

## **Reviews of Hymn-Based Choral Compositions**

### **Donald Sebesta**

#### **New Music**

**A Generous Heart.** Chris de Silva. GIA, G-8667, 2014. SATB, assembly, cantor, guitar, flute, cello and keyboard.

Using words based on the writings of Ignatius Loyola, Chris de Silva has composed a hymn/song for cantor, assembly, and choir, with a melody that is both lyric and contemplative. The text is organized around three verses with congregational refrains and each verse is a dialogue between cantor and SATB ensemble. The piano accompaniment played as written could tend to be heavy and detract from the gentle movement of the piece and there are some places where the voice-leading in the SATB parts is a bit awkward. But all in all, this is a song that well reflects the intimate nature of the text.

**I Want Jesus To Walk With Me.** Arranged by Paul Nicholson. GIA, G-7829, 2012. SAB, solo, piano.

Nicholson uses three verses of this spiritual, with slight variations in each verse. Verse one is scored for solo set against an ensemble singing background harmony on "Oo." Verse two features the melody with a simple soprano descant; verse three is set to a basic SAB harmonization. This is an anthem which can be useful for choirs of modest resources. But, what makes this piece noteworthy is the arranger's creative accompaniment, infusing the music with a George Gershwin-like reflective, somber mood. The accompaniment, though easy to moderate, would require a pianist with musical sensitivity.

**Dear Jesus, On Your Pilgrim Way.** Setting by Benjamin Ristow. Northwest Publishing House, 2806126E, 2014. SATB, organ, brass quartet, flute, and congregation.

Benjamin Ristow has composed this concertato setting based on the hymn tune, *PILGRIM REST*, by Stephen R. Johnson, with text translated from German by Michael Schultz. The hymn tune has an appealing melody which should be easy for a congregation to sing. Ristow's organization of the text is as follows:

Verse 1-Unison choir and congregation.

Verse 2-Two-part sopranos and altos with flute obligato.

Verse 3-Unison basses and tenors with trombones playing two-part counterpoint.

Verse 4-Four-part choir with sopranos singing the melody against lower voices singing in counterpoint in vocal ranges that span more than an octave.

Verse 5-Unison choir and congregation with brass ending the hymn in a grand fanfare.

This concertato is well suited for the average choir and congregation; however, verse four would require concentrated practice.

## One of My "Old" Favorites

**Jesus, Name Of Wondrous Love.** Everett Titcomb. Mills Music/Alfred, 64207, 1947. SATB and organ.

Boston composer, Everett Titcomb (1885-1968) spent a lifetime writing and performing music for high-church Anglican worship. This anthem is not typical of his work, but seems to be perennially popular, while his larger and better-crafted works go largely unnoticed. The text is by W. Walsham How, a nineteenth century Anglican priest and it has been associated with at least three different hymn tunes. However, Titcomb composed a new tune for his English-style hymn anthem and included the expected last-verse descant. This anthem is well suited for the average volunteer choir.

Donald Sebesta is the Director of Music at Mount Calvary Lutheran Church, San Antonio, Texas. In 2012 he wrote the *Hymns in Periodical Literature* column for THE HYMN. He has a hymn-tune portfolio, *Sing to the Lord a New Song*, published by Wayne Leupold Editions.