

Hornarama Code 17706

Handel, G.F: Sonata in F Major

Arranged after the Violin Sonata in F major Op. 1/10 by Michael Höltzel for Horn and Basso Continuo

Preface

When I was a student in secondary school, I played this sonata on violin often and happily with organ accompaniment. As the horn increasingly became my main instrument, I surprised my astonished organist at one rehearsal by arriving with my horn. His initial skepticism turned into wonder and the presentation of this new 'horn sonata' was a triumph. Many listeners felt that the piece sounded more beautiful on horn than it had on violin.

Each of the four separate movements works so idiomatically on the horn in its theme, range, and technical demands – not least because of the chosen key of F major – that it feels like an authentic composition for this instrument.

A splendid Adagio begins the sonata with a main theme that could not be more hornistic. The celebratory character of this movement becomes pleasingly clear with a deliberate, but not too broadly flowing tempo.

An Allegro follows as the second movement. Its restless semiquavers and runs should be played in the Baroque manner, that is not too quickly phrased but articulated very clearly and appropriately.

The wonderful serenity of the D minor Larghetto unfolds its profound beauty especially when embellished with Baroque ornamentation. This movement is particularly fitting for solemn occasions.

The last movement, a Gigue with a stormy hunting temperament, again emphasises the hornistic character of this work. It is enlivened primarily through distinct articulation and sweeping dynamics.

One could actually play the entire Sonata from the original violin part (in C basso). As that could lead to endurance problems for most hornists – especially if all four movements are performed – I have incorporated rests in all four movements that give embouchure relief and also result in a dialogue with the organ or piano.

For a particularly charming instrumentation variant that has proved a success in multiple performances, I can recommend a trio of horn, cembalo, and contrabass.

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