

Transcribing Symphonic Repertoire for Eight Horns: Principles and Process Leading from Sources of Inspiration to Final Product

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**Transcribing Symphonic Repertoire for Eight Horns:
Principles and Process Leading from Sources of Inspiration
to Final Product**

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This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

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Abstract

While music for all sizes of horn ensembles is becoming more popular, with arrangements and original compositions appearing in increasing numbers, literature on how to transcribe symphonic repertoire is sparse. Focusing on transcribing for eight horns, this dissertation provides an overview of the current state of transcribing for horn octet, followed by an in-depth analysis of the practice of the author, comparing it to that of other major exponents in the field. The main areas examined are the use of the horn and its extended techniques, the treatment of the horn octet as a chamber ensemble, and the various ways in which techniques specific to other instruments can be adapted for horns. The results are based on the author's practice and other published repertoire for eight horns, supported by more general literature on orchestration and instrumentation.

Symphonic transcriptions for horn octet became popular in the United States towards the middle of the twentieth century, and even today remain centred around well-known works from the classical and romantic repertoire. The main reason for doing these transcriptions is to provide repertoire for existing ensembles, taking advantage of the familiarity of this repertoire for both performers and audiences. Over the years, horn technique has evolved, and this is reflected in the transcriptions, mainly in terms of range extension, technical facility across the range, and equal treatment of all voices. This evolution also means that parts for instruments often considered to be more agile than the horn can be accommodated, and if not, then at least satisfactorily approximated. A case study of the author's transcription of Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz* overture contextualises many of the techniques previously presented. By outlining the techniques and principles through which each individual part can be employed and contribute to the ensemble, it is shown that indeed many works from the symphonic repertoire can effectively be transcribed for horn octet.

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