

Editor's Note

“Hosanna to the Son of David” is one of the best known sacred works of Thomas Weelkes. The piece is apparently a “full” anthem for choir (i.e. one for full choir without the interspersed solo passages that characterize the “verse” anthem), but also has much in common with the sacred madrigal repertoire. The present edition is based on London British Library Add. Mss. 17786-91, where the music appears alongside various consorts for viols. The piece seems to have been used at least as much in domestic settings as in church.

Critical report

The source is notated in G major/minor with a key signature of one flat and a time signature of barred C. Original clefs are C1; C1; C3; C4; F4; F4. Modern clefs have been substituted in the edition. In the main score and the set of parts marked “original”, the music is given in this original key. In the set of parts marked “transposed”, the music is transposed up a tone — to A major/minor with a key signature of one sharp. An editorial keyboard reduction of the vocal parts is provided in both keys and may be used for rehearsal or as an accompaniment in performance.

Note values have been halved, bar lines added, spelling and punctuation modernized. Part names are editorial. Accidentals apply to one note only (and its immediate repetition in the same octave). If there is an intervening note or rest a fresh accidental is required.

One editorial accidental is shown in the usual way above the staff (Bar 8, Voice III, Note 6)

Bar 8, Voice III (Alto), Note 6 — accidental avoids a semitone clash with Voice I, Note 3 (and is confirmed by 2 other sources — Oxford, Bodleian Library, Tenbury MSS 807-11 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Tenbury MS 309)

Bar 18, Voice V (Bass I), Note 2 — LBL Add. Mss. 17786-91 has no accidental (i.e. giving E-natural original key or F-sharp transposed version) and the editor prefers this rather more unusual harmonic effect. Those who prefer the more conventional effect with E-flat (original version) or F-natural (transposed version) will find this reading is confirmed by 3 other sources — Oxford, Christ Church Mus 56-60; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Tenbury MSS 807-11 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Tenbury MS 309)

Pitch and performance

The ranges of the individual parts are not particularly wide (perhaps reflecting the modest abilities of Weelkes' singers at Chichester Cathedral or domestic performers rather than the skilled voices of the Chapel Royal). The music will therefore work comfortably at several different basic pitch levels.

1. An early 17th-century church performance might have been at the prevailing (high) church organ pitch—either Quire pitch (according to Bruce Haynes around A= 474 or about three-quarters of a tone above modern concert pitch at A=440) or a semitone higher (Q+1). This pitch will be approximated by use of the transposed parts (in A) at A=440 or even A=466.

2. A domestic performance with viols might well have been between a semitone and a tone lower than modern pitch. This may be approximated by use of the original parts (in G) at A=440 or preferably A=415 or A=392.

The parts provided allow the music to be performed by any suitable combination of voices, organ, viols, recorders or other instruments.

Recorder players may find it interesting to compare the effect of the original and transposed versions. It will probably be necessary to “nourish” the tone carefully in the transposed version to counteract the generally thinner effect of recorders when played in “sharp” keys.

Vince Kelly

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