

David P. Dahl. *The Organ Sings*
(Augsburg Fortress, 2013, ISBN
978-1-4514-6260-9), 78pp.,
\$27.00.

This second volume by David P. Dahl provides the church organist with a wealth of useful material of intermediate difficulty. The majority of the pieces are hymn-based works, with *Twenty-Four Hymn Intonation-Preludes* as well as *Three Hymn Preludes* of somewhat greater length. A set of five variations on *Lobe den Herren* and a set of four pieces entitled *Suite Homage* fills out the collection. *Suite Homage* consists of a *Praeludium* after Buxtehude, a *Tierce en Taille* after Couperin, a *Petite Offertoire* after Franck, and a *Grand Choeur* after Dubois. These four are satisfying works in their respective styles and the counterpoint in the Buxtehude is especially fine; however, I am drawn more to Dahl's treatment of hymn tunes. Canon and fugal imitation are prevalent and impressively worked out. It is delightful to see newly composed American music that is so well crafted. Too often, new offerings by publishers targeted toward organists of average ability are either insipid and lackluster or showy to the point of tawdriness. Dahl's compositions are impeccable in their harmony and phrase structure; while they are relatively conservative in style, they demonstrate creativity and sensitivity to the hymn texts. I especially like the intonations on Advent hymn tunes. For example, in *Veni Emmanuel* the plainsong melody in the tenor is accompanied by chords based on *Vom Himmel hoch*. The theologically appropriate German chorale is paired with the plainsong tune in a subtle way that keeps the attention on *Veni, Emmanuel*. I am also fond of the cheeky *Three Kings of Orient* with its parallel fifths and fourths and the *Variation Suite on Lobe den Herren*, which shows the influence of Distler and other German neo-Baroque composers. It consists of an introduction and chorale, a variation based on parallel fourths, a bicinium, an Aria that uses part of the chorale tune in the accompaniment, a pedal solo, and finally a fughetta and final chorale. This is a very useful collection of short pieces.