

Handbell Music Reviews

May 2011

Two Carols with Percussion

I. Pat – a – Pan opt. Handrum or Tambourine

II. Fum, Fum, Fum opt. Tambourine

Edwards 3 or 5 octaves

Level 1

I like to incorporate into our church handbell choir repertoire some less familiar Christmas music so these two pieces make a great choice. It will work well for school or church choirs as well as for more experienced ensembles that are looking to prepare some easier Christmas music. Pat-a-pan is a traditional Burgundian Carol (an area in? German? I think France) and includes echoes, toll swings, and shakes. It also has an optional repeat so that depending on the setting, it can be longer or shorter. Fum, Fum, Fum is a Catalonian Carol (an area in Spain) and includes mart lifts, swings, shakes, plucks and marts. Each piece can stand alone for performance. There is great opportunity for ringers to work on dynamics in each of these pieces. Don't forget to add the percussion to add some extra texture and rhythm to the music.

Let All Things Now Living (optional flute and percussion)

Arr. Page 23 octaves

Level 1

Commonly known as the Ash Grove, this traditional Welsh melody works well in church, community and school settings. The flute part is optional so the music can be just played with handbells or Choirchimes alone. It is written as a level 1 so the melody is written as quarter notes rather than eighth notes but it still works well.

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There are some wonderful dynamics written in but the way this music is arranged and with the soaring melody line, many of the dynamics will just happen.

Processional and Joyful Dance

Tucker 23 octaves optional flute, percussion, Choirchimes

Level 1+

This really can work as two separate pieces if you like. For the Processional, Tucker includes various suggestions about the assignments including a flute, a bell tree and percussion instruments. If you are going to do the bell tree part, you will need to borrow a few additional bells. The Processional really has only 2 measures to memorize but with the layering of the ringers and additional musicians, it will sound more complex, especially if all ringers ring with big circles! Joyful Dance has optional chimes and needs to be played with feeling of one beat per measure.

This music comes in two additions – one for 2/3 octaves and one for 345 octaves – these are compatible with each other.

Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

Kellermeyer 3 octaves optional Choirchimes

Level 2-

I am not sure why I love this Picardy melody so much. It is haunting and mysterious but also serene and comforting. This is a simple arrangement but when you add the Choirchimes and dynamics the music will give you shivers. Be sure to have the circles of the ringers be synchronized for optimal visual and auditory effect of the music. This tune can be used during worship in Lent, Christmas or Communion.

Celtic Grace

Geschke 345 octaves

Level 2

The first time that Susan and I heard this, we loved it. Handbells etc has used this at a couple of Read and Ring Sessions – those in attendance loved it as well! This piece must be played with a lilt and a Celtic feel. The composer includes “quotes from Amazing Grace” which add to the Celtic melody that she has written. Ringers

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will like to ring it and audiences and congregations will like to hear it!

Kingsport Procession (Glory to God)

Wissinger 345 octaves

Level 2

This music starts with an eight measure melody line in the treble clef. In the next eight bars a counter melody is added. The accompaniment is added in the next 8 bars so the dynamic automatically grows to a forte. The melody changes in the middle to a soft, more subdued session and then the original theme returns becoming grand and broad for the ending.

Celebration

Gramann 345 octaves

Level 2+

We are very fortunate to have a Level 2+ piece by Fred Gramann. This music was written "In Honor of Donald Allured and Carl Wiltse" for the 30th anniversary of the Bay View Week of Handbells. This original composition goes quickly with the quarter note between 165 and 180 and is definitely worth having in your repertoire. This exciting music will make your ringers want to move with the music and to ring with energy and celebration. This piece is a good piece to ring in the fall as it sounds great and isn't too hard! Audiences and ringers everywhere will love this piece.

Hymn of Promise

Arr. Dobrinski 3456 octaves with 3456 octaves of Choirchimes

Level 2+

This is an arrangement by Cynthia Dobrinski of Natalie Sleeth's popular tune, Hymn of Promise (In the Bulb There Is a Flower). The music flows with ease. Between each verse is a little interlude where each section of the bell choir is featured. The middle verse adds chimes to the middle melody and suspended mallet bells in the treble. Dobrinski embellishes the melody in the final verse, the sound grows, and then ends very softly with a *pp* that will leave silence in the church as people reflect on the beauty that they just heard.

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The Power of the Cross

Arr. Bettcher 345 octaves

Level 3-

This is a very powerful arrangement of a contemporary worship song. It works well in worship, especially during Lent but could work at other services as well. I can imagine, the words of the song being spoken over the music as well as a PowerPoint presentation showing images of the “Power of the Cross”.

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