

DONA, DONA

Words and Music by Sholom Sholem Secunda, Sheldon Secunda, Teddi Schwartz,
Arthur Keves and Aaron Zeitlin

Arranged by Ruth Siegler

INSTRUMENTATION

Conductor Score	1
Violin I	8
Violin II	8
Viola	5
Cello	5
String Bass	5

Young string players will enjoy this soaring freedom song, a great lyrical piece in first position! The arrangement can be used to develop slurring and legato playing skills and to master the production of a rich pizzicato sound. Written in E minor with simple rhythms, students can experience performing in the minor mode without difficult accidentals.



PROGRAM NOTES

Dona, Dona was written in 1940–41 as part of the Yiddish musical theater piece “Esterke.” Both the composers and the lyricists were Jews from Eastern Europe. The beautiful and moving lyrics are accessible to children, as is the idea of a group of people yearning for freedom and an equal place in the world. The song was popularized in the United States during the sixties by Joan Baez. The protest movements of that time provided a welcome environment for performances of freedom songs. Although there is limited time in the orchestra classroom for historical discussions, students could be encouraged to explore the subject matter of *Dona, Dona* in their social studies classes. The text of the song relates to the history of the holocaust of WW2, and to the civil rights movement in the U.S.

On a wagon bound for market,
there's a calf with a mournful eye.
High above him, there's a swallow,
winging swiftly through the sky.

(Refrain: *Dona, Dona, Dona*, etc.)

Stop complaining, said the farmer.
Who told you a calf to be?
Why don't you have wings to fly with
like the swallow so proud and free?

Calves are easily bound and slaughtered,
never knowing the reason why.
But for those who treasure freedom,
like the swallow is bound to fly.

NOTES TO THE CONDUCTOR

This piece should be fairly simple to conduct as it is in 4/4 time throughout. Although the piece is somber in mood and content, it should not be played too slowly, so follow the metronome marking closely. The challenge for the students will be to play slurs and legato at that tempo. This is what gives the music its character. Practicing scales in eighth notes with slurs is a good warm-up exercise for this endeavor. The changes from arco to pizzicato happen quickly in this arrangement, and this is a technique that needs to be taught and practiced. Pizzicato should be played with the index finger plucking and the thumb holding the fingerboard to produce a rich sound. Have the students hold the bow normally for arco. Then, quickly grab the stick and frog of the bow with the middle, ring and pinky fingers, extending the index finger and placing the thumb on the fingerboard. Going back to arco, the process is reversed. The thumb goes back to its position under the stick with the fingers opposite the thumb on top of the stick. Have the students practice these moves without playing and they will soon master the skill. Singing is always a good way to learn music! If the students are not adverse to the idea, teach them the words for a verse and have them sing the song. This gets the tune in their heads and helps to give an interpretation to the music. You never know, they might just like it.

Dona, Dona

CONDUCTOR SCORE

Duration - 2:15

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Moderato (♩ = 108)

3

Violins

Viola

Cello

String Bass

Musical score for measures 1-4. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features five staves: Violins I and II, Viola, Cello, and String Bass. The tempo is Moderato (♩ = 108). A rehearsal mark '3' is placed above measure 3. Dynamics include *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The String Bass part includes a *pizz.* (pizzicato) marking in measure 2. A large red watermark 'Preview Requires Purchase' is overlaid on the score.

Vlns.

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

Musical score for measures 5-8. The score continues from the previous page. It features five staves: Violins I and II, Viola, Cello, and String Bass. A *Play* marking is present above measure 7. Dynamics include *mf* (mezzo-forte). A large red watermark 'Preview Requires Purchase' is overlaid on the score.

11

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

mf

mf
arco

9 10 11 12 13

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

4

4

14 15 16 17

19

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

f

f

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

f

f

18 19 20 21 22

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

4

4

4

23 24 25 26

27

arco

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

mf

f

4

4

4

4

27 28 29 30

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

p

p

p

pizz.

mf

p

4

4

4

31 32 33 34 35

36

Vlns. I *mf*

Vlns. II *p*

Vla. *p*

Cello

Str. Bass

36 37 38 39 *p* 40

44

Vlns. I *f*

Vlns. II *f*

Vla. *f*

Cello *f* arco

Str. Bass *f*

41 42 43 *f* 44 45

I
Vlns.

II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

Musical score for measures 46-49. The score is for five instruments: Violins I and II, Viola, Cello, and String Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 46 has a '4' above the second violin staff. Measure 47 has a comma above the viola staff. Measure 48 has a comma above the cello staff. Measure 49 has a fermata over the final note of the first violin staff.

46 47 48 49

I
Vlns.

II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

50

mf

p

mf

p

mf

p

mf

p

mf

p

rit.

Musical score for measures 50-54. The score is for five instruments: Violins I and II, Viola, Cello, and String Bass. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 50 is marked with a box containing the number '50' and a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 51 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Measure 52 has a dynamic marking of *p*. Measure 53 has a dynamic marking of *p*. Measure 54 has a dynamic marking of *p* and a fermata over the final note of the first violin staff. The word 'rit.' is written above the first violin staff in measure 52.

50 51 52 53 54