

Danish Christmas Carols

How to apply these 9 sets of scores? A highly biased set of ideas by the editor. Some of these ideas will find applications beyond the context in which they have been mentioned.

If you are 4 players in a quartet of brasses, clarinets, saxophones, strings, flutes, or recorders, then the matter is rather simple: find the dedicated score or scores with the relevant transpositions/clefs and distribute the SATB lines as they fit best to the ranges of the individual players.

In mixed quartets all instruments should play either in the 8-foot range or in the 4-foot (*8va*) range.

All sorts of quartets/ensembles may enjoy the support from organ/keyboard/piano and ATB guitars. These “continuo” instruments share a set of scores.

Following some of the ideas given below will call for an extensive use of (handwritten) notes, numbers, and arrows directing the single player up and down between the various SATB lines. Only in rare cases will it be necessary for one or more players to use more than one of the playing scores for a given hymn.

Guitar quartets/ensembles should let their lead voice play from the top staff in the Flute Choir score.

Letting one trumpet rest and then playing with trumpet, horn, trombone, and tuba only most often will best serve **the standard brass quintet**. For variety of sound any of the instruments can rest during single phrases or through whole verses, while the 4 other instruments share the 4 parts among themselves. The option of doubling the bass line by trombone and tuba should not be used. The effect of having the trumpets doubling the melody should be used sparingly even with the involvement of a piccolo playing the upper octave. Whether the tuba plays the bass or the contrabass line depends on the pitch and size of the actual instrument. Any variety in sound introduced by the use of cornets, flugelhorns, and/or baritone will add to the richness of the performance.

The standard woodwind quintet has two main options of part distribution. Both options have the flute playing the melody *8va* up (from the flute score) and the bassoon playing the bass line (from the low brass score or from the string score). One option has the oboe on the melody reading from the string score, the clarinet playing the alto line from the Bb score, and the horn playing the tenor line from the horn quartet score (variation: let the horn and the bassoon swap functions). The other option has the oboe playing the tenor line from the flute score, the clarinet playing the melody from the Bb score, and the horn playing the alto line from the horn score (variation: let the clarinet and the horn swap functions).

In all **larger ensembles** variation from the *tutti* sound can be created by adding effects and by having solo quartets playing sections or whole verses. During the Renaissance era such variations never were written out in the original (printed) scores. Their application was left to the performers. Some of these options will be discussed below here in the sections on various ensemble types. (One effect, which this editor is very reluctant to recommend, is the

doubling of the melody in the tenor range. If the inner voices are played well, they should not be obscured by an outbreak of the far too common tenor/baritone-soloist syndrome).

Flute Choirs exist in very varying sizes and compositions. A common trait often is the relatively large number of soprano flutes. Fortunately these can cover all of the SAT functions, so that the alto and bass flutes can be concentrated on the bass line. However it is no secret, that flute choirs rich in bass and alto flutes can create more line identity as well as a warmer over-all sound, if they allocate one or more alto flutes to the tenor line. Large choirs with three very good piccolo players can double the SAT-lines in the octave. No matter how celestial this effect can be, when executed really well, it should be applied sparingly. The same goes for one of its variants: to let one piccolo double the **tenor** line only in the octave. Flute choirs playing as stand alone units should give preference to the scores from the Easy Keys' folder for the Carols when playing the carols for which they are available.

Recorder Ensembles should let as many members as possible play their larger instruments where applicable. Many basses in F are desirable, many great basses in C even more so. If a player has the choice of using either a soprano or an alto recorder to play the melody, then the alto recorder should be preferred. Ensembles with 3 really strong players on two sopraninos and one soprano could double the SAT-lines by playing from the score for flutes. As for the sparingly use of this effect please read the Flute Choir section. Recorder ensembles playing as stand alone units should give preference to the scores from the Easy Keys' folder for the Carols when playing the carols for which they are available.

Brass Bands obviously should allocate the bass and contrabass lines to their Eb and BBb tubas. Trombones should cover the ATB lines. Euphoniums should play the tenor line. Horns and baritones should be split on the A and T-lines. That leaves the flugelhorn and the majority of the cornets for the melody, whereas not too many cornets should play the A-line. The soprano cornet mostly should rest, but in some sections/verses it can double the melody or the T-line. A very special effect is to let the soprano cornet double the melody in the octave while two single Bb cornet double the alto and tenor lines in the octave by reading from the Bb-BBb score. This effect should be used sparingly.

Clarinet choirs can play these carol scores with Bb soprano and bass clarinets only. But the other family members should be added whenever possible. The alto clarinets will improve the tenor line as much as the contraltos and contrabasses will improve the bass function. Special effects can be created by solo quartets formed by the larger clarinets alone (how often does one hear a quartet of 4 bass clarinets?). Similar to the brass band an Eb clarinet and two single Bb clarinets can create octave effects. Apply sparingly.

Orchestras and **concert bands** share many aspects of scoring, so their usage of the carol scores will be treated in common. The mixing of tuttis, selected sections only, solo quartets, and effects will be left to the discretion of the conductor/director.

The flutes should play *8va* (from the FC score). If no bass flute is available, a very discrete soprano clarinet may play the bass line in solo sections (reading the bass line from the Bb score).

The oboe section can be treated like the flutes, but a better solution in tutti might be if the 1st player plays the melody from the string score, the 2nd player plays the tenor line from the flute score, and the cor anglais plays the alto line from the horn score.

The clarinet section may follow the directions given in the paragraph on clarinet choirs.

The bassoons can play solo quartets alone or with oboe and cor anglais, but their main job will be on the tenor, bass, and contrabass lines (a contrabassoon will be extremely welcome in the sound picture).

As for the brasses: the solo horns and trombones should not be strained by playing the melody during tutti playing unless very special effects like great endings are strived for. The horns should be concentrated on the AT-lines and the trombones should play the ATB-lines. Even the alto line can be left to horns and trumpets. The tubist preferably should choose a contrabass instrument. Of course horn quartets and trombone quartets will be great for solo sections, as will the combination of trumpets and trombones. All of the above comments also apply for **brass ensembles**.

Mallet percussion and bells may play from the string, guitar, and flute scores, but the percussion should be used sparingly.

The strings obviously can play from the string score. The celli only should play *divisi*, if there is a shortage in violas (but then they can play their own solo quartets from the low brass score). An *8va*-effect can be added to strings-only sections by letting 3 desks of violins (or 3 soloists) play the SAT lines from the flute score (all of the above comments also apply for **string ensembles**). This string *8va*-effect also can be added to clarinet and brass solo quartets.

A main motto for all performances should be good clarity and good balance.

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