

Review from the British National Association of Percussion Teachers:

Orchestral Excerpts for Timpani (with CD)

selected and annotated by Randy Max

Theodore Presser Company

It is rare to come across a publication which is a real 'must have' for a particular genre and audience but, in my opinion, this book and CD absolutely deserve to be described as such. Collections of orchestral timpani movements and audition excerpts are not new, but have always been limited to a reproduction of the score with at best the occasional inclusion of a piano reduction. However, this publication includes everything that one would need to study, learn, understand and play the parts.

Whilst I am no expert on timpani auditions I am quite happy to believe that the 57 excerpts included are indeed those most requested at auditions. They are presented alphabetically by composer, and all are prefaced by a very brief biography of the composer and background to the work concerned which immediately helps to put the music into context. The presentation of the extracts themselves is 'authentic' giving a clear impression of what to expect when faced with the complete timpani part.

Where this publication excels is in the detail and guidance given about how to approach playing each part. For starters, the tempo in the score is given, but also the average performance tempo, which in some instances is remarkably different. The accompanying CD includes a classic recording of each excerpt which is 'the best of the best' as far as the author is concerned. However, the book also includes a list of alternative recordings, giving the orchestra, conductor, and tempo, which would be of great assistance in comparing approaches and performances. The CD also includes a number of 'practice tracks', which are a combination of live playing and orchestral sound samples, to assist in practising particularly challenging examples with an orchestra, beginning with a very slow tempo and gradually working up to performance tempo. This is a really valuable and practical resource.

The type of mallets required is always stated; particularly useful for a student coming across a work for the first time, and these are clarified in the introduction. More importantly, for every extract there is excellent guidance on how to approach learning the part, suggested sticking patterns, dynamic levels, areas requiring careful counting, damping, how the part fits with other instruments, in fact just about anything about that piece which is worth knowing. Whilst some of this could be

gleaned by listening to different recordings and studying the full score, much of it is the knowledge gained from experience, and this is something rarely made available to a wider audience.

Another real gem is the inclusion of various alternative tuning plans for excerpts by Barber, Bartók and Strauss, which are marked for both American and German set-ups. These include the preferred tuning plans and stickings of the likes of Gerald Carlyss, Cloyd Duff, Saul Goodman, Richard Hochrainer, Rick Holmes, Roland Kohloff and Jan Labordus. The merits of each approach are explained, helping you to experiment and find the one which will suit you the best, as well as encouraging you to think beyond the immediately obvious choices.

Not to be overlooked is the introductory section previously mentioned. As well as giving further detail about various aspects of the book and CD, there is a section on how to practice timpani parts and excerpts, practising for an audition, and practising ear training. The advice given here is both sensible and practical, and acts as an aide-memoire to ensure that all aspects of preparation are included.

This publication, whilst primarily intended as a resource for use by anyone preparing for an audition, has an immense amount to offer to any student at a conservatoire level and above. It contains an absolute wealth of information which is beautifully presented and, despite the level of detail, not at all intimidating. The current price, including postage, is £36. Whilst a little more expensive than many publications I honestly believe that it is worth every penny to anyone studying timpani at an advanced level and to those looking to pursue a career as an orchestral timpanist.

Lorne Pearcey