

# How to Prepare Orchestral Parts (and Excerpts)

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1. Get the full part.
  - a. Order from Edwin F. Kalmus, Co. – Keiser Southern Music
  - b. Download and print parts from IMSLP (International Music Score Library Project) [https://imslp.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://imslp.org/wiki/Main_Page) or another reputable source.
  - c. Photocopy the part for study purposes.
  - d. Consider using a music subscription service such as the nkoda app (nkoda.com) or a similar app.
2. Check out a score from the library, purchase one for your own personal library, or download one from IMSLP.
3. Read about the historical context to guide the integrity of your interpretation, and to inspire and influence your decisions.
4. Listen to a minimum of two recordings to compare performances and concepts of the work.
  - When listening to the 1<sup>st</sup> recording, listen with the part.
  - When listening to the 2<sup>nd</sup> recording, listen with the score.
5. Mark on your part a basic metronome marking for each movement or section (to be clocked with your metronome while listening).
  - If tempos change mid-movement, search to find the markings. This will help you to be realistically prepared
6. Jot down notes in the margins of your part or in your notebook (these are your learning tools).
  - List any questions you are going to answer and make observations about the piece involving orchestration, moods evoked, accompanying instruments, etc.
7. Play through the part to get the feel.
8. Work out tutti parts to the tempos that you observed.
9. Play and work out solos to capture the imaginative ideas that are already present in your head.
  - Sing the passages if you need more help and/or picture a scene in your head.
  - Remind yourself about the questions that you've already dealt with.
  - Ask yourself what is difficult about each solo and seek to work out the difficulties that each possess.
  - Record yourself to check your progress.
10. Play the entire part with the recording wearing earphones as if in the middle of the orchestra. (This can be a tremendous help!)
11. Listen to important orchestral works while washing dishes, making reeds, etc., to enjoy the music and get it in your ear. Seek to capture any opportunity you can to hear these works in a live performance. (This is invaluable – you will see a work in new ways from these experiences.)

**Work hard, delight in the expansion of your ideas and imagination, and experience the joy of discernment and growth as a total musician and artist.**

## **The Purpose of Orchestral Listening and Preparation**

1. To have a thorough understanding of the entire work and not just an excerpt or a snippet of a piece.
2. To enjoy the work as a beautiful work of art, in its entirety.
3. To enjoy an entire part with confidence at an audition when competing with more experienced players.
4. To make decisions based on the whole.

## **Orchestral Part and Excerpt Preparation**

**Answer the following questions as you prepare a work:**

1. What is the style of the piece?  
(For example: when was it written, who wrote it, any information that you have about the composer's background, and how does this work represent other pieces of this style or depart from other pieces of this style.)
2. How many movements are there?
  - a. What are the characteristic moods of each?
  - b. What are their key (tonality) relationships?
  - c. What are the tempos? (Consider the range of possible tempos which could capture the mood correctly.)
3. Describe the orchestration:
  - a. Is the work full or thinly orchestrated?
  - b. Are the unusual instruments used and, if so, why?
  - c. Who has the main lines?
4. Look up any terms that you do not know. These are "the composer's instructions to you."
5. Study the text if there is a vocal or literary component of the work.

### **Preparing the Solo Part:**

1. Where in the movement does the solo lie?
  - a. What is the mood context before, during, and after the solo?
  - b. What is the orchestration before, during, and after? (Who am I playing with and/or against?)
2. What is the mood or character you feel that the composer wanted to express through this part, and why did the composer use the oboe to do so?
3. What tempo possibilities or freedom do you have to capture the mood and character of the piece within your solo(s)?
4. What are the technical difficulties to overcome to achieve your imaginative desires?