

Review in September/October-edition of 'Kerk en Muziek' by Aad de Ligt

"What a nice piece of work!"

Jan Karman, Fugative arrangements of the melodies from the Genevan Psalter

The Middelburgian composer Jan Karman wrote a second volume in this series. The second volume contains arrangements on psalm 31 thru 60. Because the first volume had been sold out practically Karman decided to combine the first two volumes. Thus, this review is about the volumes 1 and 2 which appeared in one edition of 128 pages.

The arrangements have French titles and take two pages average each.

In the preface Karman writes that these psalm melodies contain a treasure of theme material which is highly suited for arrangements in fugues. This I only could underline. Continuing Karman writes that he is using mainly the first line(s), by way of which the arrangements are usable as preludes in service. One and another makes this edition in my view highly valuable.

The degree of difficulty as well as the length of the arrangements differs. For example psalm 43 gives a representative picture of a large number of arrangements. There are shorter ones, e.g. psalm 50, 51 and 57. Those need one page. The most extensive is found with psalm 23. This fugue contains eight pages and has 130 measures.

Some arrangements are printed on three staves and it is clear that use of pedal is mandatory. Most arrangements, however, are written on two staves. In those case one has to find out whether pedal is more convenient or not.

As far as the layout is concerned it is notable that some arrangements have larger notes than others. This is mainly done to fit on page and avoid page-turning.

Regarding content

The bundle contains many fine things. The arrangements may serve also as movements of a compound Partita. Sometimes it is possible to close an arrangements earlier, in order to realize a shorter prelude.

With psalm 35 after measure nr 7 can be stopped quite naturally resulting in a nice intonation.

With psalm 41 after measure nr 12 can be stopped resulting in a nice short, functional prelude.

Of course it is impossible in this review to describe the entire bundle. However, a number of arrangements will be highlighted here.

Psalm 5 got an appealing arrangement in which nice chromatical passages occur.

The arrangement is perfectly playable in a technical view. Psalm 10 begins with a quiet setup while as from measure 8 changing in a nice fluent movement with eighth notes.

Psalm 22 has a quiet character with nice fitting chromatical passages. This arrangement is quite usable in service.

The arrangement of psalm 33 has a cheerful and light character. The arrangement is well playable and the melody remains clearly recognizable.

Psalm 42 has been written as a Pastorale in 6/8 time key. It has become a beautiful arrangement with a nice modulation at measure 34. Psalm 51 has a short but appropriate arrangement that will be functional very well in services.

Summarizing I am pleased to recommend this edition.

Aad de Ligt, Chief Editor "Kerk en Muziek"