge of Glory*. \$60.00 ME. High school level, full orchestra or string. Improper words b**** out; not appropriate. Might be OK for 8th grade pops. Challenging. The students will know it—but well enough to play it?

***arr. Bob Phillips, *Monster Mash*.** \$45.00 ME. Gr 2½. There is a speaking part that goes throughout the piece. Syncopation, repetitive, very fun, maybe use for fall concert for 8th grade. Playable by 7th grade, too repetitive. Good with cuts. I think the kids will like it.

Darren Mitchell, *Pizzicato Blues*. \$50.00 M. Pizz goes for 2 pages at a fast speed and fingers wear out! Too repetitive. Too difficult for any orchestra at the middle school. High school kids might enjoy the relative novelty.

Jeffrey Bishop, *Revenge of the Red Pepper*. \$45.00 ME. Gr 2½. OK for a group that reads well, otherwise they would lose interest by the time they perform it. Tricky rhythm. The 8th grade may handle it.

David Bobrowitz/ed. Law, *Scenes of the Old West*. \$60.00 ME. Easier than Copland but sounds like Copland. Maybe for high school more than middle school. It would be a bit of a stretch for the 8th grade, but they could do it. It could grab some imaginations.

Adele Adkins & Paul Epworth/arr. Larry Moore, *Skyfall*. \$45.00 M. OK arrangement for 8th grade if kids like this movie and want to play the music from it. Need drum set. OK satisfying to play. Too difficult for any middle school orchestra in the whole, however sections may be doable in the pops concert for 8th grade. Anything with the movies can work—this one is OK in that genre.

***arr. J. Cameron Law, *Spider Web*.** \$40.00 VE. Gr 1, should be 0.5. Fun. Does the fly or the spider win? Who gets a meal? This is very appropriate for 1st year players. It features a bass player. OK for 6th grade, maybe early 7th.

Faith Farr has served as editor of this magazine since 1996. †