

Comments on Playing *Coventry Carol*

This choral style of music looks simple and for many instruments and voices it is. For the duet it is a style that is difficult to arrange in a satisfactory manner and very difficult to play musically.

The music needs to be played cleanly, with attacks on all the notes at the same time. This is difficult enough with different reeds speaking at different pressure levels, but also creates hellish fingering problems.

For the most part, legato playing and clean attacks are facilitated by assigning notes to different hands in the overlap area and changing fingers while the button is held down to free the appropriated finger or fingers for the next note or chord.

In some cases, I could find no solution. In measure 11 there is simply a break between the 2nd and 3rd beats that has to be incorporated into the phrasing. I considered going to E flat, the third of the chord, in the bass, on the third beat, but that makes the resolution to D in measure 12, on the root of the chord, parallel motion with the top voice and sounds much worse than a little lift between beats.

Note also that the arrangement alternates between 4 and 3 parts. A consistent 4 part arrangement, with the inevitable doubling in the lower voices, sounds heavy and tedious to me. Sometimes, what sounds better in one way, sounds worse in another. Ideally, the heavier four part harmonies should come only on strong beats. In measure 5 there is four part harmony on the second, weakest, beat. But when I take out any of the notes it sounds worse to me. The bass line doubles the melody, but the descending line in the bass is strong and independent and abandoning its sounds worse.

Measure 6 has an augmented 2nd in the bass. I'm not sure about the stylistic validity of this for the period.

Playing a simple, exposed tune like this, in a musical manner, turns out to be more of a challenge than playing many faster and noisier tunes. All in all, I frequently conclude that a good duet concertina arrangement is likely to get low marks in a theory class.

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