

Sinfonia

from “Die sieben Worte Jesu Christi am Kreuz”

(Dresden 1645)

Composed by Heinrich Schütz (1585 - 1672) in E minor.

Arranged in B minor by Klaus Bjerre (2004) for 5-part low brass ensemble with an optional duet of soloists. Fully compatible scores and playing scores for instruments reading the bass and treble clefs in C, F, Bb, and Eb.

This is the Sinfonia of a cantata. The original setting was for SATTB viols. Here these viol parts have been set for a low brass ensemble. A performance of just the 5 *tutti* and bass parts available for F and Eb horns, bass clef concert and treble clef Bb tenor trombones (baritones, euphoniums), bass trombone, and tuba (bass and/or contrabass) in bass clef concert or treble clef in Eb and BBB will be in full concordance with the original intentions of the composer. Players reading from any of the different clefs and transpositions can be mixed as long as a good balance is observed.

However this arranger cannot avoid hearing improvisations and embellishments when working with music of this era. The solution has been to add a number of optional solo duets adding embellishments to the original 5-part composition. These embellishments have been provided for these alternative pairs of soloists:

baritones/euphoniums reading bass clef concert or Bb treble clef (the 2nd solo part may be played on a bass tuba)

Eb horn with Eb treble clef tuba

F horns

The balance between the soloists should be observed. Even if the Eb altohorn can read from the same playing score as the Eb tuba the former is better paired with a small bore baritone as the 2nd soloist. Whereas the Eb tuba is better paired with a euphonium as the 1st soloist. The Eb tuba solo part is very challenging anyway.

The optional guitar continuo part clearly is intended for an electronically amplified classical guitar. This arranger is very fond of his Ovation Viper flat bowl sample of this instrument category, but other nylon-stringed makes and versions also are widely available. Other choices of continuo instruments like harp, piano, or keyboard will not lead to judicial steps taken by this editor. At least as long as the continuo function is done with taste. That is: the continuo player should fulfil a rhythmic and harmonic function. The approach of linear improvising as favoured by some continuo players already is represented here by the soloing parts. 4 downstrokes in each bar will be fine.

The soloists are given shared playing scores to promote the coordination of their embellishments.

The 4 upper *tutti* parts have been given shared playing scores.

The bass trombone, the tubas, and the continuo guitar also are given a shared playing score to support the sense of the basic harmonic structure

Balance is a major consideration in the performance of music originally intended for the very homogeneous, yet very colourful, ensemble of viols. In accordance with the notation practice of this renaissance era music no dynamics or articulations are given (but for an obvious opening *p* in the *tutti* parts). The performers should not misjudge this as an opportunity to play dull run-of-the-mill notes. The contrapuntal texture calls for a great mutual respect. Especially up-beat notes, wherever they may be placed in the bar, should be played detached, and an emphasis should be given to the following longer main notes. If this piece is performed *tutti*-only, the playing style should be less legato-tenuto, than when soloists are added. Dynamics should rather tend towards the softer shadings.

All phrase indications are by this editor.

You will find several similar settings in the original key of E minor, which are out of reach for low brass ensembles. Hence the present downwards transposition. Some would have preferred the key of C minor, but this editor is a strong proponent of brass players giving themselves the beautiful experience of playing in keys with sharps. These sharps and the low range will call for the outmost accurateness in intonation, if a performance shall succeed. Experienced players often will prefer to substitute open notes with alternative fingerings and slide positions.

There already exists a version for F horns in E minor. The hereby provided B minor version calls for a less challenging high range for the *tutti* as well as for the *sol*i horns. Actually the 3 octave range, written F# - f#", of the *tutti* horns can be played on single F horns. The first soloist has a range of c#' - f#" , second soloist one of f# - c#" .

This edition can be used free of charge, but reports on readings and performances would be very much welcomed.

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