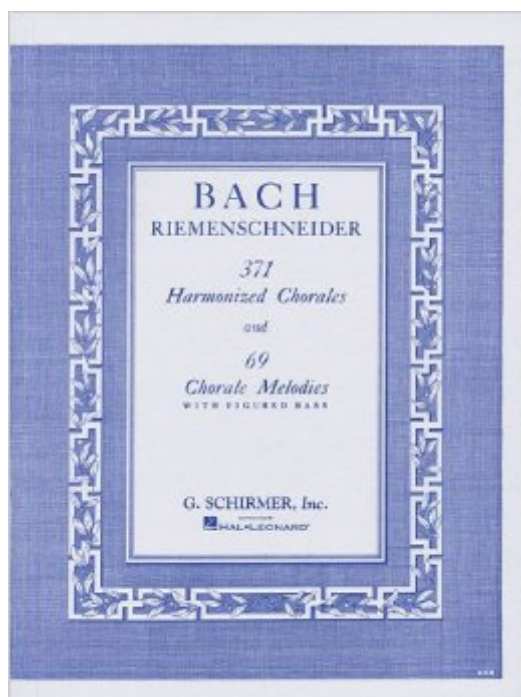


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371 Harmonized Chorales And 69 Chorale Melodies With Figured Bass



Synopsis

(Piano Method). The great Baroque master composer Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) wrote music for every combination of instruments and voices. His simplest and purest work are four-part chorale compositions and settings, so perfectly constructed that they evoke meditative spirituality. "Figured bass" was a Baroque system of notating harmony. In addition 371 chorales, this collection includes 69 melodies with figured bass. This classic Schirmer edition, edited by Albert Riemenschneider, has sold over 1,000,000 copies since its release in the early 20th century. Primarily for keyboard, the chorales can also be played by other instruments.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a nice edition to have. Playing two Bach chorales every morning is kind of like doing some jumping jacks and eating a spoonful of codliver oil...which is to say, good for you. After playing the first 120 you can expect some chorale fatigue to set in, but all the while you'll be absorbing good voice-leading and voice-doubling technique as though by osmosis. What's more, Bach will still surprise you- there are chords so jarring and dissonant that their sudden, logical resolution is like watching a rabbit being pulled out of a hat. On the downside, the notes are small (this edition really packs 'em in) and it can be easy to get lost on the page. No texts are provided, either, aside from the opening words, so you have to accept on faith that some of the more contorted harmonizations are justified by the text. It's still nice to have, though, and looks nice and musicological sitting on the piano.

Bach's 371 chorales are some of the purest distillations of common-practice era tonal harmony one can find - they remain an invaluable asset to anyone studying harmony and voice-leading principles. That is not to say that these pieces are boring harmonic exercises... Bach's genius worked its way into everything he wrote, and a quick read through any of these chorales brings one a breath of fresh [tonal] air in the midst of modern music's din. Perfect for study and enjoyment. The edition is perfect as well, with clear printing (while maybe too small for those with poor eyesight), excellent binding and almost 60 pages of notes and preface.

I bought this Riemenschneider edition before finding out about Charles Sanford Terry's edition titled 'the Four-Part Chorals of J.S. Bach'. (Volumes 1 and 2 in one book). It has one choral per page rather than cramming many per page. Where there are alternative versions of a choral all are given a page, for instance there are 3 versions of 'Ach Gott Vom himmel', two quite different ones in F and another in G. There are several chorals with even more versions. This accounts for why there are 490 chorals in the Charles Sanford Terry edition. The Sanford Terry edition also has German text and English translations which is often very helpful for finding your way into the mood and 'meaning' of a choral. Also the syllable count for each line and stanza is given which helps to get 'inside' the rhythmic and harmonic progressions. The Riemenschneider edition is apparently full of errors which have been sorted out in the Sanford Terry edition. It is impossible not to give any edition of this music five stars, but if you intend to spend some time with these masterpieces then I think the extra \$10 to get a 592 page edition is worth every cent. Four-Part Chorals of J.S. Bach. (Volumes 1 and 2 in one book). With German text and English translations. (Facsimile 1929). Includes Four-Part Chorals Nos. 1-405 and Melodies Nos. 406-490. With Music.

This is nearly indispensable for the serious music student. Used in most first-year theory courses, the Bach Chorales illustrate what the master did and why our Western music theory is based on the chorales he wrote. First bought 18 years ago, I found that I'd somehow lost my copy along the way. I bought another copy since I'm taking further music theory courses and though it isn't required in this particular course, it helps immensely to have a copy on hand.

This is a collection that has stayed in print for almost a century, and with good reason. I just acquired a new copy to replace my old one which was falling apart, and was happy to see that Riemenschneider's work remains unchanged. The 371 Chorales (as well as 69 additional examples

in two-part texture) distill the essence of Bach's work and provide endless fodder for musicians, especially teachers of music theory, for the study of voice-leading and common-practice tonal harmony. However, they are not abstract chunks of sound: it is important to realize their concrete origins in Bach's church music, and to do this Riemenschneider's extensive notes both before and after the chorales themselves make indispensable reading. An especially interesting revelation is that many of the chorales are all that remain of about a hundred lost cantatas. Given the editor's insistence on the importance of the texts in determining Bach's harmonizations, it remains a bit disconcerting that no words are given (though understandable, as many of the chorales have multiple verses and fitting words to the music would have presented major problems of space), and over the years the reprints have shrunk in size to the point where the notes seem small and cramped in many of the examples. No matter: the material itself has lost none of its value.

I was interested in this book for the purpose of helping others with (and refreshing myself on) harmonic analysis. The chorales are tightly packed, with more than one chorale to the page in many instances, but they are perfectly legible. There are some lyrics included as an appendix, but no lyrics appear directly with the chorales... a slight disappointment, but no problem for doing analysis. Includes also a brief introduction, reading which revealed how little I knew about the history of Bach's chorales, to wit: J.S. Bach, in most instances, did not compose the melodies, but rather, the chorales were his harmonizations of familiar tunes of the day.

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