

Handbell Music Reviews

February 2012

A Time of Joy

Dobrinski

3456 octaves

Level 1+

This original composition is definitely a “Time for Joy”. Written in 4/4 but with each quarter note at 160 – 170 – this piece feels like it should be in cut time. The melody is bright and sparkly, the dynamics are clear and all ringers are busy! The music includes shakes, swings, marts, mallets, thumb damps, martlifts, and ring touches, and even a brush damp. All this makes it a great piece for ringers of all ages. This makes a great piece for a festival competition because it is filled with so much music, dynamics and techniques. Your adjudicators will smile when they hear this!

Bless the Lord

Arr. Wagner

345 octaves

Level 2

This combines the flowing eighth notes of J.S.Bach’s Prelude in C with the familiar hymn tune Bless the Lord. This arrangement works well at any worship service. I would be tempted to add Choirchimes - maybe on the eighth notes at the beginning with the bells ringing the melody starting at measure 9 through to measure 21, then switch so that the treble bells are playing the eight notes and the Choirchimes are playing the melody in the middle bells. When the key changes, then have everyone play bells. If you are fortunate enough to have low bass Choirchimes, then add the lower note to add another layer to deepen the sound.

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Worthy of Worship

Arr. Ingram
345 octaves
Level 2

Some of you may be familiar with the tune Judson. It seems like I have heard it before, but I am not sure where or when but I know that I like it. I love how Bill has integrated Choirchimes into this arrangement. Although the Judson tune is not really new, these music and lyrics are used often in contemporary Christian settings. One of my learning goals this year is to focus just as much on the lyrics as I do on the music. The lyrics to the chorus are: You are worthy, Father, Creator. You are worthy, Saviour, Sustainer. You are worthy, worthy and wonderful: Worthy of Worship and Praise!

Holy Manna

Arr. Thompson
23 octaves
Level 2

This is a wonderful tune that is so versatile that it can fit almost any occasion in the church year. This clever arrangement is in the new series “Ring More with Less”. It is written for 5, 6, or 7 ringers. All assignments are included – some of them require “thinking outside the box” – like D6E6! Although there are some techniques, there are no bell changes so this could be played without tables or mats if needed. It might work well to play in the entry way of your church as people are gathering to worship.

You Raise Me Up

Arr. Raney
345 octaves
Level 2+

You will all know this from Josh Groban! Nice to have something so contemporary – although not really! The addition of the cello or digital strings, really add to the musicality of the piece. Dynamics are imperative to ensure that your ringers can ring passionately and give the most meaning to the music. To make this

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arrangement absolutely outstanding, add an inspirational powerpoint presentation. The lyrics include "You raise me up...to more than I can be".

Melody of Hope

Tucker

345 octaves

Level 2+

This original composition works well in school, community and church settings. This flowing melody will work well during Lent, Remembrance Day or any other time when you are needing to play music of a reflective nature. I love how Sondra has incorporated Choirchimes in the middle passage, especially when it is hidden in the middle between the treble and bass bells. Play this one musically and it definitely sound like a level 3+!

There is A Balm In Gilead

Arr. Dobrinski

34567 octaves

Level 2+

This arrangement of this spiritual is not done in traditional "Dobrinski style" with of techniques and tempo changes. It is written in a reflective meaningful way. The addition of the Choirchimes on the verses, is really effective. I would like to have this played a little slower than the written tempo. I can also imagine the tempo being stretched and pulled to add more meaning musically – Plus your ringers will need to watch you more – it will be good practice for them. When you are rehearsing, adjust the tempo as you direct to give more meaning and passion to the music. Remember what the song is about..."There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole; There is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin sick soul".

Dies Irae

Arr. Glasgow

34567 octaves

Level 3-

I studied this score and listened to the music numerous times before deciding to review it. It combines three melodies – There Stood the Sorrowful Mother (written

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in the 13 century describing Mary's reaction to her son's crucifixion), The Day of Wrath (from the title Dies Irae), and O Sacred Head, Now Wounded. These are all very dark melodies that provoke sadness and despair. Michael has combined them absolutely brilliantly – played only at 60 beats per minute – perhaps like a steady pulse. The best time for this music is during Holy Week – either Maundy Thursday or Good Friday. The music is not hard but to play it musically will be extremely difficult. It would be beneficial for you to explain the music to the congregation or audience before sharing it. This will give it greater meaning to the listener.

Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)

Arr. Lamb

345 octaves Opt Choirchimes.

Level 3

This is a wonderful arrangement of this piece that has parts of Amazing Grace and then the added more contemporary part “My Chains Are Gone”. Linda has done a great job arranging this for handbells. I especially like the feeling of Amazing Grace in 4/4 time with chimes surrounded by bells above and below. When “My Chains Are Gone” comes in, it becomes full. The addition of the singing bell and suspended mallets at the end along with the melody on Choirchimes, makes a perfect ending to this music.

Playful Interlude on “Jesus Love Me”

Arr. Wagner

23 octaves

Level 3

Not very often do we find level 3 music written for 2 or 3 octaves so this is a great find! Jesus Loves Me is a well loved tune and there are great bits of running eighth notes which adds the playful part to the music. It is not particularly difficult but ringers must stay focussed so that the tune is always heard beneath the eighth notes and that the tempo stays steady. Enjoy!

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Poor Wayfaring Stranger

Arr. Tucker

345 octaves

Level 3

I love this piece. It has just the right combination of mournfulness and hope. Tucker has done a great job capturing both of these emotions. She has opted to only use bells. I might add a steady drum beat or maybe come finger cymbals to the music.

Sway (Quien Sera)

Arr. Eithun

3456 octaves with optional Choirchimes and Percussion

Level 3

You will definitely recognize this latin melody and it will make you want to sway and dance! You will definitely need to move to the music when you play this music and you MUST smile too! Thanks Sandra for thinking outside the box and bringing this secular piece of music to the handbell world. I don't think percussion is optional! Just think of the words...

When marimba rhythms start to play,
Dance with me Make me sway.
Like the lazy ocean hugs the shore,
Hold me Close, Sway me.

A New Day

Tucker

345 octaves with optional Choirchimes

Level 3

Benjamin Tucker is a new name in the handbell world. He has written this wonderful original composition that represents "A New Day". It starts out with simple melody that keeps returning, sometimes in a different format, a different octave or maybe on some chimes. I love descriptive pieces like this one which you can see, hear and imagine so many things. I think I will add this music to our repertoire to help the ringers and the congregation remember that each day that we have is a gift and we should embrace it as "A New Day"!

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My Song in the Night

Page

345 octaves with optional Choirchimes and flute

Level 3

My Song in the Night is a Southern Folk Tune which has a wonderful lyrical melody. The flute is a truly wonderful addition to this arrangement. If your congregation is not familiar with this piece, I would suggest you read the some of the lyrics prior to sharing it in worship: My comfort and joy, my soul's delight. O Jesus, my Saviour, my song in the night.

How Deep the Father's Love for Us

Bettcher

345 octaves

Level 3+

This is wonderful arrangement of a contemporary Christian piece for Lent. The singing bell starts with the melody vibrating freely, alternation with some gentle eighth notes. The melody should come in strong, even though it is in the middle bells. There are a few time changes and lots of times where the tempo can be stretched to add passion to the melody. There are numerous notations that suggest alternate assignments so that all the singing bells and melody notes can be played.

O Waly Waly

3 octave Quartet

This familiar tune will work well for either community or church settings. Each ringer plays about 10 -12 bells. Although this is not rated in difficulty, it will prove a bit of a challenge to a new quartet. The score is written in parts much like an SATB choir. Also, included in the music is each part written out separately – like a band score. Either way will work! If you are looking for a lyrically, somewhat challenging quartet, this might be the one that you need.

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Seasons of Praise

Arr. Anderson/Wagner

3 octaves Solo

What I like best about these arrangements are the combinations of selections that are combined in each medley. For example, the piece for the season of Christmas, includes What Child is This, Lully Lullay Thou Little Tiny Child, Twas in the Moon of Wintertime and The Sleep of the Infant Child. You can be certain that any music arranged by Christine Anderson and Douglas Wagner will definitely be terrific so this will be a must as you make plans for the church seasons.

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