

Reviews of Hymn-Based Compositions

Jan Kraybill

New Music

Jazz Carols for Piano

John Turner. Augsburg Fortress, 2015. ISBN 978-1-4514-9911-7. \$27.00 (US). Piano.

The sixteen jazz settings in this collection offer our congregations and audiences – and ourselves – a chance to widen stylistic horizons using favorite tunes. Those that particularly caught my attention include “Angels we have heard on high” (GLORIA), which incorporates the French tune, Beethoven, Handel, and new melodies. Another French carol, “He is born” (IL EST NÉ), is a creative mix of various styles that has much rhythmic energy. The cool jazz waltz on “Come, thou long-expected Jesus” (HYFRYDOL) employs lots of interesting harmonies. I’ve encountered quite a few jazz-inspired settings of “Go, tell it on the mountain”; this is one of the best. The meditative, evocative “Infant holy, infant lowly” (W ŻŁOBIE LEŻY) is quite compelling. “It came upon the midnight clear” (CAROL) is great for those of us who want to sound like we’re jazz improvisers but, because of our inexperience in this style, need for the notes to be written out for us.

My Soul Proclaims: Piano Meditations for Worship

Marianne Kim. Augsburg Fortress, 2015. ISBN 978-1-4514-9913-1. \$21.00 (US). Piano.

Thirteen hymn tunes are set in this collection. My favorite is “Canticle of the Turning” (STAR OF COUNTY DOWN); it captures the energy of the text of justice and hope associated with this tune in worship. Settings of three beloved tunes from the British Isles, LONDONDERRY AIR, JERUSALEM, and THAXTED, are quite beautiful and evocative, incorporating fresh harmonies that are never jarring. The final piece in the book is one of the best: EBENEZER, here called “Thy strong Word” and “Through the night of doubt and sorrow,” also traditionally associated with “Once to every man and nation.”

Let All Things Now Living

Duane Funderburk. MorningStar, MSM-20-625, 2015. \$12.00 (US). Violin, cello, and piano.

Congregations fortunate to have an intermediate-to-advanced level violinist, cellist, and pianist will enjoy hearing this setting of THE ASH GROVE. The strings play an introduction with material based on the hymn melody marked “Joyfully!”; the piano enters with accompaniment material while the strings play a decorated version of the tune. Various string techniques such as double stops and pizzicato provide variety as the piece builds in volume and energy. Muted strings and gradually slowing tempo end the piece in a meditative manner.

Rejoice, the Lord Is King

Samuel Metzger. MorningStar, MSM 20-783, 2015. \$25.00 (US). Congregation, two trumpets, trombone, bass trombone, opt. timpani, suspended cymbal, and descant.

The popular "Congregational Hymn Settings" series from MorningStar continues with this energetic arrangement of DARWALL'S 148TH by Samuel Metzger. The parts are idiomatically written and will work well with intermediate players. An ambitious descant in three parts is provided. Separate, very readable, reproducible parts are included for descant, trumpets in B-flat, trumpets in C, trombone and bass trombone, and timpani and cymbals.

Cont.

Advent & Christmas: Two Preludes for Solo Instrument and Organ

Charles Callahan. MorningStar, MSM-20-110, 2015. \$12.00 (US). Organ and clarinet in B-flat or C instrument.

From the well-known hymn arranger Charles Callahan come these two very approachable and tuneful preludes on Advent and Christmas hymn tunes. "An Advent Prelude" contains VENI EMMANUEL and CONDITOR ALME SIDERUM, and "A Christmas Prelude" is, to use a pop culture term, a mash-up combining ADESTE FIDELES, STILLE NACHT, THE FIRST NOWELL, DIVINUM MYSTERIUM, ES IST EIN ROS, and MENDELSSOHN. Reproducible parts for clarinet in B-flat and C Instrument are included.

One of My "Old" Favorites**Six Preludes for the Church Year**

Robert A. Hobby. MorningStar, MSM-10-716, 1996. \$12.50 (US).

A hymn-based work that is consistently requested by my congregations and audiences around Christmastime is "On this day earth shall ring" (PERSONET HODIE) from this group of six preludes. Organist and composer Robert Hobby captivates listeners as he treats the organ as a Renaissance ensemble complete with drone, cromorne, recorder, and even a hand-drum effect with low clusters of chuffy pipes. Other tunes and times included in the collection are BRIDEGROOM ("Like the murmur of the dove's song," Pentecost), CHRISTE SANCTORUM ("Christ is the world's light," Epiphany), ROCKINGHAM OLD ("When I survey the wondrous cross," Lent), ST. MAGNUS ("The Head that once was crowned," Easter), and WACHET AUF ("Wake, awake, for night is flying," Advent).

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