

Bassoon Literature, Part 1

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This article on bassoon literature discusses the types of music most often needed by band directors for their students-namely, bassoon methods, solos and solos with band accompaniment. Methods and Grade I solos are covered in Part I. Part II covers additional literature. A subsequent article will discuss bassoon duets, chamber music with other instruments and books dealing with the bassoon.

The graded lists provided with this article are highly selective; thus, there were only a few entries in each category. Limiting the number of items recommended, enables me to comment briefly on each item. Who needs another long list that gives you no idea about the pieces? Furthermore, I have played all selections referred to in this article and am recommending them for their quality and suitability for the grade level indicated. To make these materials accessible to as many directors and students as possible, all the music listed in this article (with the exception of three solos) are published by large American publishers. The publishers of these pieces are not indicated within the body of the article; rather, they are listed in the bibliography at the end. The music included in this article is graded using six categories, with Grade I being the least difficult and Grade VI the most difficult.

Bassoon Methods

One of the most popular and readily available series of method books for the bassoon is the Rubank series, which includes the Elementary Methods by J.E. Skornicka, the Intermediate Method by Himie Voxman and the Advanced Method, Volumes I and II, also by Himie Voxman. These three books work well, and a student can be started from the beginning with the Elementary Method. However, as a student gets into the Advanced Method volumes, it would be a good idea to supplement these books with some other technical exercises, such as those listed below. The other complete method is the Weissenborn Method for Bassoon, which is published by various publishers. I recommend the New Enlarged Edition Revised by Fred Bettoney, published by Cundy≠Bettoney. All Cundy≠Bettoney publications are available through Carl Fischer. This edition not only contains the Weissenborn Method for Bassoon but also the Weissenborn Fifty Advanced Studies, the Milde Twenty-Five Studies in All Keys and the Almenraeder Scale Exercises. I highly recommend this edition and suggest that it be used to start a beginner or a student who is transferring from saxophone or flute. The Cundy≠Bettoney edition is very complete and can be used for years without supplementary materials.

The next group of method books contain materials that can be used after a student has completed the Rubank series or the enlarged Weissenborn. The Ludwig Milde Concert Studies (Vol. I & II), work especially well after a student is finished with the Weissenborn. The Concert Studies are quite difficult and use a tenor clef a great deal.

This method is very good for teaching phrasing. After a student has finished the Rubank series, he or she is usually not ready to start the Milde. A good series to bridge this gap is the Melodious and Progressive Studies for Bassoon, Volumes I and II, compiled by Alan Hawkins. This series is excellent because it uses exercises from many bassoon tutors and is very progressive.

After a student is finished with the Milde Concert Studies, he is quite advanced and is ready for more challenging material. There are many difficult methods available, but the best, in my opinion, are the Giampiere 16 Daily Studies for the Perfection of the Bassoon and the Orefici Bravura Studies. Both are very difficult and can be used to challenge the college-bound bassoon student.

The next group of methods I will discuss are those which can be used to supplement the Rubank series, or merely supply additional study material. The Satzenhofer Twenty-Four Studies and Ozi Fourty-Two Caprices are two that I recommend for this purpose. Both of these methods include a considerable amount of tenor clef material. This is important since the Rubank series does not use tenor clef.

The last two methods I will mention can be used to help a student with particular playing problems. The Pares Scales for Bassoon by Gabriel Pares, edited by Harvey Whistler, can be helpful to a student who has weak technique. It should be used after a student has been playing for approximately one or two years. Also the Bona Rhythmical Articulation for Bass Clef Instruments works well for students with rhythmic problems. It begins with fairly simple rhythms and progresses to more difficult, complex rhythms.

Bassoon Solos

All the Grade I solos listed here encompass a limited range, roughly from F below the staff to C or D above the staff. They are in keys with no more than one sharp or two flats. Grade I solos only subdivide the beat with eighth-notes. In this grade I choose solos with snappy tunes that I think will appeal to the young students. All the editions in this section of the article include piano accompaniment.

There are four solos which I recommend using for a young student's first solo: A Little Song, A Little March, Waltz for Bassoon and March for Bassoons. (See Bibliography for composers and publishers.) All have a range of an octave or less and are not difficult rhythmically. A Little Song is an especially good solo for a beginner since it has a limited range of A in the staff to the G in the staff.

The next group of Grade I solos are a little more difficult, yet again stay within approximately an octave range. This group includes Little Elephant, A Russian Folk Song, March of the Leprechauns and Gavott for Bassoon. These four solos include a few accidentals, and the eighth-note passages now contain a few leaps. Also, the articulation gets a little more complex. In this group, the March of the Leprechauns is a particularly good, spirited tune.

The last three solos I recommend in Grade I-Gavotte, The Happy Farmer, and Gique-all have a more extended range and require more technique. Now there are passages with a few measures consisting entirely of eighth-notes. The Happy Farmer is a good example of this. The Gique is the most difficult solo in this grade because of the 6/8 meter, long eighth-note passages and slurred leaps.

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Orefici, Alberto. Bravura Studies. International Music.
Ozi, Etienne. Fourty≠Two Caprices, Edited by Leonard Sharrow. International Music.
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Voxman, Himie, Intermediate Method. Rubank.
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Weissenborn, Julius. Method for Bassoon, New Enlarged Edition Revised by Fred Bettoney. Cundy≠Bettoney.

Bassoon Solos

Grade I

Best, Arthur. Little Elephant. Belwin≠Mills.
Erickson/Best. March of Leprechauns. Belwin≠Mills.
Hawkins, Alan. March for Bassoons. Belwin≠Mills.
---. Gavotte for Bassoon. Belwin≠Mills.
Johnson, Roy. A Little Song. Belwin≠Mills.
---. A Little March. Belwin≠Mills.
---. Waltz for Bassoon. Belwin≠Mills.
---. Gavott. Belwin≠Mills.
---. Gique. Belwin≠Mills.
Schuman/Johnson. The Happy Farmer. Belwin≠Mills.
Tchaikovsky/Hawkins. A Russian Folk Song. Belwin≠Mills.

Part II will appear in the March-April issue of Bandworld Magazine and will cover bassoon solos for grades II, III, IV, V, and VI plus solos for bassoon and band.

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