



Ensemble/Excerpt Clinic, Jean Martin, Clinic Editor

A New ICSOM Audition List Survey

by John Ericson

As a student in the early 1980s, I was lucky to join the International Horn Society and to read a pair of articles which featured surveys of horn audition lists, both published in the April 1983 issue of *The Horn Call*. In "Auditioning for a Horn Position in the United States," Brian Thomas and Seth Orgel summarized the contents of 41 different audition lists, and John Dressler, in "Audition Repertoire: An Update," focused the issue further by looking at high and low horn audition lists from the previous year. These articles were of great use to me; in fact, the summer after the articles appeared I made it my summer project to learn the major excerpts from as many of the most frequently requested works listed as possible. This was an important step in preparing for the auditions I would eventually take. In my teaching, I have followed an outline of excerpt study derived from these articles with my students, but I have often wondered what the results of a more focused survey of excerpts requested by major orchestras would be, especially a survey that also divided the results by position.

For those aspiring to play in an orchestra, the central thing that must be learned well in college is orchestral excerpts. In studying excerpts, there are certainly obvious technical requirements to meet, but the larger question is defining exactly what works are the most significant to study. This spring, I finally took steps toward defining what today's significant audition excerpts really are. With the help of my students at Arizona State University, a new survey of audition lists was completed. I limited this survey exclusively to audition lists from orchestras whose performers are currently represented by ICSOM (the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians); these ensembles are the 49 orchestras which would be currently be considered major orchestras in the USA.¹ A total of 88 audition lists were consulted from openings occurring over the past 20 years. Those orchestras who had horn openings for which lists were available for this survey included Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Colorado, Columbus, Dallas, Detroit, Florida, Grant Park, Houston, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Louisville, Metropolitan Opera, Milwaukee, Minnesota, Nashville, National, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Pittsburgh, Rochester, St. Louis, San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco, San Francisco Opera, and Syracuse.

The following works were requested on over half of the audition lists and are obviously highly significant works:

- (65) Beethoven: Symphony No. 7
Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5
- (62) Strauss: *Ein Heldenleben*
- (58) Strauss: *Don Juan*
- (56) Strauss: *Till Eulenspiegel*
- (48) Beethoven: Symphony No. 3
- (47) Beethoven: Symphony No. 9

You can certainly go far if you can play all the major excerpts in these works really well. However, the reality is that orchestras are hiring people to play specific, contracted positions. The details of the master agreement of each orchestra and also individually negotiated player contracts relate very much to what repertoire is actually requested in any audition. These contracts describe not only the primary position that a member of a horn section holds but may also dictate what other parts a hornist may be able to perform or even if they can perform other parts in the section. This shows up very clearly in the Assistant/Utility Horn audition lists where typically a mixture of high and low horn excerpts are requested to cover all the bases. If we take these lists (14 of them) out of the equation temporarily, and divide the remaining lists by the traditional "high" and "low" horn designations, we have the following results, once again looking only at works requested on 50% or more of lists:

High Horn [First and Third Horn] (total 38 lists)

- (34) Strauss: *Till Eulenspiegel*
- (27) Strauss: *Ein Heldenleben*
- (26) Beethoven: Symphony No. 7
- Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5
- (25) Brahms: Symphony No. 4
- (24) Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 5
- (23) Wagner: Siegfried's Rhine Journey
- (22) Brahms: Symphony No. 1
- (21) Strauss: *Don Juan*
- (20) Brahms: Symphony No. 2
- Brahms: Symphony No. 3

Low Horn [Second and Fourth Horn] (total 36 lists)

- (28) Beethoven: Symphony No. 9
- Strauss: *Don Juan*
- (27) Beethoven: Symphony No. 3
- (26) Beethoven: Symphony No. 7
- Wagner: Prelude to *Das Rheingold*
- (25) Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5
- (24) Mahler: Symphony No. 1
- (23) Strauss: *Ein Heldenleben*
- Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 4
- (21) Beethoven: *Fidelio* Overture
- Beethoven: Symphony No. 8
- (20) Strauss: *Don Quixote*

This division helps to answer the question of what excerpts are significant, but for the serious student a further division of these lists by position offers much more focus. Some of these works are highly significant for only one position but must certainly be a part of what a serious student learns. As will be reasonably obvious from the summaries below, Third and Fourth Horn audition lists often include at



Excerpt Clinic: A New ICSOM Survey

least a few First and Second Horn excerpts (e.g., Beethoven 3 has no Fourth Horn part but is frequently requested on Fourth Horn auditions).

First Horn (21 lists)

- (19) Beethoven: Symphony No. 7
- (18) Strauss: *Ein Heldenleben*
Strauss: *Till Eulenspiegel*
- (17) Tchaikowsky: Symphony No. 5
- (16) Bruckner: Symphony No. 4
Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5
- (15) Beethoven: Symphony No. 6
- (14) Brahms: Symphony No. 2
Wagner: Siegfried's Rhine Journey
- (13) Brahms: Symphony No. 4
Mahler: Symphony No. 5
- (12) Brahms: Symphony No. 1
Ravel: Piano Concerto in G
- (11) Brahms: Symphony No. 3

Second Horn (20 lists)

- (19) Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5
- (18) Beethoven: Symphony No. 7
- (16) Beethoven: *Fidelio* Overture
Beethoven: Symphony No. 3
Strauss: *Don Juan*
- (14) Beethoven: Symphony No. 8
Beethoven: Symphony No. 9
- (13) Tchaikowsky: Symphony No. 4
Wagner: Prelude to *Das Rheingold*
- (12) Strauss: *Ein Heldenleben*
- (10) Haydn: Symphony No. 31 "Hornsignal"
Mahler: Symphony No. 1
Strauss: *Don Quixote*

Third Horn (17 lists)

- (16) Strauss: *Till Eulenspiegel*
- (14) Brahms: Piano Concerto No. 2
Mendelssohn: Symphony No. 3
- (12) Berlioz: Queen Mab Scherzo
Brahms: Symphony No. 4
- (11) Brahms: Piano Concerto No. 1
Strauss: *Don Juan*
- (10) Brahms: Symphony No. 1
Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5
- (9) Strauss: *Ein Heldenleben*
Wagner: Siegfried's Rhine Journey

Fourth Horn (16 lists)

- (16) Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5
- (14) Beethoven: Symphony No. 9
Mahler: Symphony No. 1
- (13) Wagner: Prelude to *Das Rheingold*
- (12) Strauss: *Don Juan*
- (11) Beethoven: Symphony No. 3
Strauss: *Ein Heldenleben*
Weber: Overture to *Der Freischütz*
- (10) Brahms: Symphony No. 4
Strauss: *Don Quixote*
Tchaikowsky: Symphony No. 4

- (8) Beethoven: Symphony No. 7

Assistant/Utility Horn (14 lists)

- (14) Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5
- (13) Beethoven: Symphony No. 7
Strauss: *Till Eulenspiegel*
- (12) Strauss: *Ein Heldenleben*
- (10) Tchaikowsky: Symphony No. 4
- (9) Brahms: Symphony No. 2
Brahms: Symphony No. 3
Strauss: *Don Juan*
Wagner: Siegfried's Rhine Journey
- (8) Beethoven: Symphony No. 3
- (7) Tchaikowsky: Symphony No. 5

All of the above summaries contain only works asked for on 50% or more of lists by position. Obviously, many other works are important. The following works were requested on a significant number of audition lists but did not make the 50% mark to be included on any of the previous position lists. If a work was requested most frequently for a specific position, this is noted in parentheses.

12 or more lists:

- Bach: Brandenburg Concerto No. 1
- Dvorak: Symphony No. 9
- Mahler: Symphony No. 3
- Mahler: Symphony No. 9
- Mendelssohn: *Nocturne* from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (horn 1)
- Mozart: Symphony No. 40 (horn 1)
- Prokofiev: *Romeo and Juliet* (horns 2, 4)
- Rossini: Overture to *Semiramide*
- Schubert: Symphony No. 9 (horn 2)
- Schumann: Symphony No. 3 (horns 1, 3)

7-11 lists:

- Bach: B Minor Mass (horn 1)
- Beethoven: Symphony No. 2 (horn 1)
- Brahms: Variations on a Theme by Haydn (horn 2)
- Mozart: Symphony No. 25 (horn 2)
- Mozart: Symphony No. 29
- Ravel: *Daphnis et Chloë* (horns 1, 4)
- Ravel: *Pavane* (horn 1)
- Saint-Saëns: Symphony No. 3 (horn 3)
- Stravinsky: *Firebird* (horn 1)
- Wagner: Prelude to Act III of *Lohengrin* (horn 4)
- Wagner: "Long Call" from *Siegfried* (horn 1)

4-6 Lists:

- Berlioz: *Roman Carnival* Overture (horn 4)
- Brahms: *Tragic Overture* (horn 4)
- Bruckner: Symphony No. 7
- Dvorak: Cello Concerto (horn 1)
- Franck: Symphony in D minor
- Liszt: *Les Préludes* (horn 4)
- Mahler: Symphony No. 4 (horn 1)
- Mahler: Symphony No. 7 (horn 1)
- Mussorgsky/Ravel: *Pictures at an Exhibition* (horn 1)
- Rimsky Korsakov: *Scheherazade* (horn 1)

- Schoenberg: Chamber Symphony No. 1
- Strauss: *Symphonia Domestica* (horn 4)
- Stravinsky: *Fairy's Kiss* (horn 1)
- Stravinsky: *Rite of Spring* (horn 4)
- Tchaikowsky: Symphony No. 6 (horn 4)
- Wagner: Prelude to Act II of *Lohengrin* (horn 2)
- Wagner: *Die Meistersinger*
- Weber: *Oberon* Overture

A total of 46 other works (!) were requested on one to three audition lists, and many of those appeared on one list only. Obviously, many orchestral works have important horn solos, but only a few have passages that are requested frequently at auditions.

Having laid out the major statistics, it is now appropriate to note if there are any significant trends or changes in what is being requested. The 1983 Thomas and Orgel survey examined 41 audition lists from 30 major and regional orchestras. Those works requested on over 50% of these lists, in order of decreasing frequency, were:

- (34) Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5
- (31) Beethoven: Symphony No. 3
- (30) Beethoven: Symphony No. 7
Strauss: *Till Eulenspiegel*
- (24) Strauss: *Don Juan*
- (22) Beethoven: Symphony No. 9
Brahms: Symphony No. 1
- (21) Strauss: *Ein Heldenleben*
Tchaikowsky: Symphony No. 5

Thus, with two additions, essentially the same works were requested on over half of the lists in their survey, but with a different order of frequency.

Dressler divided the results of his survey of audition lists between high horn and low horn. For high horn, he noted the following works as being requested on over 50% of lists, in order of decreasing frequency:

- Strauss: *Till Eulenspiegel*
- Tchaikowsky: Symphony No. 5
- Wagner: *Siegfried*
- Beethoven: Symphony No. 7
- Strauss: *Ein Heldenleben*
- Brahms: Symphony No. 1
- Brahms: Symphony No. 2
- Dvorak: Symphony No. 9
- Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5
- Strauss: *Don Juan*

For low horn, Dressler noted the following works as being requested on over 50% of lists, in order of decreasing frequency:


- Beethoven: Symphony No. 9
- Beethoven: Symphony No. 7
- Shostakovich: Symphony No. 5
- Beethoven: Symphony No. 3

Exactly what the differences between our new survey and the results of the 1983 articles mean is difficult to say.

One impression would be that the bar seems to have been raised, with Beethoven 7 and *Ein Heldenleben* rising in overall importance. While excerpts aren't the whole show at an audition (you need a great solo and a strong resumé), it is obvious that one must know the standard audition repertoire and be prepared to perform these excerpts at the highest possible level. It is hoped that the results of this survey will help students to prioritize their study in order to have successful auditions that will allow them to join the ranks of major orchestra players in the future.

Notes

¹ For the complete list visit <www.icsom.org>. The members of a small number of orchestras in the USA in the same budget range are not represented by ICSOM; audition lists from these orchestras, for purposes of this survey, were excluded.

John Ericson is Assistant Professor of horn at Arizona State University and Artist-Faculty at the Brevard Music Center. Prior to joining the faculty at ASU, Dr. Ericson performed for five seasons in the Nashville Symphony and taught for three years at the Crane School of Music, State University of New York (SUNY) at Potsdam. Dr. Ericson holds degrees from Indiana University, The Eastman School of Music, and Emporia State University, and he has published a number of articles on the history and performance of the horn; versions of many of these articles may be found in his "Horn Articles Online" site on the Internet at <www.public.asu.edu/~jqerics/articles_online.htm>. 

www.brass-bulletin.com

Go international, join Brass Bulletin!

- 4 issues/year - 5 languages -
- full color layout - original art covers -

Brass Bulletin gives you access to professional information about playing techniques, health, discoveries, history, careers, young artists, new CDs, music and equipments for all brass. Since 1971, Brass Bulletin is the companion of many players, join them now at special price



I subscribe

1 year to Brass Bulletin (4 issues)

USD 37.00* - our price 33.00

Swiss Francs 53.00* - our price 48.00

(surface shipping included or airmail suppl. USD 18.00)

save 4.00 USD

Name	.....	Please send back to:
First Name	.....	BRASS BULLETIN
Address	.....	P.O.Box 300
Country	.....	CH-1674 VUARMARENS
City	.....	Switzerland
State	.....	or fax ++41-21-909 1009
Post code	.....
Email	.....
Date	.....	Signature

Please charge my credit card (in Swiss Francs)

Card No.	exp. date
----------	-------	-----------	-------