

Recommended Bassoon Solos

by Elizabeth Feters and Daniel Perttu

Middle and high school directors often recommend solo and ensemble pieces, but they are seldom familiar with several excellent pieces and collections for elementary and intermediate bassoonists. The following pieces and the accompanying list of pedagogical articles are a few of the best.

Selective Repertoire for Bassoonists

The Really Easy Bassoon Book: Very First Solos for Bassoon with Piano Accompaniment by Graham Sheen (Faber) contains 13 grade-1 solos within an easy beginning range of F2-D4. Some of the pieces are orchestral excerpts, such as "The Elephant" from *Carnival of the Animals* by Camille Saint-Saëns. The solos use a variety of dynamics, articulations, meters, and phrase structures, which escalate in difficulty. The piano part is relatively easy.

Four Sketches for Bassoon and Piano by Gordon Jacob (June Emerson Ampleforth) is a grade-2 work that uses the keys of C major and B \flat major. This piece is in four short and contrasting movements. A Peaceful Piece is in $\frac{4}{4}$ time ($\text{♩}=52$), A Little Waltz (waltz tempo) is in $\frac{3}{4}$, L'Apès-Midi d'un Dinosaur ($\text{♩}=72$) is in $\frac{3}{4}$, and Polka ($\text{♩}=96$) is in $\frac{2}{4}$. This pleasant-sounding work has simple rhythms and a range of B \flat 1-E \flat 4.

Romanze by Edmund Siennicki is a grade-2 piece from the *Master Solos* collection by Leonard Sharrow (Hal Leonard). The work is in $\frac{4}{4}$, stays in F and B \flat major with the exception of a few accidentals, and has a bass clef range of E2-F4. The scalar 16th-note passages within the Moderato and Allegretto tempos are not technically difficult and there are several opportunities for lyrical playing.

The five volumes of *Pièces Classiques* by Gérard Billaudot (Billaudot) have piano accompaniment for these grade 2-5 pieces. This collection of orchestral themes arrangements is unlike *Solos for the Bassoon Player* by Sol Schoenbach in that some of the excerpts were not originally scored for bassoon but will introduce students to orchestral melodies.

Bourrée I and II from *Third Cello Suite* by Johann Sebastian Bach (G. Schirmer), a grade-3 piece for bassoon and piano included in *Solos for the Bassoon Player*, is marked Poco Allegro and switches between C major and C minor. It only ranges between E2 and F4 and is in bass clef throughout. Younger players often have difficulty maintaining a steady tempo on the quarter- and eighth-note rhythms without the included accompaniment.

Three Pieces for Bassoon and Piano by Vladimir Bakaleinikoff (Belwin-Mills), a grade-3 piece, has both lyrical and staccato sections and uses $\frac{4}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ time. The movements are marked Andante, Allegro, and March tempo and are in the keys of G major, B minor, and C major respectively. The range extends from B1 to G4. Rhythms include triplets and dotted-eighth-16th passages. Beginners often have trouble with the frequent slurred intervals of a third or more in the first movement.

Introduction and Hornpipe by Francis Baines (Schoff) is a grade-3 solo in the key of G major that uses $\frac{4}{4}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$ time. The Introduction is Moderato and the Hornpipe is *Un poco più mosso*. This short, lively piece has a range of C2-F4 in the bass clef. Some of the more complex rhythms include quintuplets, dotted-eighth-16th note figures, and 16th-note pick-ups; the 16th-note triplets are a good introduction to ornamentation.

Adagio from *Sextet*, Op. 71 by Ludwig van Beethoven, arranged by Sol Schoenbach (G. Schirmer) turns the original solo into a full-length work for bassoon and piano accompaniment. This grade-3 piece is part of the *Solos for the Bassoon Player* collection. The setting is in $\frac{3}{4}$ meter but the Adagio tempo is felt in four. This beautiful piece is ideal for teaching phrasing and lyrical playing because it is in B \flat major, has a moderate bass clef range of F2-G4, and uses fairly simple rhythms. However, some students may have trouble placing 16th- and 32nd-note values within the eighth-note pulse.

Three Baroque Dances by Joseph Boismortier (Hal Leonard) starts in C

major and later moves between $\frac{2}{2}$ ($\text{♩}=68$) and $\frac{3}{4}$ time ($\text{♩}=42$). The range of this grade-3 piece extends between E \flat 2-F4 in the bass clef. The rhythms are straightforward, but the complicated minuet form includes repeats, multiple endings and a D.S. between two of the dances. The first minuet is in a major key, the second in a minor key, and the third returns to the major key. These are good examples of the Baroque minuet form.

Lyric Suite for Bassoon and Piano by Thomas Dunhill (Boosey & Hawkes) is a grade-3 piece in five movements. The Allegretto amabile is in $\frac{4}{4}$ and D major with simple rhythms and a range of D2-B \flat 4. The Scherzino, marked *Allegro molto giocoso*, is in $\frac{3}{4}$ and G major and has a range of D2-G4. The Nocturne is in E \flat major and the tempo is *Andante con moto grazioso*. The range extends from C3 to A \flat 4, and the compound $\frac{9}{8}$ meter may cause some rhythmic problems. The Intermezzo alla Gavotta is in $\frac{4}{4}$ and D minor; the tempo marking is *Animato* and the range is D2-A4. Vivace is in $\frac{6}{8}$ and passes through the keys of D major, A major, and E \flat major. The range is D2-A4. Although the piece remains in bass clef throughout, the overall length and a combination of fast tempos, compound meters, and different key signatures make this piece more appropriate for advanced students.

Two Pieces for Bassoon and Piano by Bernard Garfield (Edition Musicus), grade 3. The straightforward Andante espressivo is good for teaching lyrical playing and phrasing. The tempo ($\text{♩}=60$) and range (B \flat 2-E \flat 4) are both moderate, and this movement is in B \flat major. The Scherzo is more technically and rhythmically demanding and has a range of C2-D5 that passes through tenor and treble clef; an alternate ending avoids use of D5. This piece is in $\frac{3}{4}$ ($\text{♩}=80$) and uses numerous accidentals in place of a key signature. Rhythms include eighth and 16th notes, 16th-note triplets, quarter notes in compound meter, and a few ties.

Adagio and Rondo by Haydn Millars (Boosey & Hawkes), grade 3. The two

movements are in $\frac{4}{4}$ and $\frac{2}{4}$, marked Adagio and Moderato and written in the keys of B \flat major and F major, respectively. The range extends from B \flat 1 to B \flat 4, and the technical sections are mostly made up of scales and arpeggios. However, the frequent syncopations, complex rhythms that switch between eighth notes, eighth-note triplets, 16th notes, and 16th-note triplets make this piece more difficult than the level suggests.

Allegro Spiritoso by J.B. Senaille (Southern) is similar to the Bourdeaux *Premiere Solo*. This grade-3 piece sounds flashy but is not difficult. The work is in $\frac{2}{4}$ and A minor with an E2-G4 range. The rhythms are fairly simple, but the *Adagio non troppo* introduction includes 32nd notes. The hardest part for students is to avoid rushing the eighth notes after the 16th-note runs.

Solos for the Bassoon Player edited by Sol Schoenbach (G. Schirmer) is a collection of pieces ranging from grades 3-6 and includes piano accompaniment. This compilation transforms standard orchestral bassoon solos into complete solo pieces, which function as an excellent introduction to orchestral excerpts. The arranged score reductions in the piano part are particularly important because they show students how the bassoon part fits in with the other orchestral voices.

Sonata by Jerome Besozzi (Oxford University Press) teaches complicated

rhythmic relationships and ornamentation. This grade-4 work is composed in standard sonata form and uses both simple and compound meters. The Allegro is in $\frac{2}{4}$ and in the key of B \flat major. The A2-F4 range does not move into tenor clef, but this movement frequently switches between various rhythmic values. The Adagio is in $\frac{4}{4}$ time, (♩ =80) with an A2-D4 range. The greatest concern of this movement is keeping a continuous eighth-note pulse with fairly complex rhythms, ornaments, and subdivisions of the beat. The Presto in $\frac{3}{8}$ (♩ =66) and B \flat major ranges from G2 to F4 and moves into tenor clef. The 16th notes and 16th-note triplets are a bit difficult because the feel of the movement is in one.

Lucy Long by Fred Godfrey (Cundy-Bettoney). This grade-4 piece is in $\frac{2}{4}$ and F major. The three-octave range (C2-C5) is not written in tenor clef. The frequent large interval leaps may be difficult for young players, but the straightforward rhythms and fingerings in the 16-note passages lie well on the bassoon.

Concert Piece for Bassoon and Strings by Burrill Phillips (Carl Fischer) is marked Allegro (♩ =132) and is in $\frac{2}{4}$ time. The grade-4 piece uses numerous accidentals in place of a key signature, and the extended range of B \flat 1-A4 is occasionally written in tenor clef. The most difficult aspect of the piece is the cross-rhythmic accents, which are easier to play by viewing

three $\frac{2}{4}$ bars as four $\frac{3}{8}$ bars with the eighth notes remaining steady.

Premier Solo by E. Bourdeau (Hal Leonard) is a grade-5 piece in $\frac{4}{4}$ meter in the keys of C minor and C major. This flashy, Romantic-style piece demands a steady tempo, but calls for some rubato in both the Moderato and Plus Vite sections. The many running 16th-note passages are mainly scales and arpeggios, and the rhythms are not terribly complex. The most difficult aspect is the extreme range of the piece, which extends from B \flat 1 to C5 but does not move into tenor clef.

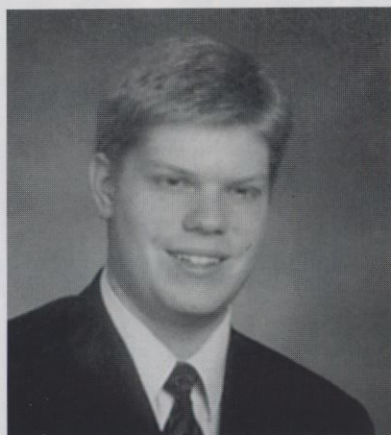
"Romanza" from *L'elisir d'amore* by Gaetano Donizetti, arranged by Sol Schoenbach (G. Schirmer) is a grade-5 piece found in *Solos for the Bassoon Player*. This lovely bassoon solo, which opens the climactic tenor aria in Donizetti's opera, is arranged for solo bassoon with accompaniment. The $\frac{6}{8}$ meter is felt in six because of the *largetto* marking. Rhythms are fairly simple but there is some ornamentation throughout. The B \flat minor key, tenor clef range of F3-A \flat 4, lyrical phrasing, and long, sustained lines are the most difficult factors.

Recommended Books and Articles Related to Bassoon Pedagogy

"Nurturing the Young Bassoonist: A Holistic Approach" by Renee Anthony Dee (*Double Reed* 24, #4, 2001) describes her approach to motivating students, teaching practice techniques, simulating performance conditions, and encouraging independent thinking. Dee is a well-known bassoon pedagogue and presented these teaching methods at the 2001 International Double Reed Society conference at West Virginia University!

"User Friendly Bassoon Tunes by Daryl Durrant (*Double Reed* 22, #1, 1999) has an annotated list of beginning to advanced bassoon solos that are organized by time period with a rubric that rates the difficulty of both the bassoon and piano parts. This list also includes solo collections. While some of the pieces are not commonly performed, they might deserve more attention.

"Solo and Ensemble Literature for Bassoon: A Selected Bibliography of Material for the Bassoon Teacher and Student" by Gary Echols in the *Woodwind Anthology: A Compendium of Articles from The Instrumentalist*. The bibliography is divided into the following categories: bassoon alone;



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bassoon and piano; bassoon ensembles; duets including one bassoon; bassoon and strings; and etudes, studies and orchestral excerpts. Pieces range from grade 1 to grade 5, and each entry includes publisher information.

The Bassoon, Its History, Construction, Makers, Players, and Music, Volumes 1-5 by Will Jansen (Uitgeverij Frits Knuf, 1978, no longer in print), is quite possibly the most exhaustive collection of information on the bassoon. Jansen was an engineer by trade and an amateur bassoonist. The text treats both the German and French systems equally, has numerous pictures, and includes an index of names, a list of illustrations, and a list of musical examples. The history of the bassoon, a bibliography and discography of bassoon solos and ensemble music, and a biography of bassoon players are some of the topics that might be of particular interest to teachers.

The Bassoon and Contrabassoon by Lyndesay G. Langwell (Ernest Benn Limited, 1965, out of print), was one of the first all-inclusive bassoon books and still an authoritative reference. "Some Noted Players Past and Present," and "Solo Music for

Bassoon and Contrabassoon" are of interest to educators.

"An Approach to the Bassoon and Its Literature" by Alan Leech (*The Journal of the International Double Reed Society*, Volume 16, 1988) is a list of method books and literature that was formerly a course syllabus for bassoon students. It is divided into the following categories: beginning, moderately easy, intermediate, advanced intermediate, moderately difficult, difficult, and advanced. The list also covers bassoon playing in chamber music, bassoon and other solo instruments with orchestra, and orchestral excerpts and provides publisher information as well.

A Researcher's Guide to the Bassoon by Daniel Lipori (The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002) is possibly the most comprehensive book published about the bassoon since Will Jansen's reference set and is by far the most scholarly publication about the instrument to date. The book lists bibliographies for the bassoon and all related topics. The chapters on teaching and tutors (method books), which also include bibliographies, are of special interest to pedagogues.

"Breathe, Don't Blow" by C. Robert Reinert and Alan Goodman (*Double Reed*, 21, #3, 1998) offers bassoonists strategies on improving tone production. The authors first discuss the importance of imagining a desirable sound and compare sound production to singing. The article then covers proper embouchure placement and relaxation, reed design, and controlling upper body tension. Anatomical functions related to breathing are explained as well.

"From ? to Bassoon" by Ronald L. Waln, *Woodwind Anthology: A Compendium of Articles from The Instrumentalist* compares the elementary skills learned on flute and saxophone to those used on the bassoon and advocates transferring students to bassoon from these instruments.

"Bassoon Basics for the Flicking Bassoonist" by Robert S. Williams (*Double Reed*, 18, #2, 1995) offers suggestions on using the whisper key, the size of the half-hole, which keys to use when flicking certain notes, and how to approach notes using flick keys. In addition, he suggests alternate fingerings to help tune or improve the response of problematic notes over the entire range of the instrument. The article also includes specific excerpts in which the use of flick keys is important. □

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