

Reviews of Hymn-Based Compositions

Beau Surratt

New Music

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Pamela M. Robertson. SATB, piano; opt. handbell and violin parts available. Hope Pub. C 5964, 2015. \$1.95.

This setting of the text "O come, O come, Emmanuel," set to a refreshingly different-from-the-usual tune, PISGAH, is perfect for the smaller choir and provides opportunity for all voices to shine. The arrangement has a sturdy, Early American, almost Aaron Copeland-esque feel to it and fits well with sense of hopeful expectation that is cultivated in Advent. The part for four handbells could also be played with tone-chimes and is simple enough that children could play it, thus adding an intergenerational component to this useful arrangement.

Concertato on "All My Heart This Night Rejoices"

David M. Cherwien. Choir, organ, congregation, opt. flute or violin. MorningStar Music MSM-60-1124, 2015. \$1.85.

Cherwien has written a delightful setting of Catherine Winkworth's translation of Paul Gerhardt's text paired with Johann G. Ebeling's tune WARUM SOLLTICH. The third stanza with choir only is replete with text painting. The flute or violin part, though optional, is particularly effective on the final verse as it soars even above the soprano/tenor descant. This beautiful and accessible arrangement would make a fine addition to your congregation and choir's repertoire for Christmas Eve.

How Far Is It to Bethlehem

Alfred V. Fedak. Twopart treble voices, piano. MorningStar Music MSM-50-1213, 2015. \$1.70.

Sofia Cavaletti, a creator of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, a Montessori-based Christian formation method, says that children are drawn to the simple and essential. Alfred Fedak's two-part setting of Frances Chesterton's text paired with the English tune STOWEY is an example of that. Soul stirringly beautiful in its simplicity, this lullaby-like piece is perfect for treble choirs just beginning to sing in two-part harmony. Slowing to a gentle end with the phrase, "sleep, as they sleep who find their heart's desire," it would make a fine addition to a children's/family service on Christmas Eve.

This Is My Song

Joel Raney. SATB, piano. Hope Pub. C5965, 2015. \$2.05.

Joel Raney's passionate and dramatic setting of Fanny Crosby's beloved text of testimony combines both the traditional tune ASSURANCE by Phoebe P. Knapp and original music by Joel himself. Set with an expressive and pianistically satisfying accompaniment, the verses tend to be more lyrical and lead into the more *maestoso* treatment of the refrain. The second verse is set to ASSURANCE and features a nice bit of text painting on the phrase "visions of rapture now burst on my sight" for which the sopranos and altos briefly split into three parts.

One of My “Old” Favorites

Amazing Grace

Keith McCutchen. SATB, keyboard. EarthSongs, S-200, 2004. \$1.85

This SATB gospel-style setting of a beloved hymn can't be beat! The accompaniment, though it may be challenging to some pianists, can also be used for the singing of the hymn by a congregation. This is definitely an arrangement that will call for the most passionate singing your choir can muster and is sure to be a hit with your congregation.