

Review of *Orchestral Excerpts for Timpani* by Randy Max – Theodore Presser Co.

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The aspiring timpanist can now add a valuable asset to their timpani excerpt arsenal, and I say so advisedly. *Orchestral Excerpts for Timpani* selected and annotated by Randy Max, Principal Timpanist of the Rotterdam Philharmonic (Theodore Presser Company ©2010) has just been launched. So, what is different about Randy's book? It comes with an audio CD (78 tracks) of orchestral performances of each excerpt, plus practice tracks. More importantly I hold, and have always held, that the value of wise and knowledgeable annotation cannot be understated in this type of publication. The comments and performance suggestions give the serious student an insight into the approach and thinking of the professional performer and teacher. This book has such annotations and much more. Randy Max has been thorough in his research.

As well as the excerpts and background information, the book features sections on effective practice, audition techniques, ear training based on singing using solfege/tonic solfa, and tuning plans (both American and German) for the various excerpts. But for me personally the most interesting and fascinating feature is the inclusion of tempo lists for each excerpt. For example, I can refer to the final *Danse Sacrale* episode from *The Rite of Spring* and see at a glance that 14 recordings of this work are listed with tempi varying from eighth-note = 112 bpm to 138 bpm. An average performance tempo is also shown for each excerpt. I also value highly the commentaries, historical and otherwise, relating to the excerpts. Most, if not all, of the timpanists mentioned are no longer with us, so I believe it is really important to mark and document their invaluable contribution to our world timpani tradition. Take a look at the opening of Brahms Symphony No.1 and be amazed the tempo variations in the listed recordings over the years. Also, on the final chord of this work learn what is meant by a “Cloyd Duff stinger”.

I reiterate that this book is undoubtedly a most useful addition to the timpanist's arsenal. I heartily recommend it to the aspiring timpanist.