

Mark A. Miller. *Roll Down, Justice! Sacred Songs and Social Justice*. Dallas, TX: Choristers Guild, 2015. 108 pages. \$39.95.

This fall, pianos and voices around the sacred music world have the opportunity to meet the words and melodies of Mark A. Miller's long-awaited compilation of "23 songs for congregational, solo, or ensemble use in worship." *Roll Down, Justice!* is a book of mostly new music by one of the most resonant modern authors of justice-seeking sacred music.

The spiral-bound compilation contains three major features. The first half offers Miller's 23 pieces arranged for piano and voice. The second half contains simplified (single melody line), bulletin-sized arrangements for congregational use. Finally, the purchase includes a demo CD featuring piano and a single female voice. With the exception of a few previously licensed pieces (e.g. "What Does the Lord Require of You?" and "Welcome"), all of the congregational arrangements are free to be copied for congregational use without license. The multiple formats in the book and the limited licensing restrictions make the music extremely accessible to all worship planners and participants.

Most pieces offer Miller's signature arrangements which feature original poetry and scripture set to memorable melodies. These are interwoven with significant, mood-setting piano accompaniments. A few of the vocal lines split into harmony for added effect, and three pieces are written for SATB ("What Does the Lord Require of You?," "Make Me an Instrument of Peace," and the earth justice song, "I Am Your Mother"). One song ("Come Out!") comes with no accompaniment as a hauntingly simple melody with revolutionary lyrics to be sung with the subversive tempo marking "Slowly, like a field song." Congregations, choirs, or soloists could sing all of the pieces, but their variety cries out for use by innovative Christian and interfaith worship leaders and social activists as more than just traditional hymns or anthems. For example, several of the shorter songs beg to be added to the protest songs of the millennial generation, including "Give God All the Praise" and "Journey Isn't Over" with its burning lyrics: "From Seneca Falls, from Selma, to Stonewall, we've come a long way, but the journey isn't over!"

As is the case with any profound music, Miller and his lyricists draw from the significant experiences of their times and lives, using the depth of personal emotion to resonate with universal experiences. Several of the most moving pieces in the collection have come out of tragedies that occurred in recent years.

Two years ago, Miller, a lifelong Methodist, watched United Methodist minister, Rev. Frank Schaefer, lose his clergy credentials after a church trial found him guilty for conducting the wedding of his gay son. The heartbreaking and sobering moment inspired Miller to create "Child of God," which moves from a slow and repetitive mantra for Queer and other oppressed people ("You are a child of God") toward the bold and triumphant proclamation from Romans 8 that there is nothing that can "separate you from the truth that you're someone, you are family, you are meant to be a child . . . of God!"

A year after Schaefer's trial, many, including Miller, were horrified when a Staten Island grand jury voted not to indict the white police officer who killed Eric Garner, an unarmed black father of six, who repeatedly cried out before his death, "I can't breathe!" Coinciding with the liturgical season of Advent, the decision drove Miller to write the waiting song, "How Long?" Here, he quotes the lamenting psalmist, Sam Cooke's 1964 civil rights song "A Change is Gonna Come", and Garner's own last words. As an Advent song, it brilliantly balances the season's often-shallow holiday cheer with the hard reality of the world's brokenness into which we call Christ's presence.

Finally, this past summer, our nation was devastated when a white supremacist killed nine at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston. When family members of the victims spoke of forgiveness and love at the shooter's bond hearing, they sparked a national dialogue about faithful and moral responses to evil and tragedy. They also inspired writer Lindy Thompson to send words of poetry to Miller. The result was "I Choose Love," which makes the mournful yet resolute affirmation of faith: "In the midst of pain, sorrow falling down like rain, I await the sun again, I choose love."

In the end, Miller achieves his goal of offering accessible, meaningful, and varied new works to the socially conscious repertoire of sacred music. In *Roll Down, Justice!* our communities of faith and social action are now blessed with 23 more tools for relevant and forward moving worship.

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