

Karen Hansen Gellert – NYSSMA® String Review Editor



Orchestra/String Review

Recently a few retired string teachers of note got together to read through some new orchestra arrangements. The players themselves are Past Presidents of Long Island String Festival (LISFA) and/or Past NYSSMA® All-State Chairs, and active NYSSMA® adjudicators, so they have years of experience with school orchestra arrangements of all levels. That being said, here are the pieces and some short descriptions.

Long Island's own, Reynard Burns, has published some really attractive and playable pieces for strings. Now, being that Rey is a double bassist, his bass parts are always interesting and challenging!

Tango de la Playa – Reynard Burns, Advanced Level

Tango de la Playa is challenging but interesting for all, a good chamber piece with three sections. It is all rhythmic and driven. A good piece to learn tango rhythms and the contrasting melodic passages. Advanced level, for high school chamber or select group.

Go Tell It - Reynard Burns, Level 4

Rey orchestrates three spirituals: *Wade in the Water*, *Let Us Break Bread Together* and *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. The first violins go into the higher positions and there are changing meters. A great showpiece for this style of folk songs.

Coming Home - Reynard Burns, Level 1
Commissioned by the Nassau County Music Educators Association for its All-County in 2022, this is a playable and interesting piece for all the strings. Contact Reynard Burns at: reynardburns@verizon.net
<https://www.lucksmusic.com/Content.aspx?c=176>
<http://www.freeflightmusic.com/composers/Reynard-Burns>

The following are all published by Hal Leonard, and can be accessed on

their website, halleonard.com.

Prairie Sky - Robert Buckley, Level 3

Rhythmic and driving with a pulsing drum set accompaniment. Attractive lyrical middle section with solo violin to add contrast.

Christmas Celebration (I Saw Three Ships) - John Leavitt, Level 3-4

High violin parts and a driving 6/8 meter give this piece distinction. Three necessary percussion parts using all the bells and whistles, literally. Could be a great program ender for a winter concert.

Whispers of Color, Aria for Strings - Joshua Reznicek, Level 4

Very flowing, featuring solos in all the sections (tenor clef solo for cello). Trills and Flautando effects add to the "color" of this piece. (Reznicek is composer of *American Sketches*, *A Fantasy for Strings*.)

Reel Music - Pasquale Tassone, Level 3-4

Three movements based on traditional reels:

1. Swallowtail Reel - in 6/8 Spiccato running 8ths, very driven. Lots of parallel 5ths making an open sound.
2. Cooley's Reel - Dolce, Andante, with section violins playing a legato melody.
3. Devil's Dream - fast and furious with staggered contrapuntal entrances.

Recuerdos de la Alhambra - Tarrega/Tassone, Level 3-4

Billed as Medium Easy, more challenging and better suited to high school both musically and structurally: high cello parts and key changes from A minor to A major. Lyrical and flowing.

Ragtime March - C. Vanessa Fanning, Level 2

Really fun piece with a hint of Sousa. Playable and interesting for all the parts. Suitable for 5th and 6th grade groups.

A Grand Affair - R.Scott Whittington, Level 2

Straightforward G major 4/4 piece until the middle section that goes into G minor. Well suited for a 6th grade group. Was performed by the LISFA Elementary 5-6.

Voyage - Yukiko Nishimura, Level 3

A good piece to start off in September. First violins have the melody over very rhythmic lower strings. Interestingly, their melody comprises doubled 8th notes, going up and down creating waves.

Montague Minuet - Ignatius Sancho/Morales, Level 2

Pleasant introduction to Minuet form. Everyone has a featured solo. Some high first violin spots, but otherwise very playable.

Amapola - Jose Garcia/Longfield, Level 3

A Spanish love song with dolce legato melodies throughout. Many rhythmic accompaniments make this very interesting and playable for a 6th through 8th grade group.

Mekanno - R. Scott Whittington, Level 3

Repetitious rhythms throughout this piece. The first section has a rhythmic energy, contrasted with a legato middle section. The piece ends with an even faster, driven ending. Exciting program ender.

Astral - Dion Morales, Level 2

Great, energetic piece with some 3rd position 1st violin parts.

Warrior of the River - Dion Morales, Level 2

The violas double the firsts and get some airtime. Rhythmically, simple and pleasant.

Song for Umma - Soo Han, Level 2

Traditional Korean folk song. Very simple rhythms and melodies. Level 2 only because it changes keys from Bb to F major.