

Reviews of Hymn-Based Compositions

Stuart Forster

All prices are in U.S. dollars

New Music

Blest are the pure in heart

David Barton. Paraclete Press, PPM01515, 2015, \$1.70

SATB, organ

This new tune for John Keble's beloved text offers impressions of other well-known tunes, such as CARLISLE and FRANCONIA, but is hardly a copy. There is plenty of unison and two-part writing, with just a little SATB in the last verse. Passing notes in accompanying voice parts and the organ keep a sense of forward movement, while keeping the gentle sense of the text at all times.

Christ, whose glory fills the skies

David Halls. Paraclete Press, PPM01519, 2015, \$1.70

SATB, organ

This new tune for Charles Wesley's well-known text is a welcome addition to the repertoire. The organ introduction and interludes each begin the same way, but lead into the next verse according to the texture that follows. The first verse is sung in accompanied unison, and the second in SATB that is largely doubled by the organ. The third verse plays with the melody, tonality, and texture so that the meaning of the text is enhanced even more. There is an option to divide the sopranos at the end. Bases may complain at having to sing so many high Es, but they are well covered by other voices.

The day of Resurrection

arr. Stephen Tappe. Paraclete Press, PPM01524FS and PPM01524, 2015, \$2.20

SATB, organ, edition PPM01524FS adds brass quartet and timpani

This popular Easter hymn is arranged here in a manner that many churches may find useful for regular descants. A straight-forward introduction leads into Monk's harmonization of the first two verses of ELLACOMBE. The final verse then offers a unison-plus-descant texture accompanied with new harmonies that help to shape the overall effect toward a fitting conclusion. There are two editions available, one for choir and organ, and the other adds brass and timpani to grow excitement in the first and last verses with fanfare rhythms that complement the other parts.

Song of Trust

David W. Music. Augsburg Fortress, 978-1-4514-8596-7, 2014, \$1.95

SATB, piano

An optional, unaccompanied, freely-composed choral introduction of ten measures contrasts with the main body of the piece. The piano then begins alone with an almost ostinato-like figuration that continues for most of the piece. The choir enters in unison, and later offers two- and four-part textures with a little imitative writing. WEN NUR DEN LIEBEN GOTT is clearly articulated in each verse, with augmented rhythm in parts of the final verse.

Come, thou fount of every blessing

Michael Larkin. MorningStar Music Publishers, MSM-50-0051, 2015, \$1.70

SATB, piano

This energetic arrangement of WARRENTON, from *Southern Harmony*, features roughly equal amounts of unison, two-part, and SATB singing. Some of the accompaniment is optional so that the choir may sing unaccompanied, if desired. The accompaniment is based on the vocal parts so that singers do not require much independence, but passing notes and runs keep the momentum high.

Sing praise to God who reigns above

David Schwoebel. MorningStar Music Publishers, MSM-50-9460, 2015, \$2.25

SATB, organ, optional congregation.

The organ introduction plays with the opening phrase of MIT FREUDEN ZART before the choir launches into an original tune. This new tune uses similar rhythmic patterns, but contrasting contours, to the known tune. The organ interlude hints at the hymn tune again before the second verse alternates TB and SA voices with new harmonies. The third verse introduces new melodic material with similar rhythm, but the increasing chromaticism leads to a modulation for the final verse, where the congregation joins in the well-known hymn. A reproducible congregational page is included.

One of my “old” favorites**Praise to God in the highest**

arr. Sidney Campbell. Oxford University Press, E150, 1951, ISBN 0193530821, also available in *Anthems for Choirs 1*, ed. Francis Jackson, Oxford, 1973, ISBN 019353214, \$22.50

SSATB, organ

This choral piece is based on a short Russian tune that was first published in 1815, and later showed up in *The Oxford Book of Carols* (1928). The tune has also been utilized by Beethoven, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Mussorgsky. The text was translated by Percy Dearmer. Campbell adds an organ introduction and interludes, and presents each verse with a new choral texture, including unison, two-part, and four parts. Additional variety is provided with ‘answer’ melodies for some verses and a freely-composed verse. Each voice is given a chance to sing the melody, and the organ pedal plays it one last time as the choir reaches its joyful conclusion.

Stuart Forster has been the Director of Music and Organist at the Episcopal Church in Harvard Square—Christ Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts—since 1999. His qualifications are from the University of Sydney, Trinity College of Music in London, Yale University, and the Graduate Theological Foundation. His music is published by Paraclete Press, Éditions Chantaine, and MorningStar Music Publishers, who also published his recent book Hymn Playing: A Modern Colloquium.