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NYSSMA Manual Revisited

Di Su

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August 2019

ABSTRACT

The New York State School Music Association's *NYSSMA Manual* is revised every three years. A new edition, the 33rd, is expected in July 2021. Back in 2008 this author wrote a review article of the 28th edition (2006). Since then, four revisions have been released and some changes have been made. This article, as a follow-up, reviews the Violin Solos section of the current edition, the 32nd (2018).

KEYWORDS. Audition, examination, evaluation, manual, music, New York, NYSSMA, test, violin

Introduction

As a must-have reference work for New York music educators, *NYSSMA Manual (The Manual* thereafter) is updated every three years. School music teachers and studio instructors rely on *The Manual* for curriculum development, music program design, lesson plan, State test preparation, and all related activities. Regular updates are necessary because things change and there is always room for improvement or fine-tuning.

Since 2008, when this author published an article in which comments were made and modifications were suggested for *The Manual*,¹ four revisions have been released. This article reviews the same section of the current edition, the 32nd (2018), as a follow-up piece. Contents to be discussed include scales, sight reading, repertoire, and Mozart violin concertos. Suggestions are made, hopefully helpful and useful.

It must be noted that in the Appendix some organizations' requirements are for All-State exam only. They are included for approximate comparison since NYSSMA does not list All-State as a separate level but uses the highest level (VI) of the regular evaluation as the comparable level.

Scales

The 32nd edition is the same as the 28th. Regrettably, the preparation of fifteen major scales is still required for Levels V-VI. It is unnecessary for the reasons I presented in 2008. A twelve-key system, derived from either a chromatic scale or the circle of fifths, should be sufficient for evaluation purpose. Arpeggios and minor scales, which I suggested to add to *The Manual* in order to be in line with the norm of other professional organizations,² are still missing.

Suggestions

- Reduce major scales to twelve (e.g., remove one from each of the three pairs: C[#]/D^b, C^b/B, and F[#]/G^b) for Levels V-VI
- Add arpeggios to all levels
- Add melodic minor scales to Levels IV-VI
- Add three-octaves scales and arpeggios, in major and minor, to Levels V-VI

Sight Reading

The 32nd edition is the same as the 28th. Under Intervals, requirements for Levels IV, V, and VI are the same, i.e., "All intervals within and including an octave." It is fine for Level IV but may be too easy for Levels V and VI considering the levels of pieces they perform, e.g., concertos of Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, just name a few.

Suggestions

- Expand intervals to at least 10th to Levels V and VI
- Add Accent as a new column (not required for Levels I-IV), add regular (on beat) accent to Level V and add irregular (off beat or syncopated) accent to Level VI

¹ Su, Di. A Critical Review of Violin Solos Section of the *NYSSMA Manual*. ERIC #: ED502952 (8 pages). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED502952>. Accessed 15 August 2019.

² See Appendix.

Repertoire

Suzuki instructors must be delighted to see that Suzuki pieces have been added to Level I since the 29th edition (2009). An addition of Oskar Rieding's concertos to Level III in the same edition is also welcomed.

Some masterpieces still do not make the list. Among them, most desirable ones include Bach's Presto from *Sonata No. 1 in g minor*, BWV 1001, Chaconne from *Partita No. 2 in d minor*, BWV 1004, Paganini's *Concerto No. 1 in D Major*, Op. 6, Ravel's *Tzigane*, and Sarasate's *Introduction and Tarantella*, Op. 43. Bach's "Presto" is as important and valuable as other movements listed, suitable for Level IV or V. Difficulty and length might be the concerns for Chaconne. But look at some of the pieces in Level VI, they are not any easier than Chaconne, e.g., Sibelius concerto. As to the length, in comparison, the 1st movement of the concertos of Beethoven, Brahms and Tchaikovsky are all around twenty minutes, (of course, recordings of these concertos include orchestra parts) Chaconne is about sixteen minutes. Both *Tzigane* and *Introduction and Tarantella* are standard recital pieces suitable for Level VI. Paganini's *Concerto No. 1 in D Major* had been listed in Level VI but the requirement of playing all movements seemed to be unrealistic. It was removed from *The Manual* in the 30th edition (2012). However, the concerto should make the list (under the condition that the requirement is modified, i.e., a single movement instead of all the movements) considering its prominent status in the violin repertoire.

Grouping should be done more carefully. For example, Mozart's early concertos should not be lined up with, say, Brahms concerto, in Level VI. (Mozart's violin concertos deserve a further discussion in a separate section later.)

Suggestions

- Add more Suzuki pieces from Volume 1 to Level I, e.g., *Lightly Row* and *O Come, Little Children*
- Add Natalia Vladimirovna Baklanova's *Sonatina* and *Concertino* to Level III
- Add J. S. Bach - Presto from *Sonata No. 1 in g minor*, BWV 1001 to Level IV or V
- Add J. S. Bach - Chaconne from *Partita No. 2 in d minor*, BWV 1004 to Level VI
- Add N. Paganini - *Violin Concerto No. 1 in D Major*, Op. 6, 1st or 3rd movement to Level VI
- Add M. Ravel - *Tzigane* to Level VI
- Add P. de Sarasate - *Introduction and Tarantella*, Op. 43 to Level VI

Mozart Violin Concertos

It is interesting to have seen changes in decision on Mozart's violin concertos. Here is the listing history of Mozart violin concertos in *The Manual*.

- 23rd Edition (1991)
 - No.3 in G Major, K.216 and No.5 in A Major, K.219 were listed in Level VI.
- 25th Edition (1997)
 - No.4 in D Major, [K.218] was added to Level VI but no Köchel number was given under Mozart's entry. The K number did appear under Suzuki's entry, though.
- 26th edition (2000)
 - The so-called "Adélaïde Concerto" in D Major was added to Level VI. The concerto had been considered spurious and the forgery (by Marius Casadesus) was confirmed in 1977.³ As a result, the concerto is not included in the *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke*, better known as *The Neue Mozart-Ausgabe (New Mozart Edition, 1980)*.
 - Concerto in E^b Major, K.268 was added to Level VI but was incorrectly listed as No. 3. According to the published literature, K.268 is either No. 6 or No. 7. A more serious problem is its authenticity. It is generally agreed that this concerto "is very probably not by Mozart, but by Johann Friedrich Eck."⁴ It is hence excluded in the *New Mozart Edition*.
 - Concerto No.3 in G Major, K.216, was moved down to Level V.
- 27th edition (2003)
 - K.268 was corrected to Concerto No.6.
- 28th edition (2006)
 - The Köchel number, K.218, was added to Concerto No.4 in D Major under Mozart's entry in Level VI.
- 30th edition (2012)
 - Concerto No. 3 in G Major was moved back to Level VI.
- 32nd edition (2018)
 - Mozart violin concerto Nos. 1 through 6 and "Adélaïde" are all listed in Level VI.

Suggestions

- Remove "Adélaïde Concerto" in D Major from *The Manual* because it is a forgery
- Remove Concerto No.6 in E^b Major, K.268, from *The Manual* because its authenticity is very doubtful
- Move concertos No.1 in B^b Major, K.207, No.2 in D Major, K.211, and No.3 in G Major, K. 216 down to Level V

³ "Musical Fakes and Forgeries." *Strad* 121, no. 1448 (December 2010): 50–51.

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=55225026&site=ehost-live>. Accessed 15 August 2019.

⁴ "Editorial Principles" in the *New Mozart Edition, Series X: Supplement, Work Group 29: Works of Dubious Authenticity*, V. 1 (1980): VIII.

Other Suggestions

- Create more levels for the following reasons
 - Some students begin to learn to play the violin at an early age. Some of them, if not all, will have exhausted all six levels even before entering high school. Having more levels will keep their interest in and motivation for higher standards.
 - The current repertoire is not ideally grouped by technical levels. This is especially obvious in Level VI where the difficulty levels spread in a wide range. Having more levels can help distribute pieces more fairly.
 - The repertoire for the violin is too rich to fit in six levels. Having more levels will create room for more pieces. For reference, The ABRSM (Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music) has eight levels,⁵ The RCM (Royal Conservatory of Music, Canada) has ten levels,⁶ and The ASTA (American String Teachers Association) Certificate Advancement Program also has ten levels.⁷

- Add technical studies
 - The evaluation will be more comprehensive if technical studies (etudes, caprices, or methods) are included. A simple way is to use F. Wohlfahrt, Op. 45 (60 studies) and H. Kayser, Op. 20 (36 studies) for lower levels. R. Kreutzer (42 etudes or caprices) and P. Rode, Op. 22 (24 caprices) for higher levels. For more options, consult with *ASTACAP Handbook*⁸ and *String Syllabus* by Littrell.⁹

- Correct typos and inconsistencies
 - Page 1-1, in scale section under “Levels III - IV”: “Perform: ...Two (2) of the one-octaves scales.” It should be “one-octave” instead.
 - Page 1-13, in repertoire section under “LEVEL THREE”: “Rieding, O. – Concerto in G dur, Op. 34” and “Rieding, O. – Concerto in h moll, Op. 35”. It will be better to use English for consistency, i.e., “in G Major” and “in b minor”.
 - Page 1-15, in repertoire section under “LEVEL FIVE”: “Beethoven, L. – Sonata in a minor, Op. 96.” It should be “G Major” instead.
 - From the examples above one can see an inconsistency in level numbering. One uses Roman numbers and the other uses number words. A single system will be preferred.

⁵ <https://us.abrsm.org/en/our-exams/bowed-strings-exams/violin-exams/>. Accessed 13 August 2019.

⁶ https://rcmusic-kentico-cdn.s3.amazonaws.com/rcm/media/main/documents/examinations/syllabi/s36_violin-syl_2016_rcm_online_secured.pdf. Accessed 16 August 2019.

⁷ https://www.astastrings.org/Web/Resources/ASTACAP/ASTACAP_Handbook.aspx (Member sign-in required). Accessed 14 August 2019.

⁸ Ditto.

⁹ Littrell, David A. *String Syllabus: Violin, Viola, Violoncello, Double Bass, Alternative Styles*. Fairfax, VA: American String Teachers Association, 2009. Print.

Appendix: Scale requirements at other professional organizations (selective list)

Organization	Arpeggios	Minor Scales	Three Octaves	Source and notes
Connecticut Music Educators Association	√	√	√	http://www.cmea.org/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/CMEA%20Strings%20Audition%20Repertoire%202019-2023.pdf
Florida Orchestra Association	√	√	√	http://myfoa.org/sites/default/files/as2020/2020FOA_All-StateAudition11-12Orch_FINAL.pdf
Georgia Music Educators Association	×	√	√	https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58d037ac59cc681d3c17042c/t/5d1a395ec4018d0001fc8e5b/1561999713146/ASO+Scales+2019-20.pdf Etudes required
Maryland Music Educators Association	√	√	√	https://www.mmea-maryland.org/strings Etudes required
Massachusetts Music Educators Association	×	√	√	http://massmea.org/sites/default/files/public/scales/Violin.pdf
Michigan School Band and Orchestra Association	√	×	√	https://www.msboa.org/Portals/0/All-State%20regulations.2014-2015.pdf Chromatic scales required
Missouri Chapter of ASTA	×	√	√	http://www.moastaweb.org/audition-excerpts-set-2/
New Jersey Music Educators Association	×	√	√	https://njmea.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/05/hsorchscales.pdf
North Carolina Music Educators Association	√	√	√	http://www.ncorchestra.org/newwordpress/parents-and-students/audition-requirements/
Washington Music Educators Association	×	√	√	https://www.wmea.org/Content/C117/2020/2020HSStringsFinal.pdf

(All) Accessed 19 August 2019