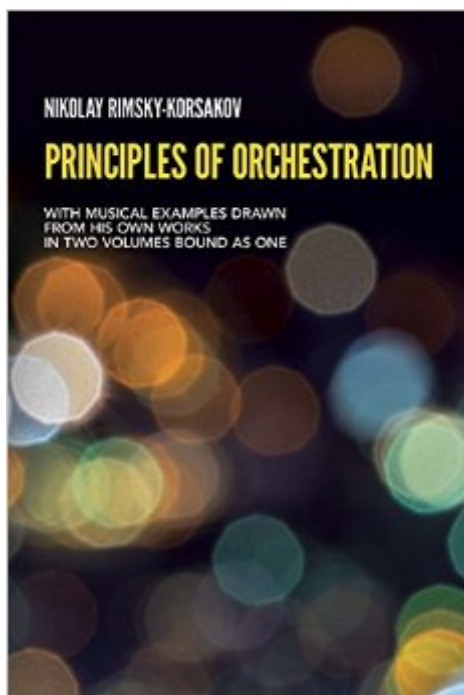


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Principles Of Orchestration (Dover Books On Music)



Synopsis

"To orchestrate is to create, and this cannot be taught," wrote Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, the great Russian composer whose genius for brilliant, highly colored orchestration is unsurpassed. But invention, in all art, is closely allied to technique, and technique can be taught. This book, therefore, which differs from most other texts on the subject because of its tremendous wealth of musical examples and its systematic arrangement of material according to each constituent of the orchestra, will undoubtedly be of value to any music student. It is a music classic, perhaps the only book on classical orchestration written by a major composer. In it, the composer aims to provide the reader with the fundamental principles of modern orchestration from the standpoint of brilliance and imagination, and he devotes considerable space to the study of tonal resonance and orchestral combination. In his course, he demonstrates such things as how to produce a good-sounding chord of certain tone-quality, uniformly distributed; how to detach a melody from its harmonic setting; correct progression of parts; and other similar problems. The first chapter is a general review of orchestral groups, with an instrument-by-instrument breakdown and material on such technical questions as fingering, range, emission of sound, etc. There follows two chapters on melody and harmony in strings, winds, brasses, and combined groups. Chapter IV, Composition of the Orchestra, covers different ways of orchestrating the same music; effects that can be achieved with full tutti; tutti in winds, tutti pizzicato, soli in the strings, etc.; chords; progressions; and so on. The last two chapters deal with opera and include discussion of solo and choral accompaniment, instruments on stage or in the wings, technical terms, soloists (range, register, vocalization, vowels, etc.), voices in combination, and choral singing. Immediately following this text are some 330 pages of musical examples drawn from "Sheherazade," the "Antar Symphony," "Capriccio Espagnol," "Sadko," "Ivan the Terrible," "Le Coq d'Or," "Mlada," "The Tsar's Bride," and others of Rimsky-Korsakov's works. These excerpts are all referred to in the text itself, where they illustrate, far better than words, particular points of theory and actual musical practice. They are largely responsible for making this book the very special (and very useful) publication it is. This single-volume edition also includes a brief preface by the editor and extracts from Rimsky-Korsakov's 1891 draft and final versions of his own preface, as well as an appended chart of single tutti chords in the composer's works.

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Customer Reviews

I purchased and read this book because of many recommendations from very different people, so clearly this is considered to be something of a cornerstone work in the world of orchestration books. The remarkable thing about this book is that it really does not go very in-depth about much at all. The purpose of this book is to inspire the reader and to generate a specific class of thinking which can achieve some very powerful results when effectively put into practice while composing. Some of the best things this book has to offer are ideas and concepts--like knowing exactly what type and size of orchestra should be playing a work from the moment composing begins rather than composing 4-part harmonies and then arranging them for the orchestra. This book is littered with similar words of wisdom. The greatest drawback to this book is in my opinion not, as others have mentioned before, the exclusive use of Nikolai's own works, but rather the fact that the art of orchestration is explained too broadly. This is not a good first book for a beginning orchestrator--it's an incredibly fantastic second or third supplementary read about orchestration that should not be overlooked by anybody. One example that stuck out to me was that Rimsky-Korsakov began writing about orchestrating for the harp, and completely omitted clarification about the harp's pedals and how they function and how they may be a limiting factor when orchestrating. He even mentioned that he would assume the reader is aware of the function of a harp's pedals. Similarly there was little to no mention about the tuning mechanism of the timpani, and I'm sure there are other examples that are just not coming to mind right at this moment.

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