

Reviews of Choral and Instrumental Hymn-Based Compositions

By CJ Redden-Liotta

All prices are in U.S. dollars

Choral Reviews

“We Walk By Faith” by Anne Krentz Organ. Augsburg Fortress 978-1-4514-9263-7 \$1.60. Two-part mixed voices and piano (Easy).

This setting of the text by Henry Alford is perfect for the choir that is sometimes low in numbers but still wants some challenge. The thematic material is very melodic, and the harmonies are quite nice, even with only two parts. The composition is generally strophic in nature, but each verse receives its own harmonic treatment, with a new melody introduced for the fourth verse. Since this text is traditionally used on the Sunday after Easter, this two part mixed arrangement will fill the needs of many choirs.

“Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross” by Jonathan Strommen Campbell. Augsburg Fortress 978-1-4514-9252-1. \$1.95. SA(T)B, piano, oboe (Easy).

Much to the delight of church choir directors everywhere, more and more publishers are starting to publish music with optional tenor or bass parts, giving choir directors the flexibility they need on some Sundays. This selection is a wonderful addition to the flexible voicing repertoire. Campbell sets the original Fanny Crosby text to a haunting new melody, which is supported by the oboe line. This setting is a nice way to highlight an instrumentalist in the congregation, and present a new tune to an old favorite text.

“O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing” by Mark Patterson. Choristers Guild CGA1386. \$2.10. SAB with piano and optional flute (Easy).

A new setting of the tune AZMON, this arrangement provides a new harmonic setting of the hymn with an accessible accompaniment. The congregation would also easily be able to sing along with this arrangement either in the last verse as suggested by the composer, or by using this as an alternative to the traditional accompaniment. The optional flute part would be appropriate for most high school level players in your congregations, making it an excellent way to include your youth in worship.

“Rejoice, Give Thanks and Sing!” by Kenneth T. Kosche. Choristers Guild CGA1390. \$2.10. SAB with piano and optional trumpet (Easy).

This anthem setting is a good choice for the summer choir and would require minimal rehearsal time for most choirs. Kosche sets the tune MARION mainly for a unison/2 part mixed choir, with further divisi in the treble parts for the final verse. Kosche also chooses to set three verses of the unaltered Edward Plumptre text, rather than the verses presented in many modern hymnals, giving you a chance to present some of the verses that are not usually sung in worship. The trumpet part is accessible to accomplished high school players due to the range (F4-G5).

“The Sacrifice of Praise” by Taylor Davis. Choristers Guild CGA1391. \$2.25. SATB with Piano and ‘Cello (Medium-Difficult).

Taylor Davis has become well known for setting well-known and loved texts to new tunes, and this composition is an excellent addition to the church choir repertoire. Set to the “For the beauty of the earth” text by Folliott Pierpoint, Davis composes completely new material for this setting. Although the notes and harmonies are not overly difficult, the anthem requires some subtlety that will require some rehearsal time. The ‘cello part is also more advanced, requiring a more accomplished player to perform the part well. Davis provides an excellent alternative to other well-loved settings of this text. This anthem would be appropriate for any time of the year this text could be used.

“Leaning on the Everlasting Arms” by Eric Nelson. MorningStar Music MSM-50-8970. \$2.25. SATB, Flute, ‘Cello, and Piano (Medium-Advanced).

This arrangement, in the new Atlanta Master Chorale series, is a sublime setting of this old favorite hymn. Nelson’s setting is at a much slower tempo than this hymn is traditionally played in service, giving it a new character and allowing the beauty of this text to shine through. There are some challenges for the choir (triple vs. duple rhythms) and the instrumental parts are written for accomplished players. This arrangement will be worth the extra rehearsal, and your choir and congregation will appreciate the beauty in this arrangement.

Instrumental Publications

Awake, My Heart, with Gladness by Anne Krentz Organ. MorningStar Music MSM-20-455. \$12.00. Two treble instruments and piano (Medium-Medium Advanced).

This set of variations on the tune AUF, AUF MEIN HERZ is a lovely addition to the instrumental repertoire for the church. Each variation is presented separately, which makes this arrangement quite flexible if time is an issue, or you need a quick, short selection to use during worship. The first variation retains the baroque nature of the original tune, the second presents a rich, lyrical variation, the third variation is more stately and elegant, and the fourth a jaunty variation which alternates between a 6/8 and 3/4 feel in both the accompaniment and the instrumental parts. The notes and tessitura are not an issue in the instrumental parts, but the tempo could prove to be challenging to a high school player.

Praise to the Lord the Almighty by Eric Nelson. MorningStar Music MSM-20-725 \$30.00. Brass Quintet (2 trumpets, horn, 2 trombones), handbells (12 across 4 octaves), choir, and congregation (with descant).

In this arrangement of the LOBE DEN HERREN tune, presented in the Congregational Hymn Settings series, the brass provide the primary accompaniment for congregational singing. The arrangement is a wonderful setting for use as an opening or processional hymn. The introduction begins with atmospheric handbells, joined by the organ and finally the brass. Throughout the arrangement, the

accompaniment is written to support congregational singing, and the descant on the final verse is well written and supported in the brass.

An Old Choral Favorite . . .

“Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing” by Nathan Howe. Available at his website (donations appreciated): <http://nathanhowemusic.com/come-thou-fount-of-every-blessing/> SATB (limited divisi) and piano.

This contemporary arrangement of Nettleton is a great addition to the choral repertoire. Howe uses the traditional, unaltered text and re-harmonizes the tune to give a fresh, new approach to an old favorite. There are optional a cappella sections, and modulations between verses help keep the arrangement from feeling like your choir is singing from the hymnal. Support in the accompaniment also allows the arrangement to be sung by limited forces (where divisi is not possible). A solo voice adaptation of this arrangement is also available from his website.

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