

## ORCHESTRATION AND INSTRUMENTATION: THE ROMANTIC ERA

### INTRODUCTION

The Romantic era saw many changes in regard to orchestration & instrumentation. Much like with the Baroque era, it saw a larger, more expanded orchestra, not only in terms of size, but also with new instruments added. Another change in this era is the fact that some instrument players may double on other instruments within the same orchestral section (For example, oboe players may double on the English Horn or the Bass oboe).

I have set up this document different from prior orchestration & instrumentation ones; I will do the same for the one for 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but for different reasons. The reason being for this document is two-fold:

1. To show the changes between Classical and Early Romantic
2. To show the changes between Early and Late Romantic

I will first present the chart, showing Early and Late Romantic orchestration/instrumentation. I will then give notable differences between the two eras, as well as between Early and Late Romantic. I will then bring the document to a close by showing the changes in orchestration & instrumentation in regard to Wagner's operatic "song" cycle "The Ring of the Nibelung."

### CHART

| <u>CLASSIFICATION</u> | <u>EARLY</u>  | <u>LATE</u>  |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| <b>WOODWINDS</b>      | Piccolo<br><br>2 Flutes<br><br>2 Oboes<br><br>2 Soprano clarinets<br><br>2 Bassoons | 1-2 Piccolos<br><br>3-4 Flutes<br><br>3-4 Oboes, of which some may double on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1 Oboe D'amore</li> <li>2. 2 Cor Anglais (English Horn)</li> <li>3. 1 Bass oboe</li> </ol> 3-4 Clarinets in B flat or A, of which some may double on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 1-2 E Flat clarinet, D clarinet</li> <li>2. 1-2 Basset horns</li> <li>1 Bass clarinet</li> </ol> 3-4 Bassoons<br><br>1 Contrabassoon |
| <b>BRASS</b>          | 4 Natural (valveless) or valved horns<br><br>2 Natural or valved trumpets           | 4-8 French horns, German horns <sup>1</sup> , or Vienna horns <sup>2</sup> (rarely natural horns)<br><br>3-6 Cornets<br><br>3-6 Trumpets in F, and other keys, Inc. C, B flat  |

<sup>1</sup> German horn is a member of the brass family and is designed slightly different than the traditional French horn. With this horn, another side is added in order for players to more easily play the upper register

<sup>2</sup> Vienna horn is a type of French horn used primarily in Vienna, Austria, for playing orchestral or classical music. Again, like the German horn, there are differences in its design and construction and has remained virtually unchanged since its beginning.

|                   |   |  |
|-------------------|---|--|
|                   | <p>3 Trombones</p> <p>Tuba</p>  | <p>3-4 Trombones</p> <p>1-2 Tubas</p> <p>(0-4 Wagner tubas<sup>3</sup> – 2 tenors, 2 bass, usually doubled by horn players)</p>  |
| <b>PERCUSSION</b> | <p>2 Timpani (one player)</p> <p>Snare drum</p> <p>Bass drum</p> <p>Cymbals</p> <p>Triangle</p> <p>Tambourine</p> <p>Glockenspiel</p> | <p>4 or more Timpani (one player)</p> <p>Snare drum</p> <p>Bass drum</p> <p>Cymbals</p> <p>Tam-tam</p> <p>Triangle</p> <p>Tambourine</p> <p>Glockenspiel</p> <p>Xylophone</p> <p>Tubular bells</p> |
| <b>STRINGS</b>    | <p>14 Violins 1</p> <p>12 Violins 2</p> <p>10 Violas</p> <p>8 Cellos</p> <p>6 Double basses</p> <p>1 Concert harp</p>                 | <p>16 Violins 1 (sometimes more)</p> <p>14 Violins 2</p> <p>12 Violas</p> <p>12 Cellos</p> <p>10 Double basses</p> <p>2 or more Concert harps</p>  |
| <b>KEYBOARDS</b>  |   | <p>Piano</p> <p>Celesta</p>  |

<sup>3</sup> Wagner tuba is generally considered a brass instrument, but it can also be classified in the woodwind category. It was originally created for his operatic cycle “The Ring of the Nibelung.” The design and construction is shaped more like a horn rather than that of a trombone, in order to give him the sound he needed for this particular work.

### NOTABLE DIFFERENCES

| <u>CLASSIFICATION</u> | <u>INSTRUMENTATION</u>  | <u>DIFFERENCES</u>   |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| <b>WOODWINDS</b>      | <p>Piccolo &amp; Flute</p> <p>Bassoons</p> <p>Saxophone</p>   | <p>No doubling – two distinct parts</p> <p>Early Romantic did not always score for Contrabassoon. Late required one player</p> <p>No orchestral player in Romantic era</p> |
| <b>BRASS</b>          | <p>French Horn</p> <p>Trumpets</p> <p>Wagner Tuba</p>   | <p>4 required early</p> <p>More late era, including Vienna &amp; German</p> <p>Late era, required in multiple keys</p> <p>Up to four players required in late era</p>      |
| <b>PERCUSSION</b>     | <p>Timpani</p> <p>Added:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tam-Tam</li> <li>2. Xylophone</li> <li>3. Tubular Bells</li> </ol> <p>Not used:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wood block</li> <li>2. Tambourine</li> <li>3. Marimba</li> </ol> | <p>Greater skill required from player</p> <p>Late era</p>  |
| <b>STRINGS</b>        |   | <p>Slight decrease in early</p> <p>More in late era, prepare for 20<sup>th</sup> C.</p>  |
| <b>KEYBOARDS</b>      |   | <p>Not used in early</p> <p>Brought back in later</p>  |