

Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)

If Ye Love Me

edited for low ensembles of woodwinds, brasses, or strings

by Klaus Smedegaard Bjerre (2015)

I already edited and uploaded this beautiful motet, in its original key of F major, in 2012. Back then as part of my modular 4-part editions of mainly church related music.

A friend opened a thread on TubeNet asking for advise about starting a tuba quartet consisting of 2 euphoniums and 2 tubas.

I have quite clear ideas on this topic, which mainly are about beauty and clarity. Intonation, precision of rhythm, balance, and sound are important elements, where sounds of the individual players shall present them exactly as musical individualists, but where the individual sounds need to have a large overlap of common, well balanced, and in-tune overtones to define the ensemble as exactly being an ensemble.

The editing or the arrangement of the music also has a huge influence on the success or failing of a quartet project. Close harmonies in too low a range are prone to cause a muddled sound.

My ideas might best be expressed in a musical setting, so I chose one of the most beautiful renaissance motets that I know. My 2012-edition allows for a tuba quartet performance, but the range is not really comfortable for the upper parts, so I decided to take the key down to C major. Doing that with all 4 parts would bring the closest intervals between the tenor and bass lines down in a range where it would be hard to avoid muddiness. The answer was to take the bass line down a further octave, which fortunately is easy, as Tallis' original bass line is not very low.

This part distribution is also a definitive vote for the usage of a bass tuba on the upper tuba part, as this size of tuba is much more likely to create a good blend with the euphoniums without overpowering them.

C major brings this motet in an ideal range for the tuba quartet, only it may cause some intonation problems for players not accustomed with the use of triggers or with alternative fingerings.

Hence I made a test version in Bb major, which in a computer playback with sampled string sounds came out very kind on my ears. So you will find versions in C major as well as in Bb major. You are free to choose between these keys, but not to mix them. Each key has these 8 compatible scores:

3 Bass Clarinets & Contrabass Clarinet

2 Bass Clarinets, Contralto Clarinet, & Contrabass Clarinet

3 Bassoons & Contrabassoon

3 Horns in F & Contrabass Tuba

2 Euphoniums, Bass Tuba, & Contrabass Tuba – all bass clef concert

2 Bb Euphoniums, Eb Tuba, & BBb Tuba – all treble clef, brass band style

3 Violas & Double Bass – *C major only*

2 Violas, Cello, & Double Bass – *Bb major only* - the bass needs an extension to low C

3 Celli & Double Bass – in Bb major the bass needs an extension to low C

Aside of being beautiful this motet also exposes the players to quite a few challenges in letting the many counterpoint elements coming to life. The breathing marks follow original text interpunctuations, which may indicate a tempo a bit faster than suggested by me. If you need more breathing marks, place them so they support the presentation of the many micro motives.

As long as good balance is maintained all versions within the same key are compatible for mixed quartets. These scores may also be used for larger mixed low ensembles.

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