

# Re-writing Parts in Band Music

*Or*

“My only oboe just moved, and Contest is next week!”

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- I. Historical precedent exists
- II. Practical considerations
  - A. Few bands have “perfect” instrumentation and/or strong players in every section
  - B. Double reeds in smaller programs
  - C. Non-varsity bands
  - D. Eligibility problem occurring too late to change someone to a different instrument
  - E. Got harp? Many instruments are colorful to the composer/orchestrator, but seldom owned by public school bands: celeste, string bass, contrabassoon, English horn, contra clarinets.
- III. Perhaps you shouldn’t play that piece...
  - A. When has a band director gone too far in re-writing parts? Using “preponderance of evidence” as a guide
  - B. Select music you can play
- IV. Re-writing missing parts
  - A. Re-writing a solo requires unusual circumstances
  - B. Ideally, re-write any line in the music not played by some instrument
  - C. Missing/unused “color” instruments: **You can sometimes leave some of These out, but you have to study the score to make a good judgment!**  
**Examples:**
    1. Piccolo: If the piccolo doubles the flute, it can probably be left out.
    2. English horn: Vital as a solo color, but hard to hear in tutti.
    3. Eb Clarinet: If it doubles another part, it is not being used for its color and may be deleted without changing the musical intent.
    4. Alto clarinet: Vital solos in Dahl’s *Sinfonietta* and Grainger’s *Lincolnshire Posy*, vital lines in Schoenberg’s *Theme and*

*Variations.* (Vital line in mvt. 2 of the band arrangement of *Capriol Suite* by Peter Warlock.)

5. Contra clarinets: Few solos or uncovered lines. Opening of Chance’s *Incantation and Dance* has a vital part for BBb contra.
  6. Soprano sax: Study score to see if it is being used as a specific color. Vital to some pieces by Grainger and Grantham.
  7. Bass sax: Rarely anything not doubled.
  8. String bass: Check for any solos or parts not doubled. (Sounds octave lower than written)
  9. Harp: Synthesize or use piano (or omit).
  10. Celeste: Synthesize or use piano (piano plays part an octave higher).
  11. Piano: Synthesize.
- V. Re-writing to boost weaker sections
- A. Try to keep same color
  - B. Must keep same range
- VI. Re-writing to help balance
- VII. Re-writing to avoid range problems
- A. First, ask: Am I playing something that is simply too hard for these players?
  - B. Adjusting octaves from a standpoint of balance: ***Never* take anything down an octave if that exact music does not already exist in the lower octave.**
- VIII. Won’t judges look down on me for doing this?
- A. If a one judge criticizes it, that may be a personal opinion, but if all judges mention it, then your re-writing has detracted from the music.
  - B. Most judges would prefer that you choose music you can perform, but all of them have been in your shoes, and almost all of them have re-written something for one of the reasons given above.
- IX. Use good taste if you do!
- A. Choose similar tone color first.
  - B. Use correct range so far as possible.
- X. Use chart “Transposition Guide for Missing or Weak Band Instruments” by Fred J. Allen