

## **FLEXible Solutions for NON-Perfect Instrumentation**

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**Problem Statement:** All music teachers deal with instrumentation problems for band and orchestra no matter where they teach. Flexible instrumentation solutions are a necessity for small bands and orchestras, rural communities, urban school populations, and even the largest and most successful programs in the country. Nobody is exempt from exploring these solutions to reach every student.

### **Survey Study:**

I conducted a survey in the Fall of 2021. All respondents identified as rural, or small program teachers. The survey was simple. It asked directors to report the number of students in their primary band ensemble. The survey conducted across 29 states regarding instrumentation in music ensembles and had 89 respondents. Using this data, I created a hypothetical ensemble using the following numbers from the survey results:

2 Flutes

2 Clarinets

0 Bass Clarinets

0 Oboes

0 Bassoons

2 Alto Saxophones

1 Tenor Saxophone

0 Bari Saxophones

3 Trumpets

0 Horns

2 Trombones

1 Euphonium/Baritone

0 Tubas

2 Percussionists

**Flex Arrangements:** These types of arrangements adopt a 4-6 parts for winds and strings + percussion. They are flexible, but limited to the parts that are written. For example, a flute player may be limited to just parts 1 and 2, and a trombone player may be limited to the lower parts.

**Fully Adaptable Arrangements:** These arrangements can be played by any combination of players of any instrument. Every instrument has every part available to them. These arrangements are especially useful for very small programs with non-perfect instrumentation.

### **Resources to Find Flex Band and Adaptable Band Pieces:**

- Look for the upcoming book “FLEXible Solutions for NON-Perfect Ensembles” by GIA publishing, with an anticipated publish date of December 2024. This book will have a list of representative pieces appropriate for smaller ensembles, along with analysis, rehearsal strategies, and ways to prepare this music.

- Every major publisher, arranges and publishes Flex pieces. Visit their booths and ask for their flex library options. Kaiser/Southern Music and Hal Leonard have particularly robust flex catalogs.

### **Flexible warmups and method books**

- Progressive Musical Studies by Brian Thompson (booth number ?), These books are fully adaptable arrangements of Sousa marches, broken down in many ways that are both educational and helpful when learning march style. Have every member learn every part. Play the march as a chorale and more.

Special thanks to Keiser/Southern Music for providing some of the music for this session and for sponsoring the clinic.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or to start a discussion surrounding these topics. I would love to hear from you.