“Harmony in the Heart”:
38 Original Tunes by Samuel Wesley set to Hymns by Writers from Four Centuries


This volume is a facsimile edition of a tunebook originally published in 1828 as *Original Hymn Tunes, Adapted to Every Metre in the Collection by the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. by Samuel Wesley* (1766-1837). This Samuel Wesley was the youngest surviving son of Charles and Sarah Wesley and the father of noted musician and composer Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810-1876). This edition was produced at The New Room in Bristol to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Samuel Wesley’s birth.

In his Preface, Carter notes that Samuel Wesley published the original volume at his own expense, demonstrating a clear desire to offer higher quality tunes for his father’s texts. According to the original Preface (extracts of which appear in the front matter), Samuel hoped to offer a greater variety of “Versification and of Cadence” as a corrective to the “homeliness” of Sternhold and Hopkins. In contrast to his uncle John Wesley, Samuel affirmed that a “just Harmony” will always be “manifestly preferable” to a melody alone. Despite this preference, he praised the effect of a good melody sung well in unison. Like his father and uncle, he denounced “affectation” and encouraged accessible melodies of good quality that are well-suited to sacred texts.

The main content consists of the thirty-eight Samuel Wesley tunes published in the original. The tunes are harmonized in four parts and have, when necessary, been transposed to suit the vocal range of an average modern congregation. The tune appears on the left-hand side of the page and is interlined with one stanza, as in the original. To the right are the remaining stanzas, occasionally followed by a suggested alternative text. Unlike some earlier Methodist collections, this one is not organized into categories according to Christian experience. This is probably due to its small size as well as the fact that it was produced by a musician and not a minister.

All of the original hymn texts were previously published in *A Collection of Hymns, For the Use of The People Called Methodists* (1780), the most substantial early Methodist hymnbook published by John and Charles Wesley. Texts taken from this collection include thirty-two texts by Charles Wesley, two by Isaac Watts, one by Samuel Wesley, Sr., one by John Wesley, and two translations of German hymns by John Wesley. To these original hymns are added fourteen suggested alternative texts: eight by Fred Pratt Green (1903-2000), three by Andrew Pratt (b. 1948), two by Charles Wesley, and one by Congregationalist bookseller and hymn-writer Charles Edward Mudie (1818-1890). Of the three texts contributed by Andrew Pratt, one was inspired by a Charles Wesley text from the original collection and another was written specifically for a Samuel Wesley tune.

While there is a general index at the front which lists original first lines, there is no scholarly back matter such as appendices. The last page and a half, however, contain in prose form the names and dates of hymnwriters appearing in the original, as well as modern hymnwriters included in this collection.

Despite a sprinkling of musical errors, the tunes themselves are eminently more singable than many tunes of the first generation of Methodist hymnody. Such features as parallel octaves and meandering harmonies further distinguish this collection from the music of the first Methodists. Overall, the work stands as a useful resource for those with both historical and musical interests.

ERIKA K. R. STALCUP

Erika K. R. Stalcup completed her doctoral thesis on the spiritual practices of the first British Methodists at Boston University in 2016. She is currently serving as pastor of the Eglise Evangélique Méthodiste in Lausanne, Switzerland.

In Their Own Words: Slave Life and the Power of Spirituals


Though there have been numerous books and periodicals written on the history and significance of the Negro spiritual in American music and religious life none have been as transformational on this topic as Eileen Guenther’s *In Their Own Words: Slave Life and the Power of Spirituals*. Guenther’s unique mixture of song and the personal stories of slaves presents a compelling and moving account of spirituals within the context of slave life. In the introduction, she highlights four reasons for the importance of this work. First, “that spirituals are ‘universal’ and available to all persons who are prepared to open themselves to the unsettling healing power that inhabits these marvelous songs of life” (xvi); second, “Spirituals affirm a complete trust in God to make right in the next world what was done wrong in this world…” (xvii); third, “spirituals not only offer a mirror of slave life, they have been called ‘a master index of the mind of the slave’” (xviii); and finally, “spirituals are powerful, beautiful music of sorrow and hope” (xix).

The book is divided into three sections. The first section introduces the reader to the definition of the spiritual and its origin, musical and performance characteristics, and the relationship between Christianity and slavery. The second section addresses the cultural and social aspects of slavery, including housing, education, weddings, funerals, and resistance. The final section highlights the contributions of spiritual arrangers such as Henry (Harry) T. Burleigh, James Weldon Johnson, R. Nathaniel Dett, and William L. Dawson, and the influence of spirituals on other musical styles and genres. Guenther’s exhaustive scholarship weaves together religion, music, and history in telling the often joyous, but
always tragic, dark period of history. The intermingling of song and personal testimony of slave life gives this text an added dimension absent in other books on the subject. While it is difficult to highlight one particular strength in a collection so full of strengths, the inclusion of a biblical concordance, keying scripture texts with spiritual titles, makes this text an invaluable resource.

This book will speak to the interest and concerns of music and worship leaders, as well as academics and theologians. This book will be valuable to clergy and worship leaders in the local church; to professors and students in the college, graduate school, and seminary communities; to high school and community chorale directors; and to the lay person with a passion and love for music. Guenther’s work is prophetic and timely for the world and the church. The music and message of spirituals is more relevant now than ever before. Guenther’s argument for her book is summarized in the final sentence: “The value of knowing—in their own words—the context that gives birth to the spirituals, their meanings, and the potential for connecting to life in the twenty-first century is one in which I believe with all my heart” (411).

Thomas L. Baynham Jr.

Prayer Rising into Song: Fifty New and Revised Hymns

The subtitle might suggest a balance of new and revised material, in fact this collection is comprised almost entirely of new material. The title also suggests that these hymns are in prayer form. Though many of them are, they also take the form of narration, meditation, and proclamation. Some are tied directly to scripture narratives. Others offer commentary on scriptural themes. Of the hymns that are explicitly lyrical prayers, many derive from the Book of Common Prayer.

A large share of the hymns are commissions for particular events. Occasionally I had the sense that the poet was bound by the demands of the commission. There are a couple of instances when Daw, FHS, seemed to be charged with converting a church’s unique mission statement into poetic verse. But for the most part, his texts transfer easily. For example, the wedding hymn “When a wedding guest at Cana,” though prepared for a particular occasion, is lyrically generous so as to be useful in diverse contexts. It is also theologically rich so as to offer homiletical fodder for the preacher and, if all stanzas are included, leads liturgically to the celebration of the sacrament of communion. For churches desiring a hymn to dedicate a new worship space or celebrate the anniversary of a congregation, this collection provides equally excellent and transferable resources.

All fifty hymns are presented first as poetic texts, without music. This is followed by a section of notes providing the backstory for each hymn, explanations of stanzas, and performance suggestions. A tune is suggested for each text. The lion’s share of meters is familiar. Sometimes the rhyme scheme of the lyrics is at variance with the suggested tune. For example, Daw suggests the tune VATER UNSER for three of his texts. Each of these instances has a slightly different rhyme scheme but none match the simple aabbcc suggested by the chorale melody. Similarly, the hymn “What song is there to sing in a world full of need” is linked with the folk tune WONDROUS LOVE. Though cataloged with a meter of 12.9.12.12.9, the tune naturally breaks down into smaller units of 6s and 3s. Daw’s text and rhyme scheme do not match the simplicity of the folk song. But this is a subjective matter. The user is, of course, free to search for other matches or compose a new melody.

For lyrics with more unique meters, an appendix of new tunes is provided. These texts and tunes fit hand in glove. Musical composers include Alfred Fedak, Sally Ann Morris, Carlton Young FHS, Swee Hong Lim, and Carol Doran. I would lift up the final entry as a most wonderful example: “Wordless is the prayer.” It is a particularly daunting task for the hymnwriter to compose a text that acknowledges the shortcomings of words. Indeed, it seems impossible! But this text, when used with the Morris’ tune WORDLESS, expresses this sentiment beautifully. Most of the measures are devoted to non-lexical syllables.

Following the appendix are all the essential indexes including helpful scriptural and topical indexes. The collection is spiral bound and well laid out. I have long admired Carl Daw’s hymn texts. Prayer Rising into Song demonstrates his continued inspiration and contribution to contemporary hymnody.

Martin Tel is the Director of Music at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Songs for the Waiting: Devotions Inspired by the Hymns of Advent

As pastors and church musicians throughout much of Western Christendom can attest, celebrating Advent well amidst a culture that spends much of November and December rushing towards Christmas can be a challenge. Why should the church bother with the somber minor keys of “O come, O come, Emmanuel” or “Let all mortal flesh keep silence” when there are so many great Christmas songs to sing that have been piped into every waiting room and mall for the last month? United Methodist pastor Magrey deVega’s