

***Wondrous Love*. arr. Joel Raney & Arnold B. Sherman. Agape 2704D, 2010. ISBN 63628 22704. 3-6 octaves, keyboard, 3-5 octave handchimes, and flute.**

Wondrous Love, arranged by Joel Raney in a handbell setting by Arnold B. Sherman, has a number of interesting features that make it more than just another arrangement of the famous tune. The handbell director might be a bit skeptical that anything new can be drawn from yet another setting of such well-known music. Right from the beginning, however, the major key and jaunty tempo make this setting very different from what we're used to. Although it felt a bit jarring at first, since a slow, solemn version of *Wondrous Love* is so ingrained in one's mind, I found I appreciated that it made me think about the tune in a new way. My ears perked up especially at measure thirty-three, where the parallel fourths and fifths give this section a noticeable Asian flair. The piece has a number of key changes, which have the potential to sound cheesy, yet I found they do not distract from the integrity of the piece as a whole.

I wondered at first if *Wondrous Love* should be a level four piece, instead of level three as it is labeled. The bell part alone may qualify as level three, but getting the bells together with the other obbligato instruments-- keyboard, flute, and handchimes-- can make this piece quite a challenge for the handbell director and his/her volunteers. The instrumentalists are not required to be overly acrobatic, but the piece goes by at a good clip, and there are three key changes to contend with. The director would be wise to schedule plenty of practice time with all the musicians together. Coordination is by far the greatest challenge in this piece, but the payoff will be worth it. *Wondrous Love* combines some bold creativity with the comfort of a familiar tune; it should be a delight to your congregation as well as your musicians.

***Rejoice, the Lord is King!* arr. Sandra Eithun. GIA 8950. 2015. ISBN 85147 89508. 2-3 octaves.**

Rejoice, the Lord is King! (*DARWALL*) arranged by Sandra Eithun struck me immediately as the kind of piece I was always searching for as a bell choir director. The bell choirs I worked with—and perhaps this is true for you, too—were always a mix of musicianship levels, and it seemed the music that came in sample packets was always too hard for my volunteers. *Rejoice!* is extremely straightforward. It doesn't change tempo or key, except for a simple ritard at the end, yet it includes several moments where your players can hone their handbell skills: thumb damps, shakes, and a few accidentals. The tune is a familiar one across most denominations. Even if your ringers are capable of more challenging music, *Rejoice!* is a good piece to have on hand when you need something simple to play.

***We'll Work Till Jesus Comes*. arr. Andrew Duncan. GIA 8942. 2015. ISBN 85147 89428. 3, 4, or 5 octaves.**

We'll Work Till Jesus Comes, arranged by Andrew Duncan, is based on a hymn tune, but one that has never been in common usage. I describe myself as a hymn nerd and I have never come across it; and, wow, how exciting it is to listen to a whole handbell piece, written for use in worship, with no familiar melody to be found! The nature of the bells themselves really make this piece come alive. Duncan calls for martellato and thumb damp techniques in the

middle register of the choir, which mimics the sound of hammers hard at work. In the lower and upper registers, bells ring out at full volume. The unmistakable message is that we have work to do, but in our work is also joy and even celebration. How often do our handbell choirs send the youth group off on their mission trip, or celebrate the congregation's hard work at a Habitat for Humanity project down the road? This piece would be great for such Sundays, and it works for the general church year as well.

***His Eye is on the Sparrow.* arr. John Atteberry. GIA 8733. 2014. ISBN 85147 87338. 3, 4, or 5 octaves with opt. 3 octave handchimes and flute.**

I'm always on the lookout for handbell music that breaks the mold. *His Eye is on the Sparrow*, arranged by John Atteberry, intrigued me because the original piece is usually such a highly expressive gospel tune. Handbell choirs tend to need very steady tempos. How can you mesh these two with integrity? Atteberry's solution in his arrangement is to go in a different direction. Instead of an emotional piece, Atteberry takes his arrangement in the light and quick direction. The speedy tempo and sweetness of the bells, combined with the trills and grace notes from the obbligato flute, paint a picture of the sparrow herself in flight. Listeners who are expecting the usual interpretation of *His Eye* may find all this a bit jarring, but arrangements like these help us think of familiar tunes in new ways. To top it off, the piece is a level two, so it is accessible to a broad base of ringing skills, allowing even the average ringer to experience ringing a classic tune arranged with creative integrity and a flair of originality.

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