

THE ART OF ARRANGING

Shirley M. Rider

Aron Copland once said that music is in a continual state of becoming. This is true, I believe, because of the unrelenting crescendo with which the symphony of life with melodic progression hastens to its finale. The largos and allegros of life move ever onward compelling men to adjust in what ever way they may to its demands. This reality may be found in many areas of life, but it is my intention to explore it in relation to music in the particular area of choral arranging. I have included a certain amount of material in the field of instrumental arranging but only to the extent that it is pertinent to the subject at hand and further helps to elucidate the given material. I have included choral arrangements to bear out points under discussion and have included appropriate instrumental arrangements to give freshness and appeal to well known compositions. These arrangements are my own original efforts and are placed on the staff in accordance with the rules of engraving approved by the national music organization in The United States Of America. These arrangements are not to be considered as an end in themselves but rather as a spring-board leading to further application of the

principles involved. They are also designed to be a direct teaching aid in my present position. This material is prepared according to the following premise and seeks to make that premise a vital reality in the life of the author and all who may find use for this study.

“Arrangement and adoption are the musical counterparts of literary translation. Voices or instruments are as languages by which the thought or emotions of composers are made known to the world; and the object of arrangement is to make that which was written in one musical language intelligible in another.” ¹

The purpose for which an arrangement will be used will decide the type of arrangement to be made. The two kinds of arrangements chiefly made are for study purposes and for public performance. An arrangement made for study purposes will be strict. It may be detracted from but not added to. Piano arrangements of operas, symphonies and quartets are of this type. However, arrangements for public performance are simple transcriptions in which the musical substance remains the same but is transformed to a new medium. In many cases this technique may be carried to the point of reworking the entire piece with changes.

Once an arrangement is under way, care must be given to many different factors if a satisfactory result is to be achieved. Range, voice leading, instruments involved, coloring desired and other factors enter into a choice of chord or harmonic doubling. Many times juxtaposition and interlocking methods are used. In the juxtaposition method, pairs of instruments are simply put side by side in the

1 Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians,
MacMillian and Company L. T. D., New York, St. Martin's Press 1954

THE ART OF ARRANGING

normal order of register. In the interlocking method, however, colors are mixed so a more homogeneous blend results. For example, g e and c g. In any event, balance and blend are always done with the greatest of care. The line of music rather than individual notes is very carefully guarded. Practical rather than extreme registers are used for both voices and instruments especially for non-professional groups. Tone color must be as carefully followed for voices as for instruments in the way of timbre, tessitura, vocal line and dynamic balance between sections. Dramatic expression must also be watched for voices and instruments alike. To master each of these fields and have a sure instinct and feel for each factor involved, one must have had a goodly amount of experience with performing groups. However, as it takes time to gain such experience, many times one is only saved by a through knowledge of the field of choral and instrumental arranging. A good basic knowledge of harmony, counterpoint, and the ranges and problems connected with the various instruments as well as a through knowledge of orchestration is necessary in order for one to be able to make sound decisions in the field of arranging. The basic terminology necessary for scoring and general understanding is also a prerequisite in doing a competent piece of work.

In order to make a successful arrangement, the principles of part writing must be carefully followed. The through knowledge of and strict adherence to the practical voice ranges has more to do with the successful performance of a composition than is generally supposed. It is unwise to ask even a professional group to sing beyond these ranges for more than a very short passage as prolonged singing in these registers will over-tax the voices. For this reason such writing

should be reserved for a climax or for special effects. Another fact sometimes even more unrecognized is that the previous statement is also true for instruments. Although it may be more emphatically true in the case of the wind instruments, it also may be said to be true of all of the instruments to varying degrees. No amount of practice or effort on the part of the group or the conductor will completely compensate for a basic disregard of instrumental and vocal ranges. Also it is necessary to note that given ranges must be further reduced when dealing with primary or early junior high voices giving due consideration to the unchanged voice. For example, where the practical range of the mature soprano voice is from the C below the treble staff to the G above the staff, the proper practical range for children's voices is from E on the staff to F. In short, the voice is kept on the staff in order not to strain the voice either upward or downward. Although a thorough expose of the field of the unchanged or otherwise immature voice is beyond the scope of this paper, a similar reduction of the practical ranges for each part that may be considered appropriate for a particular age group will be sufficient to avoid harming these delicate voices. It is common professional knowledge that a voice which is pushed to soon into ranges or dynamics beyond that which it is capable of will never reach its full capability and will reach an untimely end. This has been found to be only too true in the case of artists who sought roles beyond those which they were capable of at that particular time and finally awoke to find they were at the end of what might have been a promising career. If this is true of an artist who should know more about the use of the voice and should have far more training in using it safely, how much more careful must we be in the

THE ART OF ARRANGING

handling of young or otherwise immature voices. We must realize that the same thing is true of the instruments. We ignore this fact at our own peril. It is a basic part of the professional integrity of the conductor of choral and instrumental music to act responsibly with regard to these vital areas which affect each member of a group for better or for worse. Charts showing the practical and professional ranges of the voices and of the instruments generally used in every-day situations are shown in an appendix at the end of this study for convenient reference.

Once the range of the voices has been decided upon, care must be given to make each part move melodically and with smoothness. Instruments accompanying the voices may not disregard this principle though they may have more freedom of choice in some instances. There are various factors which will be helpful in achieving this goal, but diatonic movement and leaps of a third may always be safely usefully used. If a larger leap must be made, after it the melody should change direction. However it may continue on if it stays within the same chord. There are exceptions to these rules, but in general, it is wiser to stay within this framework.

Although almost any interval may be mastered after constant practice, it is wiser to avoid certain intervals especially for inexperienced groups. The most difficult intervals may be considered to be diminished fifths in a downward direction, augmented fourths in an upward direction, and augmented seconds either up or down. Although there are ways to overcome these situations, it is far wiser to avoid them from the beginning.

Another problem to be considered is that of voicing; whether open or close voicing will be used. Open voicing implies that the upper

three voices span more than an octave while close voicing implies that the three upper voices will be contained within an octave. Using both of these styles freely will result in interesting compositions. The only time when a change should be avoided is when a steady one color effect is desired. In any case, there should never be more than an octave separating any two adjacent vocal parts. The only exception to this might be for a short time when necessary for smooth voice leading. Usually it is more common for there to be a greater interval between the tenor and bass than between the other three parts. Due consideration should be given to the fact that the timbre of male and female voices is quite different when considering voicing and spacing. A good rule to remember is that the same pitch sung by a male voice will sound higher than if it is sung by a female voice. This factor may be used to good advantage when trying to emphasize a solo in the bass or tenor part. The relative intensity in the male voice is caused by the fact that a male voice may be near the top of his range when a female voice may be in a very comfortable part of her range. Thus, when all parts are in their middle range they will blend with equal intensity. The same is true for instruments to a degree.

Once the problems of voicing and spacing are in hand, care must be given to the matter of doubling. Basically, the first, fourth and fifth steps of the scale. So, in the I, IV and V triads, the root is doubled in root position, while either the root or fifth may be doubled in inversions. The third can't be doubled especially in the first inversion with the third in the bass. However, in the II, III, and VI triads, the third is the best tone to double. The root may also be doubled, and in inversions the fifth may also be doubled.

THE ART OF ARRANGING

These rules apply for the most part to both major and minor triads. There is one chord which does not react in this way however. The II chord in minor keys is diminished and thus must be inverted. It is best to double the third or the root in this case. In V^7 chords in the root position, the root may be doubled and the fifth omitted. However, it is better to add all the parts if possible. When the V^7 chord is inverted, all tones must be included. The rules for the doubling of the V^7 chord also apply to diminished chords, secondary sevenths, and augmented VI chords. When a V^9 chord is used in the root position, the fifth is omitted. When the chord is inverted, the root must be left out. All of the rules for doubling are in force as long as the bass is the real bass line. In other types of writing, these rules need not be followed. By retaining a tone common in two consecutive chords, unity of composition may be achieved. It should be remembered that the fourth tone of a scale wants to move downward to mi, and the seventh tone wants to move upward to do. It may move down to sol, but this must be accomplished in an inner voice and usually in close voice writing, Parallel fifths and octaves must be avoided, and fourths should be avoided also. Whenever possible, contrary motion should be used. Octaves may be used in the bass by leaping to avoid a static sense. It is also possible to cross the alto and tenor parts when the part is homophonic although it is generally advisable to avoid crossing other parts. However, when the writing style is contrapuntal, parts may be freely crossed with attention being given to the independent melodic line of each part.

When addressing oneself to any and all of the above problems, the arranger must always keep in mind that a group must be able to

hear the parts it is about to sing. This is true for instruments also if they are really to play in tune, but is an even greater problem for the choral arranger. Because of this fact, it is better to avoid chromatic and dissonant passages. If they must be employed, the tempo should be reduced to the point that there is sufficient time to hear the intervals. If the tempo can't be relaxed, then the passage should be done in unison. Careful approach to these passages will be helpful. Although there may be no end to the techniques to be considered in good part writing, careful application of the above rules will provide a sound basic technique which will grow and deepen with experience in writing, hearing, and performance. Of course, due care must be accorded to principles of musicianship such as metrical pulse, style consciousness and the daily contact with various composers to inculcate an informed taste for authenticity.

Although it is quite possible to become completely fascinated with the possibilities of harmonic writing, one of the most powerful and beautiful forms of part writing is the simple unison. It is easy to learn and is adaptable to almost any circumstance. It may be used alone or in combination with part writing as in Handel's Messiah. The only times when it is wiser not to use unison is when the harmony is too complicated or there is modulation within the harmony making it very difficult to hear and feel the actual character of the music. It may be said that unison writing is like a camera bringing into sharp focus rhythmic, flowing, strong, vital music and providing a charming freshness and contrast to harmonic writing.

“Traditional two-part writing usually employs only unisons, thirds, fifths, sixths, octaves and tenths.”¹

THE ART OF ARRANGING

Three part writing is another technique used to give variety to four part writing and to provide for the cases in which only three voices may be available. A great variety of color may be achieved according to the combination of voices used. The principles of good voice writing carefully followed will insure the desired result provided care is taken to fill out the harmonic structure in the accompaniment. Although contrary motion of parts is stressed, increasing use of parallel motion is being recognized to give fanfare-like quality, buoyancy and movement of parts in a rather striking manner. In unaccompanied writing care must be taken to give the complete harmonic structure as closely as possible and to include the bass line of the harmony in the vocal parts. The use of contrapuntal writing will be useful in insuring clarity in any given part. This effect may be enhanced and given deepened color by the careful addition of instruments to the part or parts involved.

Four part writing is a wonderfully workable medium in which to express a full range of musical ideas in complex harmony, but much care must be taken to insure a tempo slow enough for this harmony to be properly heard and digested. If this isn't possible, then a more simple type of arrangement must be selected. Even so this style must be tempered to give the buoyancy and movement sometimes wished. The general rules for four part writing apply to all forms of four part writing, but still there are special considerations for all male or all female arrangements. However any consideration of these groupings should be prefaced with a well grounded knowledge of mixed four part writing technique. As a complete harmony may be achie-

¹ Choral Arranging -Hawley Ades

Shawnee Press, Inc. Delaware Water Gap, Pa. 1966

ved within the vocal parts, the work may be unaccompanied unless the accompaniment is necessary to the rhythmic support. Special attention to hymn writing will give an abundance of examples of strong four part writing. Community song books offer a similar type of study. The basic rules already laid down for part writing, spacing, doubling etc. must be followed. Also due care must be given to smoothness of voice leading. A free interchange of close and open voicing may be used in the freedom of four part writing. A through study of Bach Chorales will be an unending source of study and information in this style of writing. The contrary motion caused by contrasting open and closed voicing is an impressive and effective characteristic of four part writing. Harmonic content may be enriched by using the following combinations with care not to over use them. The sixth may be added to the one and four chords. The seventh may be added to the one and four chords. The seventh may be added to the five and two chords. Passing tones in the form of diminished chords and added ninths also will serve to give variety.

Although a through study of accompaniment is beyond the scope of this paper, in actual practice, this all-important part of choral arranging can't be ignored. For this reason, a cursory study is attempted here. It is all too true that a good arrangement may be ruined or at least made difficult to perform by reason of the accompaniment. In order to enhance the arrangement, a number of factors must be observed. The arranger must be clear as to what purpose the accompaniment is to fulfill. It will no doubt have a combination of purposes including emphasizing the text and music in point of emotion and intellect, strengthening the melodic line and completing the harmonic structure, making the rhythmic content and forward

THE ART OF ARRANGING

motion more impressive, giving a more contrapuntal feeling, giving added color and contrast through accompaniment figures and other kinds of embellishment and making the composition a more comprehensive believable musical whole. In any case the accompaniment must never become more important than what it accompanies unless this is the express wish of the arranger for a special effect.

There are many kinds of accompaniments, but the main ones to be considered and practiced by the would be arranger include those designed to simply strengthen the parts through their duplication, provide rhythm, strengthen the melody, give a sustained or punctuated effect, give variety and movement through arpeggios or special figures, contrapuntal or other special effects, and piano or other instrumental solo accompaniments, and the great variety of effects to be realized through the combination of other instruments following these guide lines. Judicious use of the principles included here will make possible arrangements in all styles and periods which the arranger may encounter.

Although there are special effects and more accompaniment possibilities when multiple part writing is used, the arranger will do well to refrain until an expert.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps the most profound conclusion to be reached through this study is that there is indeed no conclusion which may be readily reached or propounded. Each area of study within the entire whole is a study within itself with seemingly infinite possibilities of application and enlargement. Each new factor introduced in turn opens up a whole new area of exploration which is further enlarged by new tastes and new demands on the arranger. It may be this very sense of possibility hindered only by lack of imagination and knowledge on the part of the arranger which pushes him or her on and on to new endeavor much as one panning for gold completely unconcerned by the number of failures and only remembering the incomparable thrill of even one gold nugget of successful arrangement. In this sense, this study is not to be interpreted as something complete in itself but rather as a set of guide rules which if mastered and followed faithfully will insure at least a measure of success to the budding arranger and give the necessary know-how to spur him or her on to greater efforts. Diligent study of existing musical examples and courageous efforts on the part of the arranger plus attendant experience in working with actual groups in performing the arrangements will provide the necessary laboratory for self evaluation and the necessary improvements which may be subsequently made. I will be more than happy if this study is referred to in this spirit.

Music only becomes melody to gladden the hearts of men when it is heard in a language which is completely intelligible to them. This is the purpose of the arranger which this study is designed to implement and make a reality.

THE ART OF ARRANGING

Glendore Gosling PEACE OF the RIVER

Viola Wood

Slowly with Expression (A)

arr. by Shirley M. Rider



{ Peace I ask of thee, O riv-er peace, peace, peace, }
{ When I learn to live serene-ly cares will cease, }



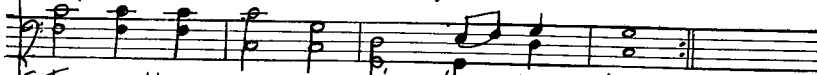
{ peace, peace, O riv-er peace, peace, peace, }
{ I live se-re-ne-ly cares will cease, }



(B)



{ From the hills I gather cour-age, Vi-sion of the day to be, }
{ Strength to lead and faith to fol-low, All are giv-en un-to me, }



{ I ga-ther cour-age, vi-sion to be. }
{ Strength, faith to fol-low, gi-ven to me, }



Handwritten musical score for the hymn "Peace I ask of thee, O river, Peace, Peace, Peace." The score is written on three systems of staves. The first system is a single treble clef staff with a common time signature (C) and a dynamic marking of *p* (piano). The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. The second system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff with the lyrics "Peace I ask of thee, O riv-er, Peace, Peace, Peace." and a bass clef staff with the lyrics "Peace, Peace O riv-er, Peace, Peace, Peace." The third system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff with a dynamic marking of *p* and a bass clef staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a final chord in the bass staff.

Go tell it on the Mountain

ev-ry where Go Tell it on the

ev-ry where, Tell on the mountain that Jesus Christ is

ev-ry where. Tell on the mountain that Jesus Christ is

Violin I II

Viola

Cello

Bass, Pizz.

Piano

8va

THE ART OF ARRANGING

Go Tell it on the Mountain

17 To 18 Fine 18 Angels Kept Their watch-ing o'er Si-lent flocks by
born. While born. Hm
born. born. Hm
Violin I & II
Viola
Cello
Bass Jazz.
Piano
3 m

Go Tell it on the Mountain
night. Behold throughout the heavens there Shown a holy Li—ght. D.S. al Fine

Handwritten musical score for the hymn "Go Tell it on the Mountain". The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It includes a vocal line and instrumental parts for Violin I & II, Viola, Cello, Bass, and Piano. The key signature is G major (one sharp). The time signature is 4/4. The score is marked with "D.S. al Fine" at the end of the piece. The vocal line is written in a soprano clef. The instrumental parts are written in their respective staves. The score is handwritten and shows some corrections and markings.

THE ART OF ARRANGING

SATB
Crisply

TRAMPIN

arr. by
Shirley M. Rider

mf ms sf

I'm a tramp-in, tramp-in, tryin to make heaven my

Guitar

mf sf

Piano

home, Hallelujah, I'm a tramp-in, tramp-in, tryin to make heaven my home.

home.

tryin to make heaven my home.

Trampin

②

Tryin to make heaven my home,

I've never been to heaven but I've been told, tryin to make heaven my home, that the

E♭6 Dm6 Cm7 B♭7 E♭6 B♭7 E♭6

Tryin to make heaven my home. I'm a-

Streets up there are paved with gold, tryin to make heaven my home.

E♭6 Dm6 Cm7 B7 E♭6 B♭7 E♭6 D.S. al Fine

THE ART OF ARRANGING

1 Tenor Lead
Baritone
Bass

My Wild Irish Rose

arr. by Shirley M. Rider

My Wild Irish Rose, — the sweetest flower that grows — you may
search every where, but none can compare with my wild Irish Rose — My
wild Irish Rose, — the dear-est flower that grows, — and some
day, for my sake, she may let me take the bloom from my wild Irish
Rose.

The musical score is written on ten staves. The first staff is the Tenor Lead, the second is Baritone, and the third is Bass. The lyrics are written below the staves. The music is in 3/4 time and features various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p.' (piano). The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat signs.


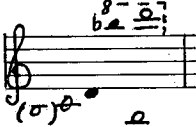
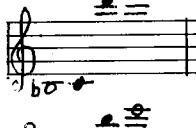

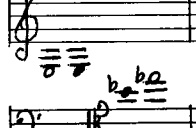
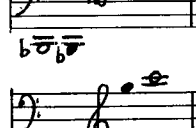
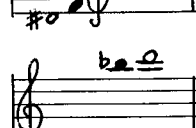
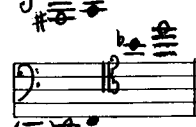
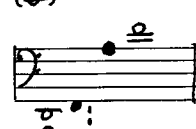
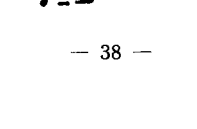

THE ART OF ARRANGING

A handwritten musical score for a choral arrangement. The score is written on three systems of staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a circled 'B' above the staff. It begins with a rest followed by a series of notes with lyrics: "Fa la la Fa la la la la la la la". The middle staff is a bass line in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with a rest followed by notes with lyrics: "Troll the an-cient yule-tide carol, Fa la la la la la la la la.". The bottom staff consists of two staves, a treble and a bass clef, both with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains piano accompaniment with various chords and melodic lines. Dynamics markings include *mf* and accents (>). The score concludes with a double bar line.

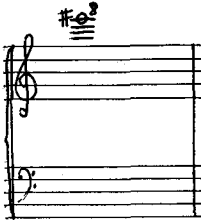

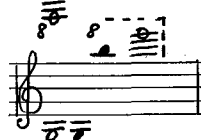


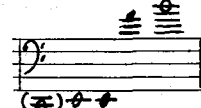

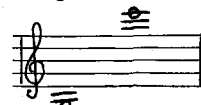
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Appendix

Instrument	Written Range	Actual Sound
Woodwinds		
Piccolo		8ve higher
Flute		as written
Oboe		as written
English Horn		perfect 5th lower
Clarinet in A		major 2nd lower
Bassoon		as written
BRASS Horn in F		perfect 5th lower
Trumpet in Bb		major 2nd lower
Tenor Trombone		as written
Tuba		as written

Instrument	Written Range	Actual Sound
PERCUSSION		as written
Marimba		
Glocken-spiel		2 8ves higher
Bells (Chimes)		8ve higher
Celesta		8ve higher

Instrument	Written Range	Actual Sound
Harp		as written
piano		as written
STRINGS		
Violin		as written
Viola		as written
Cello		as written
Double Bass		8ve lower
Guitar		8ve lower
Mandolin		as written


Instrument	Written Range	Actual Sound
Manuals		depends on registration
Organ		
Pedals		
Harpsi-chord		as written

The ranges for each instrument are given in open notes for the extreme possible range and in black notes for the practical or commonly used range.


I am indebted to Kent Wheeler Kennans "The Technique of Orchestration" for the information used in the chart and for this very useable format.

ACCEPTABLE VOCAL RANGES FOR THE VARIOUS VOICE PARTS (CHART)

Soprano I	Soprano II	Alto I	Alto II
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Tenor I (sounds 8va lower)	Tenor II	Bass I (Baritone)	Bass II
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The vocal ranges given in the above chart are given in black notes for the professional range and in open notes for the practical ranges. I am indebted to Hawley Ades "Choral Arranging" for these ranges given in this format.