

Note: This compendium of mandolin ensemble arrangements in parts is intended for free distribution via digital download of PDF files. You can print out the entire package – all 1000 pages. Or you can review the table of contents, which lists each song, its composer, my estimation of the level of difficulty (easy, moderate, challenging), and what page range in the PDF file to select on your computer. For example, #62, *The Pink Panther* by Henry Mancini, is moderately difficult and can be found on pages 601-609. Select a specific title of interest, ask your printer to print the designated page range, and you've got your tune.

Smiling Pontiff Editions

Harpswell, Maine

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Dedication

This collection is dedicated to the musicians
who made all this arranging fun for me.

The “original” and still the greatest Howitzers,
David, Dana, Stu, Marko, Steve and Commander John.

and

The steady core of Light Sweet Crude,
Patty, Janet and Greg.

Introduction

This collection of arrangements for mandolin ensembles was created over a period of about 40 years, beginning in the late seventies when three mandolinists and a guitarist started working up a few numbers to play at our local folk club in Bath, Maine. This group – the Howitzers Mandolin Orchestra – expanded substantially over a decade or so, ultimately including 20+ mandolins, 3 mandolas, 3 or 4 guitars, piano, bass, drums, 2 musical saws, 2 tap dancers, and a “featured” vocalist. Here’s a picture of us onstage with Peter Ostroushko & the Mando Boys, c. 1984.



The earliest arrangements were very simple, all done by ear. But as time passed, they got more complicated and I started writing them down. Several of these arrangements are found in this compendium.

Years later, I was hired for a job at Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago, where I thought to put those arrangement to use and started teaching a weekly Mandolin Orchestra class. Most of the students could barely read notation, so those old Howitzer numbers were about right. But this class ran for twelve years, and the students kept getting better and better. So I started creating many more new arrangements, some of which got rather complicated (transcriptions of piano solos by Dave Brubeck, or sax solos by Coleman Hawkins – the rhythms and tonality can get pretty tricky). The instrumentation of this “orchestra” also changed with every new session of classes. At times it narrowed down to three mandos and a guitar; at others it included many more mandolins, plus the occasional mandola or mandocello. Sometimes we had a bassist, often not. At the conclusion of each session, this ensemble would usually perform at Old Town School, or at one of several different bars spread across Chicago. We played under the name “Light Sweet Crude” to a devoted fan base.

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The arrangements offered here thus vary a bit. Some are straightforward transcriptions of famous pieces, others I created pretty much from whole cloth. A plurality are scored for 3 mandolins and 1 guitar – but if you've got a bass, they can usually follow the guitar charts. The few mandola parts can be assigned to a mandolin (usually). Mandocello parts usually double the guitar parts, and indeed if you've got a m'cello but no guitar you could give the m'cello the guitar parts. A couple numbers are scored for four mandolin parts, and a few for just two of them. Several arrangements ask you to sing. You can sing the notated parts, sometimes unisons, other harmonized; or you can sing and play simultaneously; or just play and forget the vocals; at your option.

A note about the mandolin parts: Early in my arranging career, I realized that typical charts assign the melody to the first chair, and the rest are left with internal or backing parts, which can be strange and/or tedious. As a result, I usually swap the melodic lines around from one mandolin part to another, so nobody is stuck playing oom-pah all the time.

A note about the guitar parts: A few are fully notated all the way through (Beethoven, Mozart, Smeck...), but most have chords. These charts were created using Finale software, which does not allow you to enter a chord without attaching it to a note. So a typical guitar part might look something like this:



Play the fundamental as a single note C/alternating G, and play the chord on the offbeat. Watch out for passages that are notated for single note runs, sometimes solos. These are interspersed among the chordal passages. Occasionally, with a run of 16th notes the chord abbreviations run into each other, but you can usually tell what's intended.

Most of these arrangements are for harmonized parts that demand rather slavish attention to the scores. But some of the jazzier numbers include solo passages, and musicians should feel free to treat these sections as subject to free improvisation as appropriate to the tune. The scores here should be viewed as suggestions...

Finally, my students constantly found notes that just didn't sound right, and we would often make corrections to the scores right in class. Some of these errors are likely to have crept into this collection, so feel free to make your own corrections to suit your ear. If you send me an email with your changes, I can correct future editions.

I had an enormous amount of fun making all these arrangements, and I hope you have just as much fun playing them.

Bau Graves, 2024