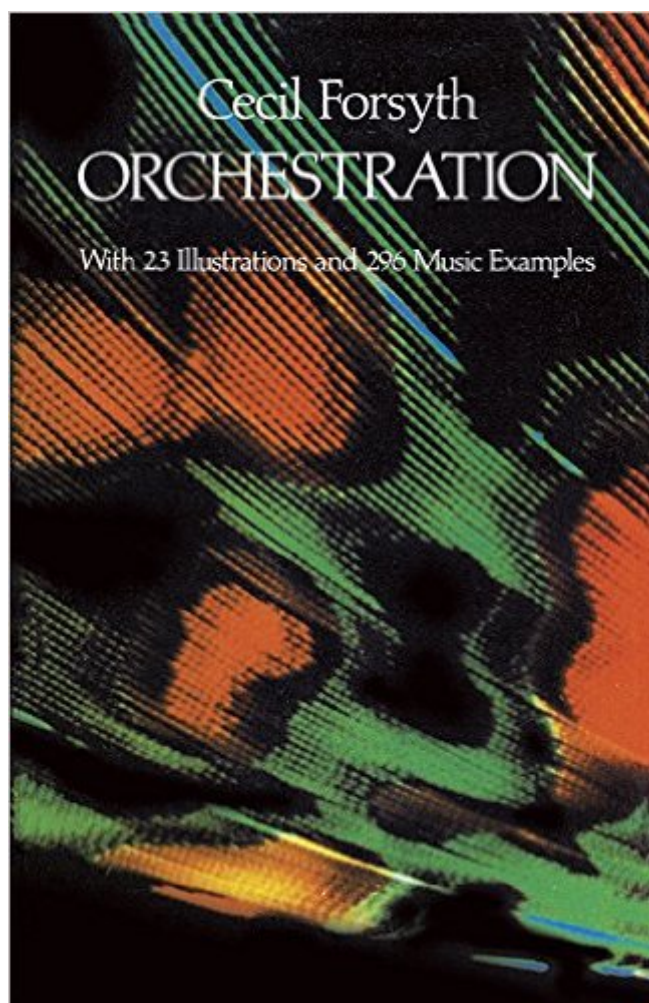


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# Orchestration (Dover Books On Music)



## Synopsis

"For its time the most comprehensive treatment of the subject." — New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians

Before the 17th century, composers seldom indicated in their music whether the composition was to be performed by a particular combination of voices or instruments. Then in 1607 Monteverdi made a well-known suggestion for the orchestration of his opera *Orfeo*. And as the Baroque era unfolded, the concept of orchestrations began to evolve, achieving a notable clarity and the acceptance of a keyboard instrument as an integral part of the ensemble. Toward the middle of the 18th century, stylistic changes in instrumental music, e.g. styles that emphasized a single melodic line, directly affected methods of orchestration; while in the 19th century, orchestrations became an ever more vital factor in the composer's technique, a stylistic determinant that places a wealth of possibilities at his disposal. Finally, in the early 18th century, increasing awareness of the importance of internal balance, certain ideals of blended sound, and firmly established instrumental characteristics enabled orchestration to take its place as an academic discipline beside harmony and counterpoint.

In this classic manual, a noted English composer describes 57 orchestral instruments (ca. 1914) tracing their origins, development, and status at the beginning of World War I. Not only are the history and evolution of each instrument fully discussed, the author also explores the techniques of each instrument, as well as players' impressions about what they must play. The result is an unparalleled insight into the inner working of an orchestra — a vivid impression of what it is like to be a violinist, clarinetist, trombonist, or other orchestral player.

While there have been numerous developments in instrumental technique on an individual basis since the book's first publication, most of what Forsyth says is still valid. Writing with wit, grace, and good sense, Forsyth created a formidably thorough, comprehensive, and informative text that has instructed and influenced generations of composers, conductors, musicians, and musicologists.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In Los Angeles, among the top composers (Henry Mancini, Jerry Goldsmith to list 2) on the A list, this is THE book. Forsythe covers the subject with characteristic dry British wit, but his referencing is impeccable, including covering specialty instruments (like the Serpent, Wagnerian tubas, and many more) that are simply not covered in the other titles. His explanations are indepth, accurate, and still very usable. If you can only afford one book, get this one.

The introduction to Cecil Forsyth's "Orchestration" is by William Bolcolm, a prominent American composer very much of our time. (His opera "A View from the Bridge" premiered November 1999 and was favorably reviewed in "Newsweek", "Time Magazine", and "The New York Times.") As William Bolcolm points out, very little of this book is out of date--a few tiny, insignificant bits; it remains "eminently usable". It also remains head and shoulders above the scores of tedious, dull, and perfunctory orchestration manuals subsequently published. One of its many virtues is its immersion in what Mr. Bolcolm calls "technical culture": It imparts to you a sense of what it's like to play the various orchestral instruments. Future fetishists (those wishing to obliterate the past and present in sacrificial rite to a future they can know as little as you and I) take note: what is best is what endures.

An excellent and authoritative text. There have been some changes in the capabilities of the instruments that are not reflected in the text, and of course it is missing all of the more modern and electronic instruments (this has the same unabridged text as the 1935 edition), but it's still very useful and well-written. One (small) lack: after reading the section on the harp, I still greatly prefer the standard on that subject, "Harp Scoring" by Stanley Chaloupka, for discussion of composing or orchestrating for the harp. I feel this book should be in the library of anyone serious about orchestration or composing for an orchestra.

While Forsythe offers a great deal of depth and detail, much of it I found superfluous unless you are

a musicologist, and I am a musicologist. But now my primary interest is orchestrating. The author includes too much historical background on the various instruments, such as the evolution of the horn, which you only need to know if you are analyzing Hadyn symphonies. If you are orchestrating a new symphony, you need to know current instrumental capabilities and practices, and the Forsythe book is now nearly 100 years old. Most of his information remains valid, but how will you know what isn't? I read this and a few other classics (Berlioz/Strauss, Rimsky, Piston) -- all of which are worthwhile -- before getting some coaching from a composition professor, who recognized that I needed a newer text. He recommended Adler or Kennan. So I bought the fourth edition of Kennan's orchestration book, a good place to start. Continue later with Forsythe and the others once you've acquired the up-to-date basics.

This is one of my very favorite books--not merely one of my very favorite orchestration books, not merely one of my very favorite music theory books. I read it again and again--sometimes for information, sometimes for entertainment. Its prose is lively and stylish; its advice is practical and to the point; it amuses; it inspires. By the bye, William Bolcom's new introduction is my favorite introduction to any book. Also recommended: PENTATONIC SCALES FOR THE JAZZ-ROCK KEYBOARDIST by Jeff Burns.

This book is organized as a tour of the many instruments that comprise an orchestra, together with description about how each instrument sounds, and how it might be used. Its primary focus is the instruments, not their arrangement. My interest was more the latter. I am an amateur, novice composer of short works, working to arrange and orchestrate my own music. I want to understand better when oboes are best used over strings, how strings sections "against" each other are sculpted, when interplay between brass instruments is most appealing, etc. I respect this man, but his book is not for me.

I am an amateur orchestrationist and I loved this book. The history of the instruments gave me a greater understanding of each group and their strengths and weaknesses. I hope everyone who has an interest in instrumentation would read and study this book.

This book is superb, very indepth. I bought it, however, thinking it was going to discuss topics such as instrumental combinations, balance of tone, and other concepts more typically associated with 'orchestration'. It turns out, it deals more with the various characteristics and capabilities of each

instrument in the orchestra...EXCELLENTLY! Though it could've been titled 'Instrumentation', it is an essential, valuable book. This may not be the definitive 'orchestration' book your looking for, but buy it anyway - you'll be glad you did!

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