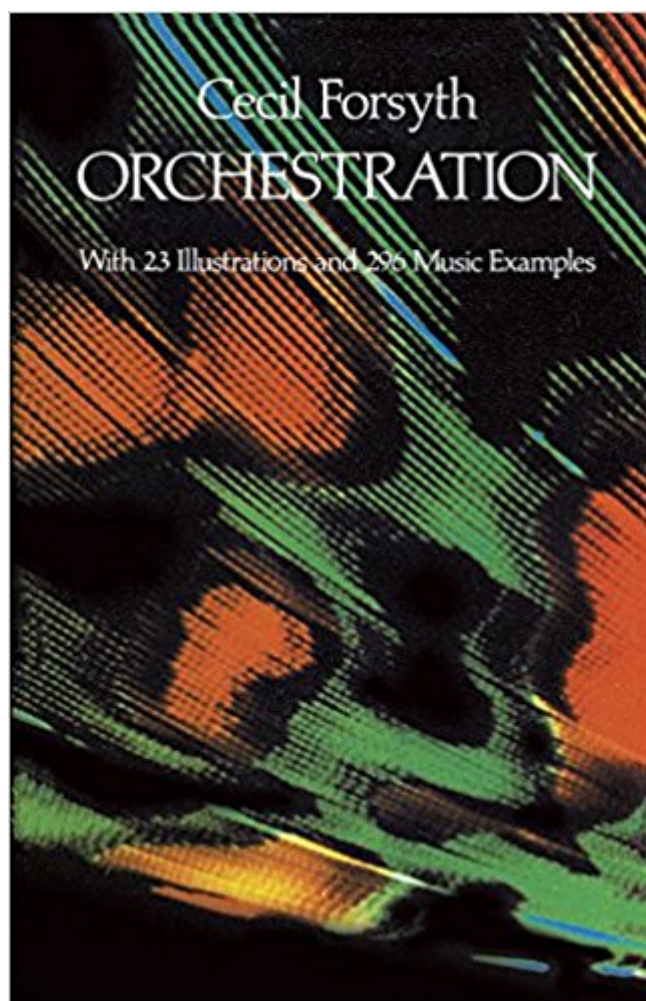


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Orchestration (Dover Books On Music)



Synopsis

"For its time the most comprehensive treatment of the subject." — New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians

Before the 17th century, composers seldom indicated in their music whether the composition was to be performed by a particular combination of voices or instruments. Then in 1607 Monteverdi made a well-known suggestion for the orchestration of his opera *Orfeo*. And as the Baroque era unfolded, the concept of orchestrations began to evolve, achieving a notable clarity and the acceptance of a keyboard instrument as an integral part of the ensemble. Toward the middle of the 18th century, stylistic changes in instrumental music, e.g. styles that emphasized a single melodic line, directly affected methods of orchestration; while in the 19th century, orchestrations became an ever more vital factor in the composer's technique, a stylistic determinant that places a wealth of possibilities at his disposal. Finally, in the early 18th century, increasing awareness of the importance of internal balance, certain ideals of blended sound, and firmly established instrumental characteristics enabled orchestration to take its place as an academic discipline beside harmony and counterpoint.

In this classic manual, a noted English composer describes 57 orchestral instruments (ca. 1914) tracing their origins, development, and status at the beginning of World War I. Not only are the history and evolution of each instrument fully discussed, the author also explores the techniques of each instrument, as well as players' impressions about what they must play. The result is an unparalleled insight into the inner working of an orchestra — a vivid impression of what it is like to be a violinist, clarinetist, trombonist, or other orchestral player.

While there have been numerous developments in instrumental technique on an individual basis since the book's first publication, most of what Forsyth says is still valid. Writing with wit, grace, and good sense, Forsyth created a formidably thorough, comprehensive, and informative text that has instructed and influenced generations of composers, conductors, musicians, and musicologists.

Book Information

Series: Dover Books on Music

Paperback: 592 pages

Publisher: Dover Publications; Revised ed. edition (October 1, 1982)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0486243834

ISBN-13: 978-0486243832

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 1.2 x 8.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 23 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #252,565 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #43 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Classical > Chamber Music #153 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Theory, Composition & Performance > Composition #749 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > History & Criticism

Customer Reviews

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Even if this book has been around for quite a while, it's still very useful for a musician looking to understand the instruments, rather than dig into orchestration. It even has dad-style jokes on it, that adds to its charm (see the picture).

This is a classic work that breaks down the sections of the orchestra, with descriptions and histories of each instrument that makes up the percussion, string, woodwind, and brass section. It also includes unusual instruments like bagpipes. It details the range of each instrument and includes examples of notation for each.

I find this book very interesting and informative. Definitely, in order to write truly superb orchestrations one must work with actual instrumentalists, but for preliminary details and such, this book is a great reference in regards to the information contained within it not to mention its historical value.

recommended by Henry Mancini and Nelson Riddle

Lots of great information

This book was purchased for adding to the collection of references used by an associate who is a composer/musician. The material is excellent and was immediately put to use.

While Forsythe offers a great deal of depth and detail, much of it I found superfluous unless you are a musicologist, and I am a musicologist. But now my primary interest is orchestrating. The author includes too much historical background on the various instruments, such as the evolution of the horn, which you only need to know if you are analyzing Hadyn symphonies. If you are orchestrating a new symphony, you need to know current instrumental capabilities and practices, and the Forsythe book is now nearly 100 years old. Most of his information remains valid, but how will you know what isn't? I read this and a few other classics (Berlioz/Strauss, Rimsky, Piston) -- all of which are worthwhile -- before getting some coaching from a composition professor, who recognized that I needed a newer text. He recommended Adler or Kennan. So I bought the fourth edition of Kennan's orchestration book, a good place to start. Continue later with Forsythe and the others once you've acquired the up-to-date basics.

The introduction to Cecil Forsyth's "Orchestration" is by William Bolcolm, a prominent American composer very much of our time. (His opera "A View from the Bridge" premiered November 1999 and was favorably reviewed in "Newsweek", "Time Magazine", and "The New York Times.") As

William Bolcolm points out, very little of this book is out of date--a few tiny, insignificant bits; it remains "eminently usable". It also remains head and shoulders above the scores of tedious, dull, and perfunctory orchestration manuals subsequently published. One of its many virtues is its immersion in what Mr. Bolcolm calls "technical culture": It imparts to you a sense of what it's like to play the various orchestral instruments. Future fetishists (those wishing to obliterate the past and present in sacrificial rite to a future they can know as little as you and I) take note: what is best is what endures.

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