

Learning Orchestral Excerpts 101

A basic guide by Prof Dade

When a student performs an orchestral excerpt for me, I want to hear the orchestral context as they play. In order to achieve this, students should not only practice the excerpts and learn the notes but also know the individual parts of the score and understand how the solo fits.

Here is a basic step-by-step guide so you will learn each excerpt thoroughly. If you have questions on specific excerpts, contact me: Dadea@missouri.edu

1. Listen to the entire piece (with a score) several times at least.
2. What other orchestral pieces did this composer write? Any historical significance to this piece? Anything in the composer's life affect their writing?
3. Identify the specific excerpt. Take note of the context.
 - a. How would this be conducted?
 - b. Is there room for rubato at any point?
 - c. Are you always the solo or do you switch roles between solo and accompaniment?
 - d. Are other melodies happening at the same time?
4. Start learning the excerpt slowly.
5.
 - a. Legato: Make sure each note is in tune while having a forward direction. First, try without vibrato and then add vibrato, checking to see if that changes intonation.
 - b. Technical: Learn slowly. Try playing it the opposite of its markings (slowly, slurred). Eventually play something in-between short articulation and long. Keep air pressure and support going through the notes. Remind yourself of this process (intermittently) as you bring up the tempo.
6. Record yourself playing the excerpt. Try to play parts of the contexts with your recording. Do you notice that you (in the recording) gain or lose time? Re-record until it is "easy" play with.
7. Are dynamics clear in the recording? How is your direction?
8. Check several recordings and find a *slow*, *medium*, and *fast* tempo.
9. Is my tempo and pulse stable? If there is an accel. or rit. marked, is it clear? Are fast notes even? Is there any compression?
10. How is my intonation?
11. Does my vibrato help the direction of the line?
12. Is the style correct? Consider differences between Beethoven and Stravinsky or Mozart and Bach. Do I understand these styles?
13. Am I convinced by my performance? Is it exciting or dramatic? Are dynamics clear?

SYMPHONY NO. 4 IN A MAJOR, "ITALIAN"

2nd VMT

FELIX MENDELSSOHN
(1809-1847)

Andante con moto

8

7

11

12

SHÉHÉRAZADE

3 Poèmes pour Chant et Orchestre

G^{des} FLûTES

MAURICE RAVEL

II. - La flûte enchantée

Très lent Solo

1 *p expressif*

1^{re} Fl. *mf*

2 **Allegro** *f*

ad lib. **Suivez** *rapide*

3 **Modéré** *p*

Très rall. *simili*

Lent *f*

Rit.

4 **Très lent** *pp*

5 *p*

Cédez 1^{er} Mouv! *pp expressif*

Chamber Symphony

1. Mongrel Airs

John Adams

$\text{♩} = 120-124$

198 5

Flute

p

207

210

217 *mf*

221

224

227

230 to Pic. trumpet Piccolo *ff*

238

244 *ff*