

SEPTEMBER 2020

WASBE WORLD

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE WORLD ASSOCIATION FOR
SYMPHONIC BANDS AND ENSEMBLES



**WASBE WORLD, The Official Magazine of the World
Association for Symponic Bands and Ensembles**

September 2020 Vol. 12, No. 2 2020

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Graphic Design and Layout:

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Cover Image:

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Please send material to Markus Mauderer,
WASBE Executive Director:

wasbeworld@gmail.com

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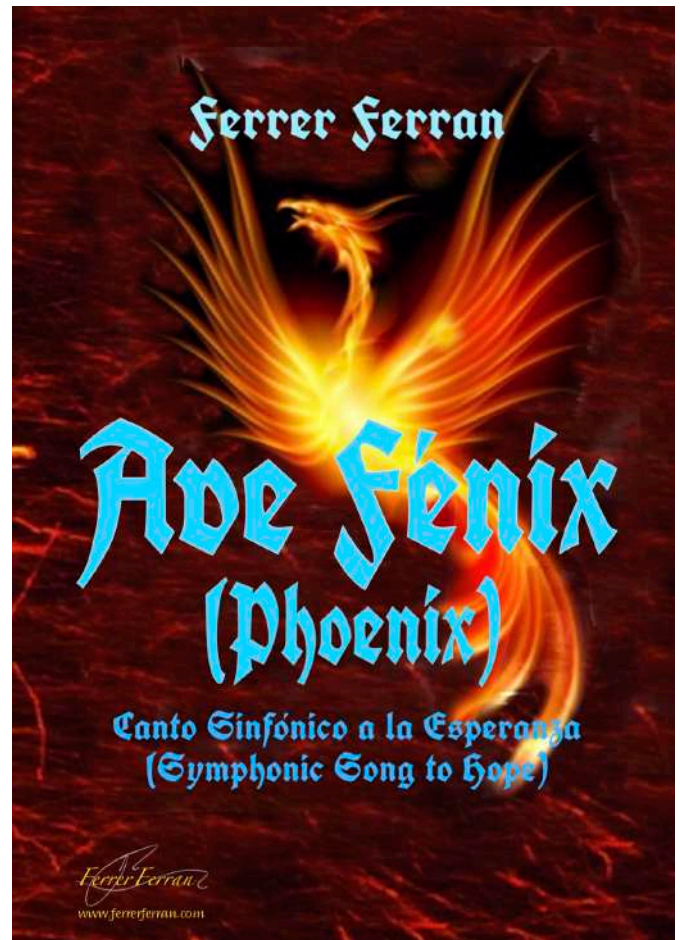
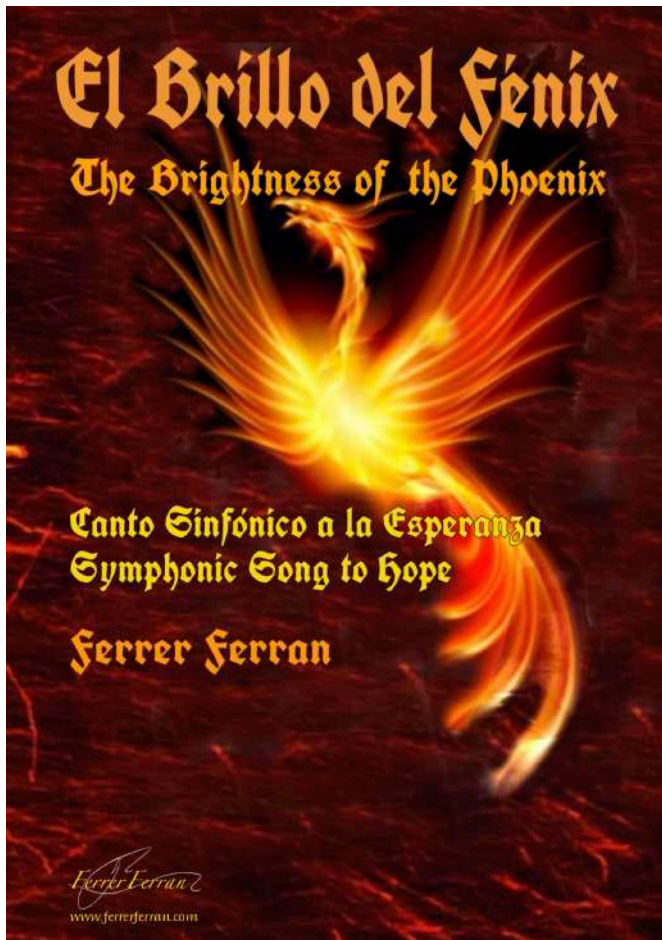
EL BRILLO DEL FÉNIX *CANTO SINFÓNICO A LA ESPERANZA*

(THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE PHOENIX—SYMPHONIC SONG TO HOPE)

SILVIA CASADO SCHNEIDER
WITH FERRER FERRAN



Photo of Ferrer Ferran conducting El Brillo del Fénix at the Estreno Mundial provided by Marcelo Valerio



"El Brillo del Fénix" and "Ave Fénix": Ferrer Ferran

The original composition "The Brightness of the Phoenix" was composed by Ferrer Ferran during the lockdown in Spain. He sets to music the events and every facet of the pandemic, from its outbreak in China to its spread over the whole world, the fates of the people and the daily applause.

His aim wasn't to immortalize the events related to the pandemic such as a remembrance, a commemoration or as an event, but to reflect the tragedy by expressing everything that occurred through music.

Ferrer Ferran dedicates this piece of music to all the people whose lives were taken by the pandemic, to everybody who fought on the front line, who looked after us and who helped us to pick up our courage to look again for peace, harmony and hope.

Ferrer Ferran: "Qué de las cenizas del ave fénix revivan en nuestro pensamiento aquellas almas desaparecidas." (Let us bring the disappeared souls to life in our minds from the ashes of the phoenix.)

THE CREATION

Generally the story of Covid was set. So Ferrer Ferran fixed the general structure, a kind of schedule, as he is used to do, to fill then every moment with music creating a whole in the end. But this time the melodies and harmonies flew in a magical way directly from his heart to his fingers. They then found their way to his grand piano which brought forth those enchanting sounds that form this piece of music. For the composer this it is a special piece of music, because it formed his personal development, something that he has never experienced or felt before—simply magical.

During 2 – 3 weeks he dedicated countless hours every day to this project close to his heart. He set everything to music that in this moment of the pandemic and the lockdown touched his heart, and assimilated it by composing. At once it made him happy because in this way he could do something for the people, whose suffering he saw every day. First of all he wanted to create something great for the first musicians' meeting.



The title of the original piece of music “The Brightness of the Phoenix” is the result of a longer lasting process, but the myth of the phoenix reflects exactly his message. “We will always start again and build everything up again. We are like a phoenix and obtain new life by arising from our ashes, so the virus won’t beat us, but we it.” (Ferrer Ferran)

The word “brightness” (brillo) in the title represents that kind of magic, that you have to feel and can’t be expressed with words. This “brightness” (brillo) only can be understood with your heart, but not with your mind. It is an individual magic because “brightness” (brillo) is formed by your own imagination, emotional experiences, desires and dreams.

MUSICAL TRANSFORMATION

Ferrer Ferran’s piece of music starts with a bloodcurdling scream for help. It emerges from the chaos of a virus that infected many people. The tragical and sad sound of the C minor chord at the beginning emphasizes the dark mood and gloom. The lyrics of the choir CORONA, CORONAVIRUS support the development of the tragedy in the first part. Ferrer Ferran structures his composition in various sections with little subtitles or sentences in the score. Listening to the music you won’t notice anything of these sections because they merge into one another.

COVID itself runs like a golden thread as 4 basic notes through the whole piece of music:

C (Do) – C O (Do sostenido) – Cis VI (mi) – E D (re) – D

Approximately in the middle of the composition (total time approx. 22 min) the music’s character changes. The harmonies become more colourful, more beautiful and more romantic. You move now from darkness to light and start seeing the light at the end of the tunnel—hope appears.

He musically represents death with a lullaby inspired by Brahms famous lullabay “Guten Abend, Gute Nacht”. The sound of a solo flute “lulls” an elderly person to sleep. Nobody can say goodbye to her or him anymore. A very emotional moment is the duet between the flute—one of the relatives—and the bassoon—an elderly person, who is dying,—whose hearts are saying goodbye to each other.

The daily applause in honor of the people who were fighting on the front line, frequently appears in the piece. It is an enjoyable dance in three-four-time, that always starts with the choir, it sings COVID, COVID, COVID, then bells that symbolize the time in the evening 8 o’clock with 8 strokes of the clock were added, music is developing and the whole leads to the orchestra’s applause.

He imagines Mahler’s “Resurrection Symphony” because he was deeply convinced, that it will have to be a “resurrection”—you have to revive and revivify from this. That’s the reason you listen to an ALELUYA from the choir at the end of the composition.

A magnificent, awesome and energetic final that at the same time is made very simple and easy with sustained notes in all parts, also in the choir’s part with three long ALELUYA, brings the “Symphonic Song to hope” to an end.

An organ emphasizes the character of the whole final. The piece of music ends with a brilliant C major chord—hope, the light at the end of the tunnel.

THE CHOIR

The human voice is probably one of the most beautiful instruments of the world, that mother nature has given us. It lends a very special colour to the music and he didn’t want to miss this special brilliance and beauty in this piece, because he wanted to represent every aspect of life from tragedy to hope; at that point the choir helps a lot.



Photo on left of the choir provided by Marcelo Valerio. Photo on right of Ferrer Ferran conducting El Brillo del Fénix at the Estreno Mundial by Rufino Pardo Valverde

Including a choir he achieves his aims of a maximum possible participation—there aren't any limits—because he wanted to compose a piece for the people and that everybody should have chance to participate in a performance of this piece of music. The lyrics for the choir are very simple and easy. They only consist of 3 words: COVID – CORONAVIRUS - ALELUYA

The choir is also used for different effects like screams or applause. They could be customized by the conductor according to her or his mood.

There's only one solo for mezzo-soprano in the choir's part. She sings a lament which also can be played by a flugelhorn. At is this moment, where you say last words to a dying soul and the daughter encourages her father to fight.

So he thinks that it should be possible for everybody with a little bit of understanding of music and "open ears" to take part in the choir. Although he has considered that it can be performed without a choir.

Because of his interest in bands and his knowledge about the large and various offer of music literature for bands, he thought that it is a good opportunity to compose this piece of music with choir.

The premiere of the original piece "El Brillo del Fénix" ("The Brightness of the Phoenix") is planned for wintertime with a participation of round about 200 musicians conducted by Ferrer Ferran himself. Because of the recent situation in Spain Ferrer Ferran couldn't say anything more about that.

"Ave Fénix" (Phoenix) premiered as an open air concert in Argamasilla de Alba's bullfighting arena by Ferrer Ferran on 22.08.2020. There's a special relationship between Ferrer Ferran and this place, its musicians and people: In 2013 he was named "Bachiller de Honor de la Argamasilla" and

he has been running a conducting workshop there in the summer for the last 18 years.

The world premiere of "Ave Fénix" (Phoenix) succeeded with standing ovations—of course in compliance with the special restrictions related to Covid-19.

Ferrer Ferran says: "The audience won't notice any difference between both pieces of music, because it's the same music—the same message." The main difference consists in the technical level and necessary skills.

He wants to offer this composition to the whole music world for free with the most possible flexibility for playing—this means for example with or without choir, the possibility to replace instruments p. e. tenor saxophone instead of bassoon, optional instruments like cello and synthesizer—because music is for everybody and every band should be able to play it.

As soon as both pieces of music were premiered, the whole world can them download for free on Ferrer Ferran's homepage: www.ferrerferran.com/partituras/

I give profuse thanks to Ferrer Ferran – creator and father of "El Brillo del Fénix" ("The Brightness of the Phoenix")—because without his willingness to tell me about his composition, that gave him the creeps again, this article wouldn't be possible.

Written and translated by Silvia Casado Schneider

Interview conducted by Silvia Casado Schneider with Ferrer Ferran in August 2020