

Sat-Maras Polska

Swedish folk dance

Arranged for quartets or 4-part ensembles of SSAB, SSSB, or SSSA flutes by Klaus Bjerre (2004).

This Swedish traditional was introduced to me, when an American tuba-friend asked about its rhythm and tonality. I have played a good deal of Swedish traditional dance music, but aside from being more or less able to tell what is authentic and what is not, I am no strong expert on the genre.

The word “Polska” may be confusing as it means Polish in Polish, but so it does in Swedish, here with a reference to a dance type. Traditionally there has been some exchange of labour forces across the Baltic Sea, so there is nothing surprising in finding a Swedish dance based on a Polish rhythm.

The tonality is D minor with the surprising twist, that the sub-dominant is G major.

Having listened to the tune a few times in the context of the discussion with my friend my ears started forming an arrangement. And as there is no overflow of music presenting quartets of low instruments, I wrote the original arrangement with those in mind. The melody rhythm, the pulse, and the tonality all have been kept within the original framework. However some of the voicing hardly stays within the practices of Swedish folk musicians. And the demands on the players are not at a 1.0.1 level, if a performance shall be successful.

As a response to an asking I made a transposed version for horn quartet. During that work it became clear to me, that this piece might be changed into a recorder quartet, albeit a quite challenging one.

And then a version for flutes of course could not be avoided. One option would have been to involve the piccolo as the lead instrument and just make a transposed version of the recorder version. However the result rather has been a transposition of the original version for euphoniums and tubas, even if this solution takes some of the voices up in a very high range,

There are two playing scores. The SSAB version will lead to the most colourful performance. The SSSA version presents some compromises in the bass-line in form of octave displacements, but then it makes this music available for quartets and ensembles not possessing a bass flute. The two scores are almost fully compatible, which makes the SSSB permutation very obvious. The only limitation is, that alto flutes should never be used on the 3rd and 4th parts at the same time, as that will lead to a not desirable voicing of the ending.

This arrangement can be used free of charge, but a postcard or an e-mail would be nice. If this arrangement should happen to appear on a printed concert programme, then a scan would be very much appreciated.

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