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ORCHESTRATION

handbook

The Essential Guide to Every
Instrument in the Orchestra



by Don B. Ray, M.A.

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From Hal Leonard : The Orchestration Handbook: The Essential Guide to Every Instrument in the Orchestra before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Orchestration Handbook: The Essential Guide to Every Instrument in the Orchestra:

35 of 37 people found the following review helpful. Flawed; Questionable Information By Adam Bolli typically don't review products like this, however, I found this orchestration manual by accident while searching for a different title. Anyone thinking about purchasing this book needs to know a few things about its content, and the somewhat serious flaws it contains. Examples follow: 1) This manual is designed for the composer/orchestrator who specializes in professional film music (most orchestrators would not appreciate the 16 out of 72 pages dedicated to click track tables and film length conversion charts, but if you need one, it can be found in this book). 2) The ranges listed for many instruments were not accurate - sometimes the range printed was the transposed range, and others it was an untransposed range. There was no way of knowing which range was appropriate unless you already knew what the range of the particular instrument was - not very useful for a novice orchestrator (and confusing for a more experienced one). The ranges (transposed or untransposed) could easily be disputed in most cases. 3) The clefs corresponding to particular instruments were sometimes downright WRONG! Mr. Ray seems to think that French horns play in alto clef (horn players NEVER play in alto clef). Concerning that error, my book actually had a publisher-produced correction sticker over the more accurate (printed) horn range chart - I peeled away the alto clef sticker to find (after badly scarring a page in my book) a range which was at least in the correct clef, although somewhat lacking in accuracy. 4) For as picky as the author seemed to be on some areas of orchestration and detailed instrument descriptions, there are errors such as the confusion of gongs and tam-tams as the same instruments. Anyone who has taken a basic percussion techniques class would tell you that a gong has an indefinite pitch, while tam-tams are pitched percussion instruments. 5) Important differences in instruments are sometimes neglected. For example, the author makes no mention or differentiation between the capabilities of a straight-bore tenor trombone and a tenor trombone with an F-attachment (trigger). This is important for determining range as well as playability of passages in the lower register. It is also a factor when writing for jazz ensemble (where straight-bore tenors are much more common) versus concert band or orchestra trombone sections. 6) Muting terms concerning brass instruments are not wholly accurate, nor is the factor of *time* in changing mutes mentioned. Four types of mutes are listed for the trumpet with a short (3-word) description following each. They are very uninformative for the most part. For the trombone, under "sordino" there is merely a "see trumpet" description of the muted effects (although the sound of mutes used with the two instruments varies quite a bit). I am not an expert in the field of orchestration, but I have found enough errors and omissions in this manual to cause me to question its integrity. Although I applaud the author for inserting some interesting and useful information not contained in some orchestration books, I could not with a clear conscience recommend this book to anyone who would like to study the art. Even though it may be a bit dry, a standard orchestration textbook like Kennan/Grantham's "Technique of Orchestration" would contain much more accurate and detailed information, while basic information for each instrument can still be readily accessed. If you still want to buy this book, I'll sell you my copy! This is definitely a purchase I regret.

(Reference). The Orchestration Handbook is an at-a-glance guide to the key elements in a musical score. Students and instructors alike will find this handbook indispensable for its clear, concise explanations of instrument characteristics, musical symbols, mood and dynamic indications, and tempo marks. Wondering if your melody can be doubled by clarinet and tenor trombone? Not sure of the difference between dolente and doloroso? The characteristics of every instrument and score marking are covered here. Designed in a unique 4-1/2 x 12 format, The Orchestration Handbook belongs on the music stand of every conductor, arranger and composer. Don B. Ray is the creator of the Film Scoring Program at UCLA's Department of the Arts and a retired Music Supervisor for the CBS television network.

About the Author Don B. Ray is the creator of the Film Scoring Program at UCLA's Department of the Arts and a retired Music Supervisor for the CBS television network.