

Old Becoming New: Little Known “Gems” of the String Orchestra Repertoire

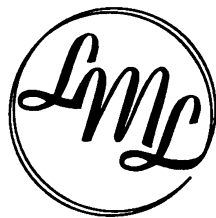
SANDRA DACKOW, CLINICIAN

Looking for “new” and exciting compositions for your string orchestra?

Led by renowned arranger and educator Sandra Dackow, teachers will have the opportunity to hear and learn about the forgotten historical gems of the standard string repertoire. Perfect for concert, festival and competition performances; explore or revisit selections that have been “lost” in the mix of the vast history of string literature. Exhilarate students and audiences alike with these old, yet “new” pieces of music history! Bring your instruments to participate in the reading orchestra!

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JOHANN PACHELBEL

(1653-1706)

GIGUE (FROM CANON AND GIGUE)

#01494 · GRADE III+ (UPPER INTERMEDIATE OR INTERMEDIATE)

We all know the *Canon in D*, but how many have experienced the very short *Gigue*, with which it is paired? Written for the same three violins and bass line as the *Canon*, the *Gigue* is a great palate cleanser after the endless repetitions of the *Canon* progression. Imitative, but not canonic, it is a joyful little dance with an active bass line that's fun for everyone. The third violin part does not require notes on the E string, and therefore could be played by violas reading treble clef. Very short (two Baroque halves, each repeated), each half builds to a rhythmic climax, showcasing the brilliance which an upper intermediate group can achieve.

LEARN MORE ABOUT PACHELBEL



German composer and organist, Johann Pachelbel is best known for his *Canon in D*. He composed a large body of both sacred and secular music, including works for organ. Pachelbel is considered one of the great organ masters before J.S. Bach.

GEORG PHILIPP TELEMANN

(1681-1767)

CONCERTO FOR TWO VIOLAS AND STRINGS IN G #11724 · GRADE III+ (UPPER INTERMEDIATE OR INTERMEDIATE)

Telemann's *G Major Concerto for Viola and Strings* is a gift which nourishes intermediate violists everywhere, and is rewarding for intermediate orchestras collaborating with the soloists. Less well-known is the *Concerto for Two Violas and Strings*, also in G. Featured in Suzuki viola materials, it provides both the soloists, as well as the ripieno orchestra, lots of fun and busy lines which are not difficult to play. Written in four short movements, this straightforward music is filled with stock Telemann Baroque devices, used to good effect. While the solo viola parts do reach into third position, the orchestral violin parts stay within first position range and only the bass requires some second or third position work, briefly. This is an excellent work to feature solo violas or even multiple players, as well as a good "switchover" piece for violins looking to learn alto clef and double (many of the violin and viola lines are the same).

LEARN MORE ABOUT TELEMANN



Telemann enjoys a place in the Guinness Book of Records as history's most prolific composer. Easy to dismiss as all-purpose generic Baroque composer, he can actually rival Bach for power and drama, Handel for charm and Vivaldi for sheer fun. We are well-served to explore him further.

CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD VON GLUCK

(1714-1787)

OVERTURE IN D FOR STRINGS #05288 · GRADE III (INTERMEDIATE)

In Gluck's *Overture in D for Strings*, the opening gives us a combination of a baroque style in the first violins, a classical style in the second violins, and a transition of baroque to classical in the bass part. Compare this with similar works of Mozart, for instance the *Three Divertimenti* K. 136, 137, 138. The first movement of Gluck's overture is a robust *Allegro*. There are many examples, like in the Brandenburg Concerto No. 5, where the first and second violins play one part throughout many segments of the movement against a bass line (again baroque).

In the *Andante*, the first and second violins continue to be in unison throughout, while the bass line (often in unison with the violas) progresses again in a very baroque manner. There are some florid backward dotted rhythms, as well as triplets, but the slow tempo can accommodate this.

It is in the last movement, *Presto*, that we get a glimpse of the breakthroughs to truly classical musical language. It is short, bright, and could be mistaken for Haydn or early Mozart. This delightful movement is uncomplicated and loads of fun to play, especially for the violins who really get to wail.

Gluck is often overlooked, as many of his works are transitioning from the baroque to classical style, and, used as we are to Haydn and Mozart, we can find this "in between" language a bit unsettling. This piece is straightforward, and good music for intermediate strings, as it does not exceed the technique for Grade III players. The violin parts go into third position, the viola and cello parts can be played entirely in first position, and the bass goes up to D in third position. Of course, other shifting can be employed, but as shifting is not necessary, it makes the work approachable for late middle school to early high school ensembles.

LEARN MORE ABOUT GLUCK



Christoph Willibald von Gluck bridged the Baroque and Classical periods, which gives us unique insights into the music of that era. Most of the time, we hear elements of the newer classical style, but he does revert back to baroque gestures. In this way, he is different from his contemporary, Mozart. Gluck, having been born two generations before Mozart, is celebrated as a reformer in the writing of opera of his day and made it a point to stress the importance of the music over the virtuosic expressions of florid singing.

ARTHUR FOOTE

(1853-1937)

SERENADE IN E FOR STRING ORCHESTRA, OP. 25 #11105 · GRADE V (ADVANCED, BUT APPROACHABLE)

Foote's *Serenade in E Major* for String Orchestra sounds European and romantic – one would not pick the style out of a lineup as being specifically American. The *Serenade*, not an especially long work, is in five short movements, with old-fashioned titles (an American *Holberg Suite*?). The opening *Praeludium* is charming, with a contrasting trio rather than much development, in keeping with the construction of short forms. Even the tempo indication of *Allegro comodo* says it all. The movement is in four sharps but is easy to hear and though there is chromaticism, the passagework is not high for any section.

The second movement entitled *Air* immediately brings to mind an American *Air for the G String* in both its construction, pace and mood. The second half is longer than Bach's, but we are glad, as it is exquisitely beautiful, and begins to remind us, again, of Grieg's *Holberg Suite*. There is high passagework for the first violin, some treble clef positionwork for violas and some shifting for the cellos. The pace is relaxed and the shifts well considered and under the hand.

The third movement, entitled *Intermezzo*, is once again, written to evoke an older style, with more modern harmonic language. A pizzicato section is especially charming. A trio with triplet passagework is romantic, but the accompaniment is technically demanding. The key signature of five sharps will challenge players, but the music is easy to hear. (How many students have encountered g-sharp minor, even briefly?) The music is entirely worth the sharps and double sharps.

The fourth movement, entitled *Romanze*, lives up to its name and we are surrounded by lush textures and romantic harmonies from the moment we start. Though there is challenging passagework and some pretty unexpected harmonic detours, the music is entirely worth this beautiful exploration. Past the mid-point, the music becomes impassioned, and again, the harmonies shift quickly and with surprises. The retransition is amazing, with a beautiful cello solo, leading us back to gentle recap of the opening romantic material. What a great soundtrack for a film scene of a nineteenth century marriage proposal (or...even better, a rejected proposal). There is passagework, grown up emotions and some high positions, but the pace is slow and the music still approachable.

In keeping with the entire nostalgic plan of the serenade, the finale is a *Gavotte*, first in a minor key, then shifting to major, making us feel the sun has just emerged from behind a cloud in the trio.

There is so much beautiful music in the *Serenade*, which deserves to be studied and performed. The movements are not long, but just the right length to be substantial and balanced.

LEARN MORE ABOUT FOOTE



Arthur Foote was the first significant American classical composer to be trained entirely in the US. American composers of previous generations had generally studied in Germany, but Foote attended Harvard and was included in the "Boston Six" along with George Whitefield Chadwick, Amy Beach, Edward MacDowell, John Knowles Paine, and Horatio Parker. These composers comprise the beginnings of a truly American tradition of composition and paved the way for even more distinctively American voices to come a generation later. Foote was a founder of the American Guild of Organists, and, as had several of his colleagues, gave us pedagogical writings on performance and theory.

PAUL WRANITZKY

(1756-1808)

SYMPHONY IN C MINOR, OP. 31 “LA PAIX” #13743 › GRADE IV+ (ADVANCED)

The Renaissance and Baroque gave us both vocal and later, instrumental “battle” works with special effects, usually from the instruments or voices themselves (ex: Heinrich Biber’s *Battalia a 10 for Strings*). These works were clever and entertaining, wonderful examples of early programmatic style.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, immediately following the French Revolution, a number of “Battle Symphonies” were popular, employing elements now described as “French Revolution” music. The finale to Beethoven’s *Fidelio*, a “good triumphs over evil” rescue opera, provides an example of French Revolution style: square, military figures, fanfares, a sense of righteousness, trumpets, drums, usually favoring the key of C Major. Beethoven’s later Battle Symphony (Wellington’s Victory), expands into a sprawling, programmatic event, including gun shots and quoting national themes of the opposing armies. Years later, Tchaikowsky gives us perhaps the most famous work, *1812 Overture*, incorporating cannons and church bells, devices which were popular in other, less celebrated works, now mostly forgotten.

Wranitzky gives us a *Grand Sinfonie caractéristique pour la paix avec la République française* in four movements, each depicting recent French events (the French Revolution and possibly the Anglo-French war). Movement I depicts the Revolution with marches of the English, Austrians and Prussians. Movement II is a funeral march for Louis XVI. Movement III gives us marches of the English and the allies, followed by tumultuous, programmatic battle music, including cannon shots (cued here as bass pizzicato, but available as percussion parts, as well). The final movement portrays peace negotiations and final cries of joy as peace is restored.

Most important to note are the first and second individual viola parts throughout. This could be attributed to French influence, where Lully’s Baroque orchestra famously included first and second violas. Vestiges of this practice persist even into the twentieth century with French composers frequently using double stave viola parts.

There are many examples of dotted rhythms and trumpet fanfare figures. We hear much influence of Mozart throughout, recalling *The Magic Flute*, *The Abduction from the Seraglio* finale, and what seem like quotes from finales to *Symphony No. 36* and *41*. All parts are interesting, and while higher passages sometimes occur, these do not last long, nor are they difficult. There are joyous unison passages for the entire orchestra, resulting in a robust effect. The peace negotiations give us a chance to experience four-and-a-half bar phrases! Be ready for lots of linked bowings for the dotted rhythms, a good opportunity to reinforce this technique. There are considerable ornaments, offering a good teaching opportunity.

Wranitzky’s “*La Paix*” *Symphony* provides an opportunity to experience French Revolution style through a central European lens, and a classical approach that presses against the dramatic changes coming in the nineteenth century. This very playable work offers unique perspectives, as well as good fun. Paul Wranitzky, living through the life and style changes of both Haydn and Mozart, and experiencing early Beethoven at the composer’s elbow, brings a different perspective to our notions of late eighteenth century orchestral music.



LEARN MORE ABOUT WRANITZKY

The Moravian composer Pavel Vranický (later Germanized as Paul Wranitzky, following the custom of many other contemporaries) was admired by Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven. He flourished in the city of Vienna, which, as a cultural Mecca, attracted many musicians of the day seeking opportunities. Wranitzky conducted the premier performance of Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 1* and established himself as both conductor and prolific composer.

GIUSEPPE VERDI

(1813-1901)

STRING QUARTET IN E MINOR #540-3034 › GRADE VI (ADVANCED)

Verdi's musical identity is so wrapped up in his operatic output, that it is easy to overlook his one significant chamber work, his *String Quartet in e minor*, and what a disciplined composer he was when freed from the need to write text-driven music. The quartet has been performed and recorded as a string orchestra work and it will reward any group which studies it.

The first movement is filled with drama and passion, but within strict "German" parameters of good counterpoint and disciplined, but intensely chromatic language. The structure is tight, but the musical material develops well and really stays with us. This is opera, but not tied to the limitations of the voice!

The second movement, *Andantino* is precious and visits some far away key areas (six flats). The chromaticism is intense, but Verdi's hand is so sure, it all seems natural and organic. There are some very satisfying passages for string players. Overall, an interesting contrast to the other movements.

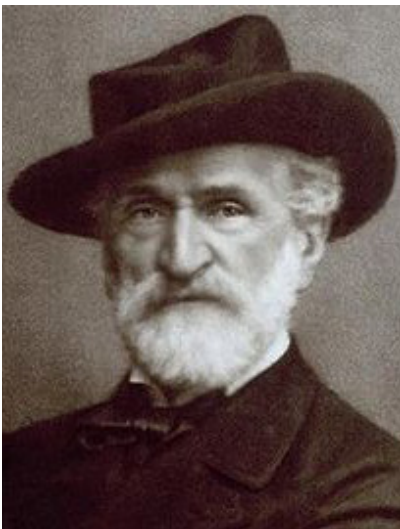
The third movement, *Prestissimo* serves as a scherzo, and is great fun to play. The terrific trio theme in the cello IS OPERA (without any words) and Italian to the core. SING!

The finale is entitled *Scherzo Fuga*, an oxymoron if ever there were one – scherzi are supposed to be fun, while fugues are serious business. However, Verdi does manage to combine these two very different agendas, again, in a tight, but expressive final movement.

All movements will require off-the-string bowings – a LOT. There are a considerable number of unison passages, which rehearse well because they are unison, but are usually also chromatic, not the strength of most string students... The bowings called for are exacting, but none are exceptionally difficult.

It is in the fast execution of chromatic passages, whether in unison or in tight harmony, that the greatest challenges for students will lie. The quartet is not long, nor does it push structural boundaries, but it is very demanding, assuming bowing skills are second nature so that the left hand passages can be realized without sounding like a struggle. The range sometimes goes beyond fifth position, but usually with logical scale passages.

An edited bass part has been included to facilitate orchestral performance.



LEARN MORE ABOUT VERDI

Without the nineteenth century operas of Verdi and Wagner, the twentieth century would not have enjoyed the wealth of stories combined with music which have evolved into television and the movies. Giuseppe Verdi was the unparalleled master of using music to heighten dramatic situations and his operas can make us cry or rock us to our foundations. Verdi used his orchestra as a Greek chorus, which would comment on what a character had just said or add strong musical exclamation points to nail home an idea.

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WRANITZKY

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