

Reviews of Hymn-Based Choral Anthems

Dorothy VanAndel Frisch
All prices are in U.S. dollars.

New Music

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

NETTLETON, arr. Joe Cox. SAB with piano. Choristers Guild, CGA1431, 2015. 7-49193-02241-2. \$2.10.

The familiar old hymn text and tune gain new interest from a new rhythmic pattern, i.e., a 3+5+2+2 division for most measures. The interplay between the piano accompaniment and the choral parts heightens the effect. Once the choral director has rehearsed the basic rhythmic pattern, the choir should find the parts very accessible. An interesting effect is created by the sopranos and basses singing the melody while the altos sing harmony; the sturdy sound goes well with this older American tune. The third stanza begins with the bass part in dotted eighth notes (four even notes per measure) against the women's 3+5+2+2 pattern, producing a two-against-three effect. The piano part is quite satisfactory: evocative of flowing water, varied for each stanza, and not difficult.

This Day of Days

ERSCHIENEN IST DER HERRLICH TAG, arr. Bradley Norris. SATB and organ with optional trumpets. Augsburg Fortress, 978-1-5064-0879-8, 2015. \$1.95.

Here is a joyful Easter anthem with relatively easy choral parts. The texture includes canon, imitative entrances, SATB homophony, and SATB two-part writing (sopranos and tenors singing the same line an octave apart, likewise altos and basses). The organ accompaniment is varied and interesting but not difficult. The descending stepwise pedal part is strong writing and produces a good effect.

Praise, Praise to God

BOUMAN, arr. Walter L. Pelz. SATB, organ, and optional assembly. Augsburg Fortress, 978-1-5064-0871-2, 2015. \$1.95.

The extraordinarily rich text is by Herbert F. Brokering. This celebration of Christ's life and resurrection includes unison writing, various combinations of two parts, SATB, SATB two-part, and unison with descant. The part-writing and organ score are very fine, reminiscent of Vaughn Williams in strength, craftsmanship, and suitability to the voice and organ.

What Wondrous Love Is This

WONDROUS LOVE, arr. Trevor Manor. Unison/two-part with piano and optional violin. Choristers Guild, CGA1451, 2015. 7-49193-02242-9, \$2.10.

This is a fine anthem for youth choir, soloist, SA choir, TB choir, or mixed two-part choir. The flowing accompaniment works well with or without violin. The melody of the introduction (based on the tune) and the fresh harmonies combine to create a welcome new setting of this standard text and tune. The flexibility of this anthem (in terms of performing forces), the text that is appropriate for most Sundays, and the ease of learning the music make this a wonderful "emergency anthem," suitable for those Sundays when the choir director is suddenly short of the singers needed for the planned anthem.

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

HOUSTON, arr. Richard Proulx. SAB a cappella. GIA, G-8758, 2014. 7-85147-87580-2, \$2.15.

The harmony of this anthem is largely the conventional harmony of the hymn itself. What sets this anthem apart is the rhythmic interest added by the contrapuntal lines and the imitative entrances of the voices. Instead of the relentless block chords of the hymn, each part gets singable, flowing lines. The part-writing makes the most of the three voices. This top quality anthem has been published as part of the Richard Proulx Legacy Series.

Festival First Nowell

THE FIRST NOWELL, arr. Dan Forrest. SATB (some divisi), audience, organ, brass, and percussion. GIA, G-8720, 2014. 7-85147-87200-9, \$2.15.

This setting is a worthy challenger to the familiar David Willcocks arrangement. The expressive motif of the first two measures permeates the entire setting, unifying and beautifying it. The part-writing becomes quite sophisticated. For the second refrain, the choir men have the melody, while the women provide harmony in two, three, or four parts above the melody. On the final refrain, the audience is singing unison while the choir not only supports that unison but adds harmony parts. The organ part is very well-written. The ending is spine-tingling. The arrangement is top quality and produces a wonderful effect even without the brass quintet and percussion.

One of My "Old" Favorites

Hark, I Hear the Harps Eternal

INVITATION, arr. Alice Parker. SATB a cappella (some divisi). Lawson-Gould, 00-LG51331, 1967. 7-83556-00510-0, \$1.85.

This arrangement still shines after almost fifty years, as is evidenced by the multiple enthusiastic videos showcasing the work online. After the first homophonic phrases, polyphony rules the arrangement, the voices calling back and forth in ever-changing rhythmic combinations, until the final triumphant chordal ending. The sturdy harmony, using only the pentatonic scale of the melody, is entirely suited to the character of this early American tune. As is usual with Parker's arrangements, all voices get something interesting to sing, the melody moves from part to part, and the lines are quite singable. Note: the first altos get part of the melody, including a high F at two points. But since the soprano part is not divided in either of these places, some second sopranos could easily help out the first altos.

Dorothy VanAndel Frisch is an organist, pianist, choral singer, and published composer. Two of her GIA choral anthems have received the J.W. Pepper "Editors' Choice" award.