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THE MAIN ARTICLE STARTING ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE:***

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**The Cello Repertoire
Advice for students and young
professionals**

written by Benjamin Whitcomb

taken with permission from “The Advancing Cellist’s
Handbook” - Appendix 1, pages 214-218
(also with thanks to Cynthia Creech)

The Cello Repertoire – advice for students and young professionals

*written by Benjamin Whitcomb
escrito por Benjamin Whitcomb*

Note: we reproduce this article because we believe it to be very useful for the young cellists of today, with a lot of sound advice and comments being offered ...

So, what music should you learn to play, and how should you choose it? In the long run, what you want to learn will depend on 1) your ambitions as a cellist, 2) the amount of time that you are willing to spend learning cello repertoire, and 3) the type of cello music that you like to play the most. As I mentioned before, our repertoire can be described as being either solo, chamber, or orchestral.

One of the many advantages to playing the cello is the enormous repertoire that we have to choose from. In terms of solo music, for example, few instruments have a larger collection of repertoire: voice, piano, and violin come to mind as exceptions, in large part because they have a longer history of being treated as a solo instrument. In terms of chamber music, the only instrument with a decidedly larger repertoire is the piano. And as far as orchestral music is concerned, how many such pieces can you think of that don't use cellos? Below is a discussion of the repertoire for cello that I consider most important to know. I will start with orchestral music.

If orchestral music is your favorite type of music, or if you would like to spend a considerable amount of your cello playing time playing in an orchestra, then you'll want to learn more complete orchestral works and more orchestral excerpts than somebody who does not particularly care for orchestral playing. I highly recommend the three volumes of orchestral excerpts that Leonard Rose compiled and edited. In addition, it is worthwhile to purchase the complete cello parts to all of the symphonic works of Beethoven, Brahms, Strauss, Mozart, and Tchaikovsky. Many of these can be purchased nowadays in electronic format for very little money. If you hope to play in an opera pit orchestra, you should also purchase a collection of cello excerpts of operas. In addition to the Internet, you can use the bibliography at the back of this book as a resource.

In many ways, orchestral playing can be considered to be by far the most likely life-long performance outlet for amateur cellists. Although the number of full-time professional symphony orchestras in America has decreased, there are a large number of part-time professional orchestras in existence. The membership of the vast majority of these orchestras contains at least some amateur musicians. If you dedicate your life to it, you might still have difficulty getting into a full-time professional orchestra, but if your heart is set on getting into a part-time professional orchestra, you will be successful. Even if orchestral playing doesn't set your heart on fire in and of itself it does have two things going for it: 1) it is a very social activity and a great way to meet new (and often very interesting) people, 2) it does provide a simple way to ensure that you always keep playing and practicing your instrument.

Out of the 200-plus well-known works for orchestra, some get programmed more than others, and some get chosen as sources for audition excerpts far more than others. Below is a list of 12 of the most-commonly-asked-for works for orchestral auditions. Even if you don't like playing orchestral music, you should still make yourself learn the main cello excerpts from these works. Not only are all of these works masterpieces, but you will learn different things from orchestral excerpts than what you learn from the chamber and solo music repertoire, and it is good to be a well-rounded musician.

Top Twelve Most Requested Cello Excerpts for Orchestral Auditions

Mozart, Symphony No. 35
Beethoven, Symphony No. 4
Beethoven, Symphony No. 5
Beethoven, Symphony No. 8
Brahms, Symphony No. 2
Brahms, Symphony No. 3
Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4
Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 6
Strauss, R., Ein Heldenleben
Strauss, R., Don Juan
Strauss, R., Death and Transfiguration
Debussy, La Mer

In addition to learning these works, you should also listen to as much of the orchestral repertoire as possible.

As with orchestral playing, if chamber music is your favorite type of repertoire to play, you will also never have a shortage of pieces to choose from. As a vocation or an avocation, you are most likely to spend most of your chamber music time throughout your life playing in a string quartet. You would be surprised how much money you can make playing for weddings and special occasions, especially if at least someone in the group has some marketing skills, some business sense, and a hefty dose of ambition. Cello chamber works for just strings include string trios, duos, quintets, sextets, and octets. There are also piano trios, quartets, and quintets, plus a variety of mixed ensembles, some of which include clarinet, flute, bassoon, trumpet, oboe, or horn. There are also a number of chamber works for cello and voice. Don't forget that cello can also play in any piece that contains a basso continuo part. Finally, most of the "alternative styles" playing opportunities that you will have will be in what are effectively chamber music groups.

THE ADVANCING CELLISTS HANDBOOK

Please do consider obtaining the complete book, I truly believe it is excellent reading material for the cellist.

ISBN number is **978-1-44909-654-0**.

Any other details can be found at the publisher's website for the book:

<http://bookstore.authorhouse.com/Products/SKU-000262919/The-Advancing-Cellists-Handbook.aspx>

Also, these links are really useful –

<http://www.benjaminwhitcomb.com/recordings-publications.shtm>

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Advancing-Cellists-Handbook-Practicing/dp/1449096549>

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