

HEY ORCHESTRA TEACHER, CAN WE PLAY THIS SONG AT OUR NEXT CONCERT? I HEARD IT ON SPOTIFY!

(Uncovering, adapting, and creating contemporary pop tune arrangements for your ensemble)

by Nick Gaudette

How many times have you been approached by students asking if you can play the hit song on social media at your next concert? You can make your students' dreams come true by following these tips, tricks, and hacks! Before we begin, make sure and remember these 3 very important rules to help guide you through the process while maintaining your already rigorous teaching schedule:

#1 - Know your own limits and abilities.

Your limits could be that you are willing to play the requested song so long as there is sheet music available. Predetermine the amount of time and energy that you are willing to set aside to either search for or create a new arrangement.

#2 - Make sure you have tools that match your ability and skills.

There are so many fantastic music writing apps out there that can do a wide variety of tasks. Maybe you need something that can do single line writing. Perhaps all you need is a grand staff to work with. Or maybe you are well versed in the latest Finale Print Music program. Whatever your situation, make sure that you are comfortable with the tools you have before pursuing any pop tune arranging. I would refrain from buying the most elaborate software with all the bells and whistles unless you already know how to use it.

#3 - Set aside the time in the day to create the arrangement.

Sure - this sounds like a very simple practice. But it is also the most important guide to follow. Chipping away at an arrangement over the course of 1 or 2 months is easier than a one-night cram session. We wouldn't prescribe that type of learning when assigning a solo piece, so the same principle applies here. As you work over an extended period of time, you may have ideas that pop up on how to enhance the creation. This is all part of the "polishing" process and can take your arrangement to the next level.

With these rules in mind, let's begin.

Step 1: Uncovering

I would recommend starting with vendors like JW Pepper or Sheet Music Plus. Open up a search bar and start browsing their selections to see if the song exists. The benefit of using a major vendor like Pepper is that you can find age and ability appro-

priate songs if your desired piece is in their catalogue. If it doesn't exist, open up your favorite search bar menu and start typing in as many searches as you can think of. Try typing "YOUR SONG" followed by "string orchestra PDF" or "string quartet" or "orchestra sheet music." Make sure to go through the multiple pages of the search. If nothing comes up, take a pause and review rule #1. Know Your Limits.

Step 2: Adapting

In this step, we'll discuss how to start laying the groundwork for creating your own arrangement. Go back to your search bar and type in "YOUR SONG" followed by "Piano" or "Easy Piano PDF". If it's a popular song, more than likely a piano arrangement will exist. Once you procure some type of piano part and you have the ability and the tools to create an arrangement (don't forget rule #2 - Have tools that match your ability), then you can begin extracting a melody and harmony line. Fire up your workstation and start pulling apart the top line. Don't dwell on the use of parallel motion — you are not in professor Allegro's theory class and your students likely won't know the difference!

Step 3: Creating

Creating may be your biggest obstacle to overcome, however you may already have the information needed to extract a string arrangement. Check out this excerpt from the *Sound of Silence* covered by the metal band Disturbed. In Example 1, the top line becomes the melody, and the bass line becomes the harmony. Remember that you can create an arrangement with just Melody and Harmony! But if you have the time, energy and skills, you can go deeper. You could place the top line with violin 1, assign the staff bass line to the cello and/or string bass, and have either violas or cellos cover the middle harmonies. When I am creating an arrangement, I'll usually create a 3-part arrangement first and double up on

the orchestral roles. I'll give all violins the melody, all violas the middle harmony, and all the cellos and bass players the bottom bass line. Keep in mind that string bass players will sound an octave lower than the cellos when reading identical parts in unison.

If you have more time and you want to split the arrangement for the traditional forces of a string orchestra, you can create a violin 2 line by dropping down a third from the melody. In the last three measures of Example 2, you can see the addition of a note series under the original melodic line. These notes share the same rhythmic and stepwise direction of the original melody. This is a very simple step in creating a harmonic counterpart to the melodic line. A good practice after creating a new line is to sit at a piano or listen to your program's playback function to make sure the chord structure sonically fits with your intention. If an added note is off (perhaps the melodic note is not part of the chord), feel free to change it by half step or whole step until it pleases your ears. If you don't like the outcome, you can always double up the melody for 1 or 2 notes.

Tools:

It's an amazing time for apps and programs. Unlike your first exposure to Finale or Sibelius years ago, we are not limited to the gigantic professional (and extremely expensive) computer software to create music notation. Don't let the software become a barrier. There are many programs out there to choose from that can match your ability as well as your budget! Here is a very short list and description of programs available. Please note that there are many programs beyond this list that you can easily search for on the internet:

Finale & Sibelius

These two programs are the industry's standard go-to programs. Both are loaded with all the bells and whistles to create pro-

fessional notation. Both have a very steep learning curve.

Logic Pro X

This is an audio recording program for apple OSX that can also export to sheet music. This function is harder to find, but if you are a Mac user, you can input all the notes with midi and export to sheet music!

Muscore

This is a browser-based program that allows you to create works and share in an online forum. Muscore is subscription based.

Noteflight

This is also a browser-based program that works on Chromebook. Noteflight also offers school and district licenses for classroom seats. This is a great option when exploring student-driven work or additional units on compositions.

Notion

This really 2 programs under the same name. You can purchase this program for PC and Tablet by Presonus. This program is very affordable and has the ability to work between tablet and PC. Note entry is unique and very intuitive!

I would like to take a moment and share my experience with Notion for iOS. I was

an avid Finale user until I decided to turn my workstation into an iPad years back for the versatility, affordable applications, and endless number of programs. The only way I was able to make the switch was because of Notion for iOS by Presonus. This program has skeletal works for all music transcription needs. Notion for iOS can even open and export XML files! If you know what the XML format is, then you likely know the importance of this file type.

Notion for iOS starts at \$15 and will give you the tools needed to transcribe notation across multiple staves and instruments. You can pay for add-ons which will unlock the many sounds of the orchestra and keyboard instruments, but it doesn't cost to notate these instruments on the staff. My favorite writing tool that Notion offers is the stylist entry. With an Apple Pencil, I am able to write out notation on the tablet and within a second, the program converts my handwriting into digital notation so long as I write neatly and stay close within the lines or spaces. I also have the ability to change lines by intervals from minor seconds to octaves. I can switch instruments, drag notes up and down the staff, change the tuning, key signatures or time signatures and draw in articulations such as accents and slurs. The areas where the Notion tablet program lacks is the measure formatting

and sizing.

Notion also has a desktop version of the program (separately priced around \$100) where you can seamlessly share files back and forth from tablet to desktop. When I struggle with measure and staff sizing/formatting on the tablet, I fire up the desktop version, share the file, and put the final touches on the work before printing out to share! If you have any questions about Notion, please feel free to email. I fully support this program for its creative note entry input and extremely intuitive user interface.

Getting students involved:

Remember rule #3: set aside the time to work on an arrangement. Perhaps you lack the time in the day to search for or create new arrangements. Getting students involved in the process can enhance a personalized learning experience for your program! Here are a few tips on how to engage this process with your students:

- *Include your students' searching abilities to uncover arrangements.* Have them look for their own selections but give them parameters such as "Must have all parts available for purchase" or "must be on JW Pepper".
- *Invite students to assist in the transcribing.* Do your students already have Noteflight seats? Ask a group to input the desired line into a program for you to rearrange later!
- *Ask for your students' input throughout the entire process.* By involving your students in the process, you may be training future composers and arrangers!

The process of Uncovering, Adapting, and Creating contemporary pop tune arrangements can be extremely rewarding for all the stake holders. While the process can seem daunting at times, the outcome has lasting effects and can potentially help maintain interest and enrollment in your program. As a grade 10-12 orchestra director, I have found it important and necessary to incorporate an all student centered concert for all my groups at least once a school year. This keeps students involved and gives them shared ownership over the process of creating and curating a concert. If you would like to know additional information on what these concerts look like and the planning process, please feel free to reach out to me anytime.

Example 1

Melody

42

peo-ple hear-ing with-out lis-ten-ing, peo-ple writ-ing songs that voic-es nev-er share.

Harmony 1 & 2

Bass

Example 2

Melody

42

peo-ple hear-ing with-out lis-ten-ing, peo-ple writ-ing songs that voic-es nev-er share.

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

Upright Bass

Harmony 1 & 2

Bass

Nicholas Gaudette is in his 6th year at Edina High School as the lead orchestra director. Before teaching full time, Nick was an active hybrid musician in the Twin Cities music

scene as a classical/jazz/studio bass player for various ensembles and regional theaters. He is also a writer, composer and collaborator with modern dance. Nick is a Cedar Com-

mission Artist, a Minnesota State Arts Board recipient, an Edina Ed Fund recipient, an electric bicyclist (past motorcyclist), and avid outdoors person. †

Do I Have Permission to Program or Create Pop Tune Arrangements?

by Nick Gaudette

If you followed my article above about creating pop tune arrangements, you might find yourself asking questions about licensing regarding the creation and programming of pop-tunes. Here is a short understanding of what I have come to know regarding the creation of pop-tune arrangements. This overview will be brief with the hopes that you can explore some of these topics that may stem from your questions.

To start, let's unpack a few points of interest:

- Anything that is of public domain can be used without permission. Public domain refers to work that does not hold any intellectual property rights.
- If you (the arranger) plan to make and or sell an arrangement you created of a work not under public domain, you must contact either the original artist or publisher that owns the work for permission.
- The publisher (or artist) of a work under copyright has the right to accept or refuse your permission.
- If you create an arrangement of a work without permission and a publisher chooses to file an infringement, the publisher has 5 years from the date of the infringement to do so. You (the arranger) are not liable for anything created 5 years after the date of creation.
- Anyone can pay for a blanket license with a publisher or company to use any number of songs. Think of a major chain restaurant that wants to play music during their brunch. The company or owner is likely paying a blanket license yearly to have rights to play music in their place of patronage.

What could warrant a possible infringement?

- Creating an arranged work to sell for profit to other ensembles
- Creating a produced professional recording (CD or record) to sell for monetary value
- Creating a produced professional recording to post on social media for monetary value (YouTube channel with ads)

If you are still concerned about your arrangement and possible copyright infringement, take note of the “Fair Use” clause (more information found at this site <http://www.acappella01.com/home/fair-use-using-others-works-without-permission-or-payment>). *Fair Use* is

not well defined and in many ways is open to complete interpretation. It's important to note that under the Fair Use clause, “if the work is used for scholarship, research, or teaching—it is not an infringement.” However, if you were approached by a publisher with a copyright infringement after creating an arrangement of a work without permission, there are some details that would help you defend your use under the Fair Use clause. If you create an arrangement of a work to use in a classroom as a unit or lesson, and then have your summative unit be the performances, that is potentially an exemption of the copyright laws and you are more than likely able to claim Fair Use.

For example:

If you are summoned for an infringement because you played a pop tune on a concert, you could say, “As a public school entity (a nonprofit school) as well as an educational co-curricular daily ensemble class, I am using the work under the Fair Use guidelines. I am using the work as an educational unit/lesson to teach bowing articulation for a summative end of unit concert. I am not collecting monetary value from the song itself and I do not plan on selling my arrangement to anyone.”

Your recorded work may be on YouTube and “flagged” for possible copyright claims, however most channels with minimal views are likely not generating advertising revenue. You could also claim that the purpose of the YouTube recording is that it's a classroom artifact and musical reference created by your ensemble that is cataloged so that it can be accessible to students in and out of the classroom.

Are you off the hook?

Who knows! The likelihood of a school or organization being targeted by a major publisher is low, however not impossible. If a school was targeted, every time a pop song is used within the walls of the school would be under scrutiny. Are the dance teams paying for the use of songs at a competition? Does the student council pay for licenses to use songs during a pep-fest? Are student video presentations that include pop songs created for classroom presentations paying for license use? This truly could turn into a rabbit hole, and you may be the only one that can determine to what length you are willing to go to pay for arrangement and licensing rights.