

BOGORODITSE DYEVO

Setting for Band by Matt Conaway

ABOUT THE COMPOSER:

Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943) has been long revered among instrumental performers for his piano concerti and symphonic works, but it is in his vocal music that we arguably find his most sublime renderings. He received his musical training at the Moscow Conservatory, and distinguished himself in both composition and piano performance. He moved to the United States in 1918, and though he did not write a great deal after that time, he traveled all over the country and world as a first-rate piano soloist. He passed away in 1943, just a few weeks after attaining American citizenship.

ABOUT THE COMPOSITION:

Bogoroditse Dyevo (Rejoice, O Virgin) is the sixth choral setting in Rachmaninoff's choral masterpiece: the All-Night Vigil, Op. 37 (1915). The entire All-Night Vigil (sometimes called the "Vespers") is written for a large acapella choir, using Russian text. It was immediately hailed as the most monumental vocal composition in the Russian church, and remains one of the most influential works among vocal music. The allure is the simplicity of the writing; all sections are written to reflect Russian plainchant, and there are no jarring dissonances or unexpected harmonic progressions. In Bogoroditse Dyevo, and indeed throughout the Vespers, Rachmaninoff achieved a sense of serenity rarely matched in choral music of the 20th century.

PERFORMANCE NOTES:

It is very important that the performers realize that this is vocal music, and should try to avoid idiosyncratic instrumental sounds whenever possible. Strive for an open, choral sound at all dynamics.

In general, there's no such thing as a good place to breathe in this piece. The performance should be seamless without any "ensemble breaths" (the lone exception being in Measure 24).

While all parts are important to the full ensemble sound, this setting can be played without Oboe, Bassoon, Bari Sax, or Chimes. Good low brass presence is very important in vocal settings, especially on the Tuba and Euph parts.

To preserve as much of the a capella foundation of this music as possible, there are no percussion parts other than Chimes.

- Measures 1-8: The F Horn part is in a somewhat risky register to start the piece. If the E's and F's aren't happening, then do not cover the Horn 1 part until Measure 19. It would not be appropriate to just take it down an octave.
- Measures 14-17: The Flute, Oboe, Tpt 1, and Euph melody should not overpower the Clarinet accompaniment. Having one player on a part until 18 could be very effective, depending on the size of your ensemble.
- Measures 20-21: Don't shy away from a true ff level - just make sure the tone remains that same pure choral sound.
- Measure 28 - As an effect, consider humming the last note as a chord immediately following the instrumental cutoff. It gives the impression of a cathedral-like resonance even in less reverberant performance venues.

Have a wonderful experience with this one - thanks for sharing great choral music with your band!



Matt Conaway is the Director of Bands for the West Lafayette Community School Corporation in West Lafayette, Indiana. Originally from Woodhaven, Michigan, Conaway completed his undergraduate degree at Indiana University-Bloomington, earning his Bachelor of Music Education-Teaching Area degree with distinction. Following graduation, he served as the Graduate Assistant Director with the Purdue University Bands. In that capacity, he served as an assistant with the "All-American" Marching Band and the concert bands. In addition, he served as a director of the "Gold and Black Sound" women's basketball pep band.

Conaway is currently on the board of directors for the Indiana University Alumni Band and was recently elected to the state board of the Indiana State School Music Association. He is a member of MENC, Indiana Bandmasters Association, Indiana Music Educators Association and Tau Beta Sigma. Matt is also active with the Lafayette Citizens Band and Lafayette Civic Theatre. He has over 150 arrangements and compositions to his credit, including works for the Bloomington "Pops" Orchestra, Indiana University, Purdue athletic bands and several high school and university ensembles in the Midwest.