

String Orchestra Arrangements

Five Arrangements Without Octave Doublings:

(1) SATB

Violin I	soprano melody
Violin II	alto
Viola	tenor
Violoncello	bass
Double Bass	bass (written up an octave)

(2) To project the melody more:

Violin I	soprano melody
Violin II	soprano melody
Viola	divide for alto and tenor*
Violoncello	bass
Double Bass	bass (written up an octave)

*divisi in the violas may require a louder dynamic if the section is small

(3) Another option for projecting the melody:

Violin I	soprano melody
Violin II	soprano melody
Viola	alto
Violoncello	divide for tenor and bass
Double Bass	bass (written up an octave)

(4) Another option for projecting the melody:

Violin I	soprano melody
Violin II	alto
Viola I	soprano melody with Violin I*
Violoncello	divide for tenor and bass
Double Bass	bass (written up an octave)

*The mix of color of the violin I and viola adds more weight.

(5) "Romantic" arrangement:

Violin I	soprano melody
Violin II	alto
Viola I	tenor
Violoncello I	soprano melody with Violin I*
Violoncello II	bass
Double Bass	bass (written up an octave)

*Violin I and Cello I doubling adds even more weight than arrangement 4

Arrangements Using Octave Doublings in the Upper 3 Voices

(1) Added brilliance to melody:

Violin I	divide soprano melody in octaves (add an octave higher)
Violin II	alto
Viola I	tenor
Violoncello	bass
Double Bass	bass (written up an octave)

(2) Bright melody with fuller scoring:

Violin I	divide soprano melody in octaves (add an octave higher)
Violin II	divide alto in octaves (add an octave higher)
Viola I	divide tenor in octaves (add an octave higher)
Violoncello	bass
Double Bass	bass (written up an octave)

(3) The fullest most resonant scoring:

Violin I	divide - soprano (oct.) + alto (oct.)
Violin II	divide - tenor (oct.) + soprano (loco)
Viola	divide - alto (loco) + tenor (loco)
Violoncello	divide - soprano (oct.) + bass (loco)
Double Bass	bass (oct.)

NOTE: Be careful when doubling the inner voices an octave lower. More often than not this will create muddiness. Doubling of the soprano voice an octave lower may or may not work (or be appropriate). In the following example, the

doubling of the B in the soprano works because it fills in the octave gap between the small E and E1 (see chord spacing below).



Chord Spacing and Doubling

Remember - Wide intervals in the lower register, tight (or wide) intervals in the upper register.

(1) Chords in open spacing - If appropriate, fill in by doubling.



(2) Possible to add a “filler” voice that doubles a note or fills in a harmony.

(3) Use voice leading rules! (7th resolves down, leading tone resolves up, etc.)

(4) For homophonic music, project the melody by doubling, use of orchestral color, or using a louder dynamic.

(5) For polyphonic music, bring out the voice in which the melody lies.