

The Modern Band Transcription

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A. History

- a. History of the Transcription
 - i. Transcriptions have been an important part of band literature since the beginning of the organized wind ensemble
 - ii. Sousa began by writing transcriptions before composing original music
 - iii. The “classic” transcription originated in the 20’s, 30’s and 40’s
- b. How the “Band Sound “ has changed
 - i. The size of the typical band has changed dramatically, from large Symphonic Band to smaller Wind Ensemble
 - ii. Most of the early “classic” transcriptions were written for very large bands
 - iii. Instrumentation differences,
 - a. Woodwind Choir
 - b. Brass instrumentation
 - c. Percussion involvement
- c. Musical Values have continually evolved over the past 60 years
 - i. Transcriptions are no longer required for most performance assessments
 - ii. Current tastes favor many recent composers , (Bernstein, Barber, Adams, etc.)
 - iii. Movie Scores, (John Williams, James Horner, etc.) are attractive to our bands, and these transcriptions are now widely available
 - iv. Transcriptions can provide a “fresh” sound when compared to contemporary grade 2, 3 band works, which can tend to sound alike
 - v. Often the transcription provides our only link to many of the great works of orchestral literature

B. Goals for Transcriptions

a. Types of New Transcription

i. "Authentic"

1. No restrictions, should be as close to the original as possible
 - a. e.g. John Williams Signature Editions transcriptions for the Marine Band, including *The Cowboys*, *E.T. Adventures on Earth*, and *Raider's March*
2. New ways of looking at original material
 - a. Experiment with color and dynamics
 - b. e.g. Grainger's folk song transcriptions

ii. Grade 3-4 "Lite" Transcription

1. Some range and technical restrictions, often shortened in length
2. Stay aurally true to original
3. Don't change the power and emotion of the source

iii. Grade 1-2 "Highlights From"

1. Significant range and technical restrictions

iv. Flex-Band

1. As true as possible to the original, but with range, time, and technical restrictions
2. Five voices or less, plus percussion
3. Abundant doublings to cover deficiencies in instrumentation

b. Goals of today's Transcriptions

- i. Make sure that the musical integrity of the original is still present in your transcription, regardless of the grade
- ii. When you look at a score, every note has equal value, but when you hear it, that isn't necessarily true. Don't let these facts get in the way of the truth!
- iii. Aim for seamless transitions when shortening a piece
- iv. Write in the style of the composer
- v. Simplify without sacrificing the musical intent (Grade 3 examples)

Elsa's Procession to the Cathedral, R. Wagner

Variations on a Theme By Thomas Tallis, R. V. Williams

Dies Irae, G. Verdi

Crown Imperial, W. Walton

Procession of the Nobles, N. Rimsky Korsakov

Nessun Dorma, Puccini

The Firebird Suite, I Stravinsky

Nimrod, (flex-band)