

Writing for Woodwinds: Putting it all together

Music 525

Big Picture

- Think about the numbers you are writing for?
- Think about the age and level of musician?
- Always think about the sound you would like to product. (Color)
 - All voices equal?
 - Choir vs choir?
 - Solo and backups?
- Think about the dynamic contour and instrument color

Execution

- Can they play effectively at your tempo?
- Can they play effectively at your dynamic?
- Can they play the full line as marked?
 - How does air factor in?
- Can they execute the articulations (think about instrument characteristics)

Voicing

- Clarinets usually split three ways in a band setting, 2 in orchestral
 - Alto clarinet typically doubles the 3rd clarinet or bass clarinet, depending on voice strength
- Saxophones are flexible
 - Use as a choir
 - Sonority strengthener
 - Rhythmic background
 - Soloist
- Flutes and oboes are often paired.
 - Be mindful of range however
- When in doubt, pair the low reeds

Voicing

- Melody may/should be doubled in octaves
- Avoid doubling the bass line above its original pitch
 - Exception - more than an octave between the bass line and the next highest voice
- Think about using the double reed quartet: 2 oboes and 2 bassoons
 - May be used in a light passage. It's all about color
- Lighter passages - Flute can carry the melody in the upper register
- Think if your tutti passages are balanced, top heavy, or bottom heavy

Voicing

- Put largest vertical intervals in the lower octave
 - Think about the harmonic series
- Close vertical space in the lower octave creates a muddy sound
- Space voices evenly in the upper register
 - Avoid too large of gaps
 - Exception - octave displacement of melody
- Chords should be voiced as completely as possible in each section

Voice Leading/Re-voicing

- Sometimes voice parts need to be shifted due to range considerations
 - Or think about a part exchange
 - Ex. tenor and bass combination
- Avoid awkward skips
- WATCH FOR EXCESSIVE DOUBLING OF THE 3RD
- Think about how you want to split voices or condense. 5 parts for 4 players? 7 parts for 12 players?

Bonus - Extended Techniques

- Flute

- Flutter tongue
- Alternative fingerings
- Bends
- Multiphonics
- Key clicks
- Whistle tones
- Beatboxing

- Oboe

- Key clicks
- Air tones
- Reed along

Bonus - Extended Techniques

- Bassoon
 - Reed alone/removed
 - Key clicks
- Clarinet
 - Bends
 - Key clicks
 - Squeeks
 - Slap tongue
 - Air notes

Bonus - Extended Techniques

- Saxophone
 - Key clicks
 - Slap tongue
 - Growling
 - Multiphonics

(strength of each technique depends on the instrument)