

## Writing for Open Score ensembles - guidelines and requirements

### What is flexible scoring?

Open Score ensembles vary in size and instrumentation, so we ask composers to write flexible scores which are designed to be performed by different numbers and combinations of instruments. You may specify your preferred instrumentation, but pieces must be playable using many different combinations of instruments.

### Division of parts

Flexible scores usually consist of four parts, and often a number of different instruments will play from each part. The conductor and performers will choose which instruments play each part, depending on what instruments are available, adjusting the instrumentation to achieve the right balance. You may also include parts for keyboard and percussion if you wish. The following is a typical division of parts:

- Part 1 upper range:
  - e.g., violin, flute, oboe, clarinet
- Part 2 upper middle range:
  - e.g., violin, oboe, clarinet, viola, alto saxophone, trumpet
- Part 3 lower middle range:
  - e.g., viola, tenor saxophone, french horn, tenor horn, bassoon, trombone, guitar
- Part 4 lower range:
  - e.g., cello, double bass, bassoon, trombone, euphonium, tuba, bass guitar
- keyboard (piano or electronic keyboard) – normally one player only
- percussion – normally one player only

### Percussion

The percussion instruments available vary between ensembles, so please suggest alternatives. For untuned percussion, specifying a generic timbre rather than a specific instrument is flexible and useful – e.g. drum, wood, metal. Tuned percussion instruments (if available) may be assigned to one of the four basic parts. Note that in CoMA ensembles, percussion is usually played by a non-specialist.

### Examples

Scores and recordings of a number of existing CoMA works are available online at <http://www.coma.org/catalogue>. If you would like to view more scores, either in person at the CoMA office or by post, contact Liz Herbert on [library@coma.org](mailto:library@coma.org).

### Score and part preparation

Please ensure that your score and part preparation covers the following points.

- The score should have a title on every page.
- Please provide a short biographical note, a short descriptive programme note (max 120 words each) and the duration of the piece at the front of the score.
- Any special performance instructions that apply to the whole piece should appear at the front of the score, and may also appear in the parts if appropriate.
- For 'Open Score' pieces (flexible scoring), the score should show all parts 'in C', i.e., not transposed.
- Where the piece is for specific instrumentation, including transposing instruments, transposed parts are preferred.
- Use only one stave per part unless the part contains complicated divisi passages.
- Try to use clefs for each part which are appropriate to the tessitura of the music – e.g., alto clef may be used for part 3.
- Bar numbers must be shown in all pieces. In longer pieces, rehearsal letters should also be used.
- The initial tempo and all tempo changes must be clearly marked.
- Metronome marks should be used where possible.
- Order of staves:
  - If there are any solo instruments, their parts should appear at the top of the score.
  - Then place the ensemble parts in order of tessitura – Parts 1,2,3,4, etc.
  - The Keyboard part(s), if any, should be placed below the ensemble parts.
  - The Percussion part(s), if any, should be placed at the bottom of the score.
- The parts should be clearly labelled on each page with the part number, transposition and clef – e.g., 'Part 1 in C Treble'; 'Part 2 in Bb Treble'; etc.
- Some parts may need extra clarification. For example, if you provide two versions of Part 3, one for clarinet and one for tenor sax, the transpositions are different by an octave. The clarinet part should be 'Part 3 in Bb Treble (Cl)'; the sax part should be 'Part 3 in Bb Treble (Sax)'.
- Please try to avoid difficult page turns in the parts wherever possible.
- Ensure score and parts are printed large enough to be easily legible, bearing in mind the distance between the player and the music stand. E.g., if using Sibelius, use staff size 7 for the parts and not less than 6.6 in the score.
- For percussion, list the instruments/timbres and the number of percussionists required on the score and at the beginning of the part.
- Lay out the percussion parts in instrumental groupings (tuned and untuned), or on one continuous line but do not use multiple separate parts. Show instrument changes clearly. Be consistent about the use of specific stave lines/space for specific sounds.
- Score and parts should be made available in PDF format.
- If you use Sibelius or other music notation software, it would be useful (but not essential) to have a copy of the source file available, so that CoMA can more easily generate any additional parts or transpositions that may be necessary.

### **Allocation of instruments to parts**

The following table gives a rough guide to how the most common instruments may be assigned to different parts in the ensemble. Parts for those instruments marked in bold and underlined are essential; other parts may be regarded as optional.

In most cases, one part can serve for several instruments. E.g., **Part 1 in C Treble Clef** could be given to Flute, Oboe and Violin. **Part 4 in C Bass Clef** could be given to cello, bassoon, trombone and double bass, but bear in mind that in this case the double bass will sound an octave lower than written. (In the range descriptions, C4 is 'middle C'; B3 is the B below middle C; C5 is one octave above middle C; etc.)

		<b>(Typical ranges, as written for C instrs)</b>				
			<b>C4-C7</b>	<b>G3-A5</b>	<b>C3-E5</b>	<b>C2-G4</b>
<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Transposition</b> (sounding)	<b>Clef</b>	<b>PART 1</b>	<b>PART 2</b>	<b>PART 3</b>	<b>PART 4</b>
<b><u>Flute</u></b>	None	Treble	in C			
Piccolo	8ve higher	Treble	in C			
<b><u>Oboe</u></b>	None	Treble	in C	in C		
<b><u>Cor Anglais</u></b>	perf 5 <sup>th</sup> lower	Treble		in F	in F	
Eb Clarinet	min 3 <sup>rd</sup> higher	Treble	in Eb			
<b><u>Bb Clarinet</u></b>	maj 2 <sup>nd</sup> lower	Treble	in Bb	in Bb	in Bb	
<b><u>Bass Clarinet</u></b>	maj 9 <sup>th</sup> lower	Treble			in Bb	in Bb
<b><u>Bassoon</u></b>	None	Bass / Tenor			in C	in C
Bb Soprano Sax	maj 2 <sup>nd</sup> lower	Treble	in Bb	in Bb		
<b><u>Eb Alto Sax</u></b>	maj 6 <sup>th</sup> lower	Treble		in Eb	in Eb	
<b><u>Bb Tenor Sax</u></b>	maj 9 <sup>th</sup> lower	Treble			in Bb	
Eb Baritone Sax	8ve+maj 6 <sup>th</sup> lower	Treble				in Eb
<b><u>French Horn in F</u></b>	perf 5 <sup>th</sup> lower	Treble			in F	
Eb Tenor Horn	maj 6 <sup>th</sup> lower	Treble			in Eb	
<b><u>Bb Trumpet</u></b>	maj 2 <sup>nd</sup> lower	Treble		in Bb	In Bb	
<b><u>Tenor Trombone</u></b>	None	Bass / Tenor			in C	in C
Bb Euphonium/Baritone	maj 9 <sup>th</sup> lower	Treble			in Bb	in Bb
<b><u>Tuba</u></b> /Bass Trombone	None	Bass				in C
Eb Bass	8ve+maj 6 <sup>th</sup> lower	Treble				in Eb
Bb Bass	Two 8ves+ maj 2 <sup>nd</sup> lower	Treble				in Bb
<b><u>Violin</u></b>	None	Treble	in C	in C		
<b><u>Viola</u></b>	None	Alto		in C	in C	
<b><u>Cello</u></b>	None	Bass / Tenor			in C	in C
<b><u>Double Bass</u></b> /Bass Guitar	8ve lower	Bass				in C
Guitar	8ve lower	Treble			in C	in C
Others	May vary	May vary	As reqd	As reqd	As reqd	As reqd