

# La Voce di Zarlino (No.30a)

for five voices  
and optional keyboard

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*AsZoh Press (2006)*

Gioseffo Zarlino *L'istitutione Harmoniche*  
Prima Parte, Cap. 6 (p.12/13)

“Chi narrera le ragioni o voci de Cieli? Et chi fara dormire il loro concentro?”  
Et se mi fusse dimandato; onde proceda, che tanto grande & si dolce suono non sia udito da noi; altro non saprei rispondere, che quello, che dice Cicerone nel luogo di sopra allegato, Che gli orecchi nostri ripieni di tanta harmonia sono sordid; si come per essemplio avviene a gli habitatori di quei luoghi dove il Nilo da monti altissimi precipita, detti catadupa; I quail per la grandezza del rimbombo mancano del senso dell'udito.

Ouvro che si come l'occhio nostro non puo fissare lo sguardo nella luce del Sole, restando da i suoi raggi vinta la nostra luce; cosi gli orecchi nostri non possono capire la dolcezza dell'harmonia celeste, per l'eccellenza et grandezza sua.

Ma ogni ragione ne persuade a credere almeno, che il mondo sia composto con harmonia; si perche (come vuol Platone) l'anima di esso e harmonia; si anche perche li cieli sono girati intorno dale loro intelligenze con harmonia: come si comprende da i loro rivolgimenti; liquali sono l'uno dell'altro proportionatamente piu tardi, o piu veloci.

### General remarks:

*La Voce di Zarlino* is a setting of a text by the Italian composer and theoretician Gioseffo Zarlino. The text is taken from a passage in the sixth chapter of the first book of his treatise *L'istitutione Harmoniche*, published in 1578, in which he describes various relationships between sound (*L'harmonia*) and the universe, as well as our basic inability to truly observe it.

The musical setting of this passage is conceived as a harmonic recitative on the first seven prime numbers of the harmonic series of C<sub>1</sub>. The material was derived from Zarlino's observation of the so-called *syntonic comma* (the difference between four justly tuned perfect fifths, and two octaves plus a justly tuned major third - resulting in a minute pitch difference of ca. 21.51 cents) and bases its' pitches on these first five fifths departing from C<sub>1</sub>, to which two tritones have been added at the top and the bottom (ie: F<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>1</sub>-G<sub>1</sub>-D<sub>1</sub>-A<sub>1</sub>-E<sub>1</sub>-B<sub>1</sub> - or in its proper harmonic order: C-G-E-B<sub>1</sub>-D-F<sub>1</sub>-A ).

The text is set as a form of recitative, in which each word or phrase is subdivided over units of six beats at differing speeds. The bars are subdivided into units of 6 or 12 seconds (ie: 6/4 or 6/2), with voices entering at the beginnings of these points. Timing can either occur on the basis of meter or on the basis of clock time (stopwatch).

The piece uses 3 to 5 basic speeds. In sections I to IV the words are subdivided into time-units of either 6" or 12", with the part marked R (for "Reciter") as the fastest speed - with a speech tempo slightly higher or lower than quarter note equals 90 per syllable. The other voices all proceed at slower tempi. In sections V to IX all voices enter at the beginning of the 'bar' and should observe the metric subdivisions as strictly as possible.

Due to the length and general slowness of the recitation, an optional, but important organ part is included. This part serves not only as a safety-valve for the singers to rely on, but is also designed to guarantee harmonic continuity. The part uses the same material as the vocalists, but holds its pitches for a longer time. The part can be played either on a positive organ (preferably in some form of just tuning) or on a synthesizer (also preferably retuned).

The notated harmonies are not to be played in their entirety, but serve as a gamut of available pitches to be chosen from during the given time-period.

The numbers over the staves indicate the total number of allowed pitches during the same time-period. The player should alternate these pitches freely, replacing one note at a time as the environment suggests. Care should be taken to avoid playing pitches which are already sounding in the vocal parts.

### Notes to the performers:

1) the diction should be unemphatic, placed on a continuous line of breath allowing the vowels to flow into each other seamlessly.

2) the piece should be conceived as a sequence of time-units into which words have been placed. Exact rhythmic precision is of secondary importance. The more complex metric subdivisions in sections I to IV are not intended to be performed with perfect strictness, but should be approached as fluctuations in velocity, either faster or slower than 1" or 2" per syllable. Easy subdivisions should be adhered to as much as possible. From section V on, rhythmic precision is more important. The numbers over or under the notes indicate their positions within the beat.

3) New harmonic pitches (indicated by a circle around the initial note) are intended to stand out from the overall dynamics. Care should be taken to blend the dynamics into a balanced texture, with subtle dynamic inflections for the new harmonic pitches. Crescendo or decrescendo markings above the systems apply to all singers. The overall dynamics however are relative and not absolute

4) where text lines cross each other, try to avoid drastic changes in texture. Create an even, homophonic sound with seamless, imperceptible changes.

5) very long, tenuto, notes at the endings of words or phrases do not have to be sung for their full notated duration, but can be conceived as the end of a breath-phrase, holding the pitch for as long as the breath allows and exiting on a decrescendo: the overall texture should be one of voices entering and exiting. If no organ is used however, it is advisable to hold the pitches for as long as possible.

6) from section V on: where the entries coincide at the beginning of each bar, avoid breathing at the same time, but choose different breathing points per singer (ie: do not all breathe together at the beginning of each bar).

6) organ part: see above.



# La Voce di Zarlino

(SERIES: C: # 1,3,5,7,9,11,13)

Peter Adriaansz

♩ = 60    ♪ = 30

(Each bar = 6" / quarter note = 60)

Sing towards the underlined notes

Changes in harmony (indicated by a circle around the initial note) should be brought out in their entirety.

0" 00"                      0' 06"                      0' 12"                      0' 18"                      0' 24"                      0' 30"                      0' 36"

Soprano 1  
*p* RE - RA..    *mp* "CHI NAR - - - RE - RA    *p* LE RA - GI - O - NI

Soprano 2  
*p* NA - RE - RA,    "CHI NAR - RE - RA    *mp* LE RA - GI - - - O - - - NI

Alto  
*p* CHI NA - RE - RA..    RE - - - - - O - - - NE    O VO - CI DE CIE - LI?

Tenor  
*p* "CHI NAR - RE - RA    LE RA - GI - O - NI    O VO - CI DE CIE - LI?

Baritone  
*p* "CHI NAR - RE - RA    LE RA - GI - O - NI    O VO - CI DE CIE - LI?    ET CHI FA - RA    DOR - MI - RE    IL LO - RO - CON - CEN - TO?"

Pos. Organ (or synthesizer)  
*p*

**SAMPLE**

0' 36"                      0' 42"                      0' 48"                      0' 54"                      1' 00"                      1' 06"                      1' 12"

Sop. 1  
*mp* O VO - CI DE CIE - LI? *p* ET CHI FA - RA DOR - - - MI - - - RE

Sop. 2  
*p* O VO - CI DE CIE - LI? *mp* ET CHI FA - - RA *p* DOR - MI - RE

Alto  
ET CHI FA - RA DOR - MI - RE IL LO - RO CON -

Ten.  
ET CHI FA - RA DOR - MI - RE IL LO RO "N - CEN - TO?"

Bar.  
ET SE MI FUS - SE DI - MAN - DA - TO ON - DE PRO - CE - DA, CHE TAN - TO GRAN - DE & SI DOL - CE SUO - NO NON SIA U - DI - TO

Org.  
②                      ①/2                      ②

1' 12"                      1' 18"                      1' 24"                      1' 30"                      1' 36"                      1' 42"                      1' 48"

Sop. 1  
 IL LO - RO CON - CEN - TO?"                      ET SE MI FUS - SE                      DI - MAN - DA - TO:

Sop. 2  
 IL LO - RO CON - CEN - TO?"                      ET SE MI FUS - SE                      DI - MAN - DA - TO;

Alto  
 - - CEN - TO?"                      ET SE MI FUS - SE                      DI - MAN - DA - - - TO                      ON - DE PRO - CE - DA

Ten.  
 ET SE MI FUS - SE                      DI - MAN - DA - TO                      ON - DE PRO - CE - DA,

Bar.  
 DA NOI AL-TRO NON SA-PREI RIS-PON-DE-RE                      CHE QUEL - LO,                      CHE DI - CE CI - CE - RO - NE                      NEL LUO - GO                      DI SO-PRA ALL-LE-GA-TO,

Org.  
 13                      2/3                      2                      2/3



**TUTTI:**  
*crescendo in phases*

*mp*

1' 48"      1' 54"      2' 00"      2' 06"      2' 12"      2' 18"      2' 24"

Sop. 1  
ON DE PRO - CE - DA, CHE TAN - TO GRAN - DE & SI DOL - CE

Sop. 2  
ON - DE PRO - CE - DA, CHE TAN - TO GRAN - DE & SI DOL - CE

Alto  
CHE TAN - TO GRAN - DE & SI DOL - CE *mp* SUO -

Ten.  
*p* CHE TAN - TO GRAN - DE & SI DOL - CE SUO - NO

Bar.  
*mp* CHE GLI O - REC - CHI NOS - TRI RI - PIE - NI DI TAN - TA HAR - MO - NI - A SO - NO SOR - DID; SI CO - ME PER ES - SEM - PI - O

Org.  
3 4 5

**SAMPLE**

**R**

*mf*

2' 24"

2' 30"

2' 36"

2' 42"

2' 48"

2' 54"

3' 00"

Sop. 1  
SUO - - - NO NON SIA U - DI - TO DA NOI;

Sop. 2  
SUO - NO NON SIA U - DI - TO DA NOI;

Alto  
- - - NO NON SIA U - DI - TO DA NOI; AL - TRO

Ten.  
A - VIE - NE A G - HA - BI - TO - RI DI QU - LUO - IL NI LO, DA NON TI AL - TIS - SI - MI PRE - CI - PI - TA

Bar.  
NON SIA U - - DI - TO DA NOI; AL - TRO NON SA - PREI

Org.