

Pifa from “The Messiah”

by Georg Friederich Händel (1685-1759)

arranged by Klaus Bjerre 2001 for The West Winds Flute Choir of Eugene - Oregon

The Pifa is a very well known and beloved pastorage originally set for strings, bassoons, and continuo. Händel divides the violins in 3 sections. The 2 upper sections play the melodic lines in the upper octave, the 3rd violins and the violas play the exact same lines an octave lower.

I got a suggestion to arrange the Pifa for the extended West Winds Flute Choir and a couple of low brass players from its closer environment. The WWFC within its structure also had a youth section with less experienced players. This sum of parameters let me come up with a score like this:

Upper octave: All the soprano flutes play divided in two equally sized sections.

Lower octave: The alto and bass flutes play the upper melody line, a euphonium (cello, bassoon) plays the lower line.

Continuo bass line: Can be played by contrabass tuba or bass tuba (cello, bassoon, string bass). One tuba only.

Continuo chords (optional): can be played by a guitar and/or a 3 part choir of harmony soprano flutes. The latter will not work well, if any of the parts are missing. The distribution of players on each part should strive to secure a perfect balance between the parts.

As for playing Baroque embellishments: Players trained in that style will play the trill and other embellishments correctly from a simple notation. Players not trained in that style might find it beneficial to study their parts from the “**verbatim**” parts provided. There is no doubt that the easiest reading will come out of the “**simple**” notation parts. (It is rather important that the lower octave melody lines are played with the same embellishments as are the upper octave lines).

Both “simple” and “verbatim” melody parts are musically fully compatible. For the conductor it might be a slight visual disturbance that the “simple” score looks like the grace notes should be played ahead of the beat. This is nothing but a shortcoming of the computer notation skills of this arranger. This should not disturb the reading of the parts.

Experience tells, that with larger ensembles the overall clarity of the performance might benefit from the addition of a couple of very experienced flutists playing the melody lines in the super octave. Only one player on each part. Either both or none of these parts should be played. This remedy should not be applied as a cover-up for badly rehearsed inner parts.

There also is a clarinet choir version of this arrangement in the planning. And there will be additional parts allowing performances by church, school, and community ensembles. All versions will be fully compatible.

This arrangement can be used free of charge, but a postcard or an e-mail reporting on readings and performances would be nice.

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