J. S. Bach

Sinfonia to Cantata 29
(Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir)

Transcribed for solo Marimba (or Xylophone, or duet) with Symphonic Wind Ensemble

by

David Avshalomov

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INSTRUMENTATION

Piccolo
Flutes 1. 2.
Oboes 1. 2.
English Horn in F (optional)
Bassoon
Contrabassoon (optional; doubles String Bass part)
Eb Clarinet
Bb Clarinet 1. 2. 3.
Eb Alto Clarinet (optional)
Bb Bass Clarinet
Eb Contra-Alto Clarinet (optional)
Bb Soprano Saxophone (optional)
Eb Alto Saxophone 1. 2.
Bb Tenor Saxophone
Eb Baritone Saxophone
Horn in F, 1. 2. 3. 4.
Bb Trumpet 1. 2. 3.
   (Trumpet 1 part in D also provided)
   (Soprano Saxophone 2. part also provided to substitute for Trumpet 1)
Trombone 1. 2.
Bass Trombone with extension
Euphonium (Baritone treble clef Bb part also provided)
Tuba
String Bass
Timpani
Solo Marimba (or solo Xylophone; or duet)

3-5 Percussion:
   Glockenspiel
   Bass Drum
   Large Tam Tam
   Suspended Cymbal
   Triangle
BACH, SINFONIA TO CANTATA 29
Transcription for Band with SOLO MARIMBA, or XYLOPHONE, or DUET
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PERFORMANCE NOTES

SOLO PART
This transcription may be played in one of three ways:

1. Solo Marimba on the solo part. Ignore the 8va markings and play the entire part, nonstop, start to finish.
2. Solo Xylophone on the solo (Marimba) part. Play in the octave written (will sound one octave higher than Marimba). Ignore the 8va markings and play the entire part, nonstop, start to finish.
3. Duet for Marimba and Xylophone.

For Duet:
- a. Xylophone player instead uses the part marked “Xylophone FOR DUET ONLY.”
- b. The Marimba is tacet in bars marked “Xylo Only.”
- c. Marimba observes the optional 8va markings.
- d. The Xylophone must use medium hard rubber mallets in this version and try to match the Marimba’s volume and tone.

SETUP: Soloist should be at the front of the stage, as for a piano concerto. For the Duet version, if the soloists can be noticeably separated left/right, this will enhance the antiphonal/echo effects.

TEMPO
The 120 tempo may be relaxed to 110, but no slower or it will become stodgy.

Please have the courage not to slow down at the end. In the violin version the last note is an eighth note! It is a quick, brilliant, throwaway ending.

DOUBLINGS/CROSS-CUES/OCTAVES
- With Marimba solo, all the accompaniment parts work best with one player on a part (except for the 3 Clarinet sections and possibly flutes), with a large band you may need to use subtle amplification for the soloist only (quality mike, amp and audiophile speakers, not a PA system).
- Xylophone solo can cut through a larger band and should be unamplified.
- Bach’s violin I, II, and viola parts are covered by Clarinets 1. 2. 3, enriched by Oboes, English Horn, Alto Clarinet, and Alto and Tenor Saxophones. Where Bach’s Violin I part goes too high for Alto Sax, Alto Sax. 1 joins Alto Sax. 2 to play the violin II part in unison, and Oboe 2 joins Oboe 1 to play the Violin I part in unison.
- If there are several players on each sax part (and only single oboes), the optional Soprano Sax part, which doubles Oboe 1 exactly, should be added to help the top (violin I) part be heard in balance.
- An alternate version of the Trumpet 1 part (only) for piccolo Trumpet in D is also provided.
- Trumpet 1 top notes (concert B, C, C#, D) are cued in Eb Clarinet (and a few high Trumpet 2. notes in Flute 1). If you do not have a high trumpet player, use the cues.
- Alternatively, an (additional) Soprano Sax in Bb could play the Trumpet 1 part instead of trumpet, with the dynamics all one level higher. (This was Pablo Casals’s idea for the 2nd Brandenburg Concerto.) A separate part is provided for this substitution. In this case the Eb Clarinet does not play the Trumpet 1 cues.
- In either case, however, best not to have the idle trumpeter double 2. or 3. as it will throw off the balance.
- For Baritone Saxophone, Bass Clarinet, Euphonium/Baritone, Tuba, and String Bass, low notes that may be out of range for some models of the instrument are clearly marked either to be taken 8va (ossia) or omitted, if the player lacks the note. Bass Trombone part should only be played by an instrument with the low extension, otherwise omit it.

TRILLS
The notations at the end represent one authentic way to realize the trills marked in Bach’s original solo parts and trumpets. Do not improvise the trills; play them as written, including the slight diminuendo on the second one—relax into the harmonic resolution.

DYNAMICS
Dynamics are absolute for each part and reflect the normal relative volume/dynamic range of various instruments, winds vs. brass, etc. Thus, a Saxophone marked forte against a trumpet marked mezzo forte should be roughly equivalent in volume (give or take). Obviously the conductor may make adjustments to clarify foreground/background, blend unison parts in different instruments, and accommodate the hall. The accompaniment is deliberately marked with moderate dynamics to ensure that the soloist (or soloists) are heard as totally predominant throughout except for the very last passage.

Horizontal wedges under single long tones are not for a big expressive crescendo or diminuendo. They are a way of reminding the players to make every long tone live, to grow and die a little, by pressing it out. At most, gain one dynamic level, perhaps less. Sometimes the top dynamic of a longer swell is marked.

ROLES AND FOCUS BY SECTIONS
The key to an effective presentation of this transcription is to fine-tune the balance of sections/roles, one period at a time.
- After the opening tutti phrases, all the accompaniment parts need to back off a little, listen sharply, and support the overall perpetual motion part the soloists) and never to overpower them.
- Trumpets 1. 2. 3. are Bach’s original parts. Despite the high writing, trumpets need to make a fairly light sound. They need to be heard throughout but not predominate until the final section (see previous note about cues of high notes).
- The bass line group plus the instruments representing the string group need to be in balance with one another; dynamics have been correlated to help with this.
- At the end, the low brass, timpani, and percussion need to add strength but not overpower the overall texture.

VIBRATO
Vibrato is not generally part of the Baroque sound picture in works of this character. Play with a straight tone throughout.

SLURS
Flutes and piccolo have alternate versions of slurring (dotted slur lines) in several measures at H and J, substituting a simpler bar-long slur for a series of 2-note slurs. Section should decide which to use (for the whole passage) and inform the conductor.
This transcription is based on Bach’s manuscripts (in holograph): The *Preludio* to the third *Partia* (sic. in ms.) for solo violin, BWV 1006 (1720), and the score to the *Sinfonia* to Cantata 29, *Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir* (We thank you, God, we thank you), BWV 29, a sacred cantata which Bach composed in Leipzig in 1731 for the *Ratswechsel*, the inauguration of a new town council, on 27 August of that year. It is one of the few sacred cantatas he opened with an orchestral *sinfonia*. The music is Bach’s arrangement of the selfsame violin solo version from the third *Partia*. The solo organ plays the original violin part, while the orchestra adds an accompaniment, the whole transposed from the key of E major to the standard Baroque festive D major.

(This *sinfonia* had appeared as a middle movement in his Wedding Cantata BWV 120a (1729), also in D and with solo organ but accompanied by only strings and continuo, with oboes doubling the violins.)

Bach distinctly modified the original solo violin part in several places to create the solo part for organ (without changing the implied harmonies); how and why is an instructive study for composers and arrangers, and best explained by an organist. The solo line is entirely from the organ part of the orchestral version; I have added some dynamics (especially echoes) and phrasing slurs to the solo line from the violin part. Thus the final result in the band solo part for the mallet soloist is a hybrid combining the organ version of the melody with the details of a more expressive rendition possible on the violin.

In the mallets duet version, division of the solo line between Marimba and Xylophone is used towards the end to delineate series of sequences.

All the accompaniment notes have been transcribed from the orchestral version.

Additionally, the figured bass (harmony) markings from the orchestral score’s continuo line were realized (fleshed out) in muted horns.

The bass line parts assume both 32- and 64-foot stops in the organ’s bass pedals; hence the tuba and bass trombone parts are often in the growly range. This also helps prevent them (especially the tuba) from obtruding.

Some slurs, localized phrasing swells, and staccato and tenuto marks, have been added in the accompaniment to reflect modern scholarly/practical thinking about Baroque performance practice and phrasing. They give just one way to phrase these passages (the transcriber’s taste).

Adding the contrabassoon part doubling the string bass part is a nice optional enhancement.

Such marks have been applied to the bass instruments that represent the organ pedals as well. Though the quick localized swell was not normally possible on organ (nor likely in Bach’s own rendition, even “under expression”) it was both possible and suitable on string bass and cello then as now, and these would have doubled the organ bass line if present.

The slightly “band-istic” richness of the ending over the long-awaited low sustained pedal D is greater than Bach’s scoring but is inspired and to some extent implied/sanctioned by his own wonderful orchestral flowering there in trumpets, oboes, violins, etc.

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DAVID AVSHALOMOV
Dynamic New Music for Band

Siege  [7] (also available for orchestra)

Spring Rondo  [8]


The Last Stand, tragic tone poem [7'45"]
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Vignettes, suite of 10 supershort miniatures for community bands [11]
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“Everyone’s Guide to the Band,” comprising:
  Lifeboat Variations [18-24] (with opt. narrator)
  Cornucopia of Rounds [12] (can be performed separately)

Glockenspiel March novelty  [2:30]

TRANSCRIPTIONS

Bach, Sinfonia to Cantata No. 29, transcribed for:
  • Symphonic Wind Ensemble with Clarinets 1, 2, on the solo part (E♭)
  • Solo Marimba (or Xylophone, or duet) and Wind Ensemble (D)

WITH CHORUS

Principles, secular cantata (Thos. Jefferson) [32]
  • Original version TTBB (divisi), solo baritone, concert band
  • Revised version SSAATTBB, solo baritone, concert band

Sergeant Pepper Medley Lennon/McCartney [16’]
  TTBB chorus, Tenor and Baritone soli, concert band (or combo)

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