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# Arranging Game Music for Orchestra

— A How-To Guide! —

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# What We Will Learn

- Orchestration Basics
  - Each instrument family's role in the orchestra
  - Basics of writing for each instrument
- Adapting looping music as concert music
- Necessary changes for real musicians



# Orchestration Basics



## ORCHESTRATION

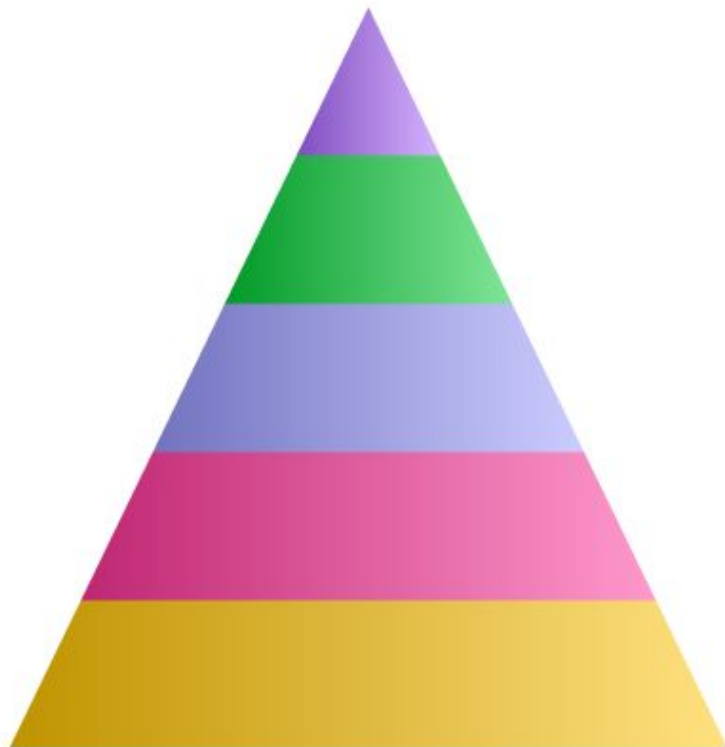
■ STRINGS

■ WOODWINDS

■ BRASS

■ PIZZ. STRINGS

■ PERCUSSION



# Role of Each Instrument Family

- Strings- The body of the orchestra, to be heard basically throughout a piece.
- Woodwinds- Add color to string melodies, strengthen strings.
- Brass- BRASSTOWN USA, add color, bombastic moments
- Percussion- Accents, color
- Saxes- Treated as wind/brass, flexibility.



# Quick Orchestration Ideas- Strings

- Suited for many types of melodies (lyrical, playful, staccato, etc)
- Can play fast runs effectively
- Very versatile in what they can play (violins and violas mostly)
- Cellos + Basses expected to hold down bassline
- Can be played pizzicato as well (plucked strings).



# Quick Orchestration Ideas- Woodwinds

- Please allow breathing time!
- Flutes/Clarinets/Bassoons have great agility, more so flutes.
- Ranges have different attainable dynamics
- Different characteristics in various ranges.
- Can be implemented for a wide variety of melodies.
- Add color to strings.
- Bassoons blend nicely with cello + contrabass.



# Quick Orchestration Ideas- Brass

- Please allow ample breathing time, more than winds even.
- Need more rest than winds.
- Great dynamic range, but remember that brass is much louder than winds or strings.
- Doesn't blend with strings well without woodwinds.
- Adds a lot of color/dynamics.
- Great at exciting moments.
- Can also be lyrical.





# Quick Orchestration Ideas- Percussion

- Huge variety of instruments to add color to your piece.
- Save for special moments.
- Take advantage of the variety of instruments.
- Be aware of how many percussionists your group has and allow ample switching time for different instruments.



# Adapting Game Music For the Concert Hall



# Game Music VS. Concert Music

- Game music is set to loop, while concert music obviously does not.
- Therefore, game music adapted for the concert hall usually needs to be modified into a non-looping piece of music.
- Most game loops don't typically have dynamic shape, whereas concert music should.



# Ideas For Adapting Looping Tracks

- Try re-orchestrating melodies differently a second time (different instrumentation, dynamics, expression, harmony, etc)
- Tag endings for interest.
- Your track doesn't have to end like the game's track (because they don't end)- consider big chords, fermatas etc to make it more conclusive.



# Making Friendly Music for Real Musicians



# Why Game Music Sometimes Isn't Playable

- Not usually written in consideration for real musicians
  - Too fast
  - Difficult keys
  - Not written with instruments in mind
- NOTE- More modern game music is orchestral/written for real musicians, so this may not always be a concern.



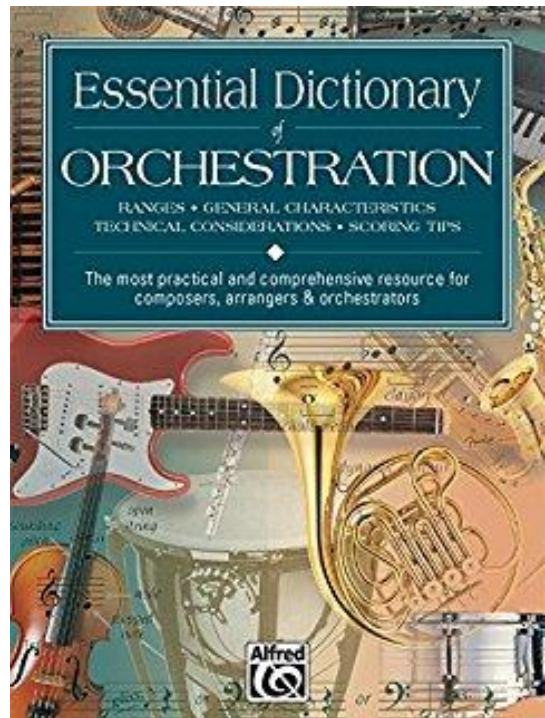
# Modifications You Can Make

- Slower Tempos
- Transpose Up/Down a half step into a more friendly key
- Assuring melodies are written for a suitable instrument- study the melodies and really try to think of what instrument is best suited for them.
- Adding harmonies- NES music especially is a bit bare-bones.



# General Tips!

- Get an orchestration book!
- Listen to the source music a lot and play the game it comes from.
- Ask a musician if you are not familiar with their instrument.
- Realize that what sounds good in Finale or Sibelius may not sound good IRL.



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**THANK YOU**