

# ARRANGING AN EARLY 19<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY ORCHESTRAL WORK FOR RECORDER QUINTET

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In recent years arrangers of recorder ensemble music have been turning to light orchestral works from the Classical and Romantic periods (late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries). Despite the inability of recorders to reproduce the dynamics and varied timbres of the original instruments, some of this repertoire sounds quite charming on recorders.

Contredanses, derived from English country dances, were popular on the European continent during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Beethoven's *Twelve Contredanses*, composed in 1802, were scored for various combinations of instruments and were probably commissioned for use in an official masked ball.

The source consulted was a 19th-century edition of the orchestral score (Ludwig van Beethoven, *Werke*, II/17a, Leipzig: Breitkopf & Haertel, 1862-65). *Dance No. 5* was scored for violins 1 & 2, 'cello, double bass, 2 B-flat clarinets, 2 bassoons, and 2 E-flat horns. The double bass part duplicates the 'cello an octave lower and so is not considered a separate part. The second violin part has frequent double stops and must, therefore, be treated as two separate parts. There are thus ten individual parts.

The harmony, however, consists entirely of triads and seventh chords (triad + added seventh above the chord root), so four parts are adequate to cover the harmonization. My task in making a quintet arrangement was to choose the five most important lines at any given moment and disregard the others.

Clarinets and horns, unlike recorders, are "transposing instruments." Their music is not notated at the pitches actually heard. I first rewrote those parts at actual pitch.

Next I determined which instruments have the bass line and which have the melody. That was easy because the piece is essentially homophonic (melody + chords). The bass line is scored for 'cello and double bass except in measure 21 (horn 2) and measure 22 (bassoon 2). I assigned that line to the bass recorder. In the first 16 measures, violin 1 has the melody, doubled in places by violin 2 an octave below (a typical orchestral technique). Ignoring the octave doubling, I assigned the melody in those measures to soprano recorder 1 except in measure 4, where it drops below the soprano range and was, therefore, given to the alto.

In the first section of the trio (measures 17-20), the melody alternates between violin 1 and clarinet 1, and several parts drop out to lighten the texture. I gave the melody there to soprano 2 alternating with alto, and made soprano 1 *facet* (silent). In measures 21-22, the two violin parts have the melody in octaves. I again ignored the octaves and gave it to soprano 1, doubled in measure 22 by soprano 2.

In assigning the other parts, I tried wherever possible to distribute interesting counter-melodic motives among the inner voices. For example, I gave the 16<sup>th</sup>-note trill in measure 10, originally scored for bassoon 1, to the tenor recorder, and the descending 16<sup>th</sup>-note run in measure 11, originally scored for violin 2, to the alto.

Before proceeding further, I had to make one important change. “Contredanse No. 5” was originally written in the key of E-flat major. Although that key fits the ranges of the recorders, it proved unsatisfactory because of the awkward, weak-sounding low E- flats in the soprano parts and low A-flats in the bass part. Transposition down a half step to D major eliminated that problem.

All the dynamics on my score are Beethoven’s, as are the articulation markings in the trio section. In measures 1-16, the articulations in the top line are Beethoven’s. The slurs in the alto and tenor lines in measures 8-11 are also his. He did not include any other articulation markings in measures 1-16, but I added some in an effort to approximate his dynamics. I thus made eighth notes in soft passages staccato and those in loud passages more legato. In measures 23-24, which are meant to be loud, I departed from Beethoven’s downward melodic progression and transposed the top line up an octave so as to avoid the top soprano’s weak lowest notes. In a grand-consort situation, loud passages can be played tutti and soft ones one-on-a-part, and Beethoven’s crescendo can be approximated by gradually adding players in measures 21-23.

It should be noted that this arrangement can be turned into a quartet arrangement by giving the repeated A’s in measures 17-20 to soprano 1 and deleting the entire soprano 2 part. In fact, I had originally arranged the piece for four recorders and added the second soprano line later to accommodate a beginning player. The quintet arrangement is designed especially for a grand consort situation in which one or two strong sopranos play the top line and the other sopranos play line 2.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Bergmann defends the transcription of music customarily considered unsuitable for recorders (e.g., pieces by Schubert and Schumann). He believes such transcriptions are useful in teaching children..
- Conrad, Laura. "Transcribing Renaissance Music for Recorders." *American Recorder* Vol. XLIII, No. 1 (January 2002), pp. 16-17.  
Author explains how she transcribed individual parts in a two-voice canzonet by Thomas Morley, without adding bar-lines. Music is included. (Part of *AR*'s "Composers/Arrangers" series, edited by Stan McDaniel.)
- Edridge, Tom. "Arranging Keyboard Bach for Recorders." *Recorder and Music Magazine* Vol. 4, No. 1 (March 1972), pp. 4-5.  
Recommends specific works suitable for transcription, including several fugues.
- Geisler, Richard. "A Merry Go 'Round: What can you do with a cute little tune?" *American Recorder* Vol. XLIV, No. 2 (March 2003), pp. 19-22.  
The "cute little tune" is a 16<sup>th</sup>-century chanson, "Margot, labourez les vignes," which Geisler arranged for recorder orchestra. Article includes his arrangement and his explanation of arranging techniques. (Part of *AR*'s "Composers/Arrangers" series, edited by Stan McDaniel.)
- Mondrup, Annette. "Arranging String Music for Recorders." *American Recorder* Vol. XLII, No. 5 (November 2001), pp. 16-18.  
Author explains how she arranged for recorder quintet a movement from a suite for strings by a 17<sup>th</sup>-century German composer. Music is included. (Part of *AR*'s "Composers/Arrangers" series, edited by Stan McDaniel.)
- Morris, Roger. "Q & A" (Arranging choral music of J.S. Bach for recorder consorts). *American Recorder* Vol. XXXIX, No. 5 (November 1998), p. 32.
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Author shows how he arranged a spiritual for recorder quartet. Music is included. (Part of *AR*'s "Composers/Arrangers" series, edited by Stan McDaniel.)
- Prior, Susan. "In Search of Recorder Music: Transcription." *American Recorder* Vol. XXIV, No. 4 (November 1983), pp. 146-49.  
Article discusses arrangements for recorder consorts as well as arrangements of solo and chamber sonatas. Mentions types of music suitable for consort arrangements and includes a bibliography of specific sources.
- Seibert, Peter. "Arranging for Recorder Ensemble." *Recorder Education Journal* 4 (1998), pp. 22-28.

- Article discusses, among other things, the audience intended for the arrangement, sources of arrangeable music, and arranging techniques. Musical excerpts from his own arrangements are included.
- Swiger, June. "Arranging a 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Scottish Melody for SAT Recorders." *American Recorder* Vol. XLIV. No. 4 (September 2003), pp. 18-20.  
Author discusses her own arrangement. Music is included. (Part of AR's "Composers/Arrangers" series, edited by Stan McDaniel.)
- Van Dahm, Thomas E. "Romantic Music for Recorder Ensemble: Why Not?" *American Recorder* Vol. XLII, No. 4 (September 2001), pp. 18-19.  
Author believes that arrangements of certain choral songs, *lieder*, and organ and piano works by Schubert, Brahms, Mendelssohn, and other 19<sup>th</sup>-century composers would be appropriate for recorder consorts. He feels that there is a growing demand by recorder players for such music and notes that a few publishers are now willing to publish recorder adaptations of Romantic music.
- Whitney, Maurice C. "Adapting Choral Music for Recorders." *American Recorder* Vol. XIII, No. 1 (February 1972), p. 9.  
Describes various types of choral settings suitable for recorder ensembles and mentions five specific Renaissance pieces as examples.
- Wyatt, Theo. "Arranging—a Practical Survey." *Recorder and Music Magazine* Vol. 4, No. 2 (June 1972), pp. 55-58.  
Gives suggestions for novice arrangers. Recommends beginning with madrigals and Bach chorales. Discusses basic techniques of arranging (octave adjustments, transposition, etc.). Mentions general sources of arrangeable music.

# Contredanse No. 5

Ludwig van Beethoven  
arr. Carolyn Peskin

$\text{♩} = 84$  *I*

Musical score for Soprano 1, Soprano 2, Alto Tenor, and Bass, measures 1-5. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 84. The first measure is marked with a first ending bracket and a first ending repeat sign. Dynamics include *p* (piano).

6 *9 (più legato)*

Musical score for Soprano 1, Soprano 2, Alto Tenor, and Bass, measures 6-9. Measure 6 is marked with a first ending bracket and a first ending repeat sign. Measure 9 is marked with a first ending bracket and a first ending repeat sign. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *p* (piano). The instruction *più legato* is present above measure 9.

11 *Fine*

Musical score for Soprano 1, Soprano 2, Alto Tenor, and Bass, measures 11-14. Measure 11 is marked with a first ending bracket and a first ending repeat sign. Measure 14 is marked with a first ending bracket and a first ending repeat sign. Dynamics include *sfz* (sforzando), *p* (piano), and *Fine*.

17 TRIO

S. 1

S. 2

Alt. Ten.

Bs.

*p*

21 D.C. al Fine

S. 1

S. 2

Alt. Ten.

Bs.

*p* *cresc.* *f*

*cresc.* *f*

*cresc.* *f*

*cresc.* *f*

D.C. al Fine