

Analysis of "O Come All Ye Faithful"

by Vince Corozine

Moreover, we may achieve variety in many ways within a musical arrangement. This example is taken from an arrangement that I did for the opening of the Thanksgiving Parade in Philadelphia for WPVI (ABC-Disney); *O Come All Ye Faithful*. It is scored for eleven instruments; three trumpets, two trombones, three saxophones, and three rhythm (piano, bass, and drums).

I considered beginning the arrangement with a brass quartet ala chorale-style, but felt that three musical lines moving at different speeds would accumulate the needed tension and momentum, that the parade opening required. These three lines, (in a musical conversation), lead to a forte ensemble passage beginning in m.11 that builds in intensity. Not only does the texture vary from three unison lines to divisi, but the rhythm section also begins to swing in 4/4 time. Notice that the three characteristics of a good arrangement take place within this short excerpt; 1. Transparency of texture (three unison lines moving at different speeds (mm. 3-10), 2. Variety of tone color (unison building to an ensemble passage), and 3. Contrapuntal lines building to a climax. Recognize that these characteristics occur again later in the arrangement beginning at m. 20.

It is important to note that the slowest-moving line (melody) is assigned to unison trumpets, while unison trombones are added and play a contrapuntal line that moves a bit faster than the trumpet line. Below all of this is a fast-moving part in eighth notes for the bass, which is introduced two measures before the trumpets enter. All three lines combine to form a conversation among the three sections. The saxophone section is silent until m 11. Doubling the saxophones on a line at the beginning, would threaten the clarity and purity of the brass sound, and would have an adverse affect on the flexibility of the arrangement.

Also notice at m 11 that the saxophones play a unison line against divisi brass. This unison line adds focus and direction to the sound, and the fact that it moves in contrary motion to the brass makes it even more appealing.

I have found it useful to double the lead trumpet at the lower octave using another trumpet or a trombone, whenever the lead trumpet plays above Bb concert (above the staff). This doubling at the lower octave reinforces the overtones of the high trumpet and adds brilliance and energy to the sound.

Unison lines add focus and direction to the sound, particularly when written in contrary motion to the melody.

Example 1. **O Come All Ye Faithful** arranged by Vince Corozine
 (Notice that all instruments are in concert key, with the bass sounding one octave lower)

(This arrangement may be heard on Vince's Web page: www.vincecorozine.com)

O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL

With movement ♩ = 152

The musical score is arranged for the following instruments: Alto Sax, Tenor/Bari Sax, 3 Trumpets, 2 Trombones, Guitar/Piano, Bass, and Drums. The key signature is two flats (Bb and Eb), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as 'With movement ♩ = 152'. The score includes various dynamics and performance instructions:

- Alto Sax:** Starts with a rest, then plays a melodic line starting in measure 6.
- Tenor/Bari Sax:** Starts with a rest, then plays a melodic line starting in measure 6.
- 3 Trumpets:** Play a rhythmic pattern starting in measure 2, marked *f marcato*.
- 2 Trombones:** Play a rhythmic pattern starting in measure 2, marked *f marcato*.
- Guitar/Piano:** Play a rhythmic pattern starting in measure 2, marked *mf*. Includes a 'Bell Effect' instruction in measure 2 and a 'Guitar/Piano' instruction in measure 3.
- Bass:** Play a rhythmic pattern starting in measure 2, marked *mf*.
- Drums:** Play a 'Double time jazz feel' pattern starting in measure 2.

The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 1 through 5. The second system starts at measure 6 and includes a 'Naturale' instruction and a chord progression: Bb Bb9 Cm7 Bb9.

11

Alto Sax *ff* *f* unis.

Tenor/Bari Sax *ff*

Trumpets *ff*

Trombones *ff*

Guitar/Piano *f*

Bass *ff*

Dr. *ff*

17

Alto Sax *ff*

Tenor/Bari Sax *ff*

Trumpets *ff*

Trombones *ff*

Guitar/Piano *ff*

Bass *ff*

Dr. *ff*

Swing with brass

22

Alto Sax

Tenor/Bari Sax

Trumpets

Trombones

Bass

Dr.

26

Alto Sax

Tenor/Bari Sax

Trumpets

Trombones

Bass

Dr.

SOLO

One will discover that the saxophones play unison counterpoint lines for most of the arrangement, except in measure 14 and the last three measures of the arrangement where they are divided to add fullness to the brass chords. Notice the alternating of the tenor and baritone saxophone notes in m 15. (Repeated notes have a tendency to be difficult to play and do not “swing.”) Having the saxophones play divisi throughout would make the arrangement sound too thick and cloying, and destroy the flexibility of the moving lines. A constant “tutti” sound lacks in contrast...ie: the big-sounding sections sound even bigger when they follow unison lines.

What clearly emerges is the fact that unison lines are used almost as much as divisi lines. In fact, in this arrangement there are twelve measures of unison while divisi totals only fourteen measures. Musical lines (particularly those that move in contrary motion) are more engrossing for the musician to play, and are more appealing to the listener, than are constant divisi chords. This constant divisi wears on the ear and quickly becomes tiresome to the listener. Unison lines provide contrast for the listener, and when the brass divisi does appear, the effect is even more varied and impressive.

A word about voicing brass chords. Making three trumpets and two trombones sound like a much bigger ensemble is possible if one adheres to the following guidelines:

1. Use lots of fourth intervals from the top down. They add a contemporary ring and sound more resonant than chords voiced in thirds. (mm 11, 12, 19, 20, 25)
2. Use only one third throughout the entire brass section.
3. Avoid repeated notes in any part by crossing voices. Repeated notes tend to stifle and to take away from the loose swing feeling of the phrase. (mm 11, 12, 25)
4. Breath marks should be included in all parts to facilitate musical phrasing.
5. Add the 9th, and 13th to dominant seventh chords. (mm 18, 26, and next to the last measure).
6. Add the 9th and 11th to minor seventh chords. (mm 11, 25)
7. The root of a dominant seventh chord is not needed . . . leave it to the bass player. If the root appears in the melody, make the chord a 13th. (m 24)

Notice the effectiveness of thick, pungent chords in the last three measures leading to a four-octave “resonant” Eb for the final note.

Achieving variety in a musical arrangement takes careful thought and insight into the many possibilities that are available for arrangers. Remember that full, thick-sounding chords tend to sound cloying and pungent and will take away from the suppleness and clarity of the musical arrangement.