

A Christmas Songbook

edited by

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Bb Reed Score

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“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”

-Luke 2:10

“Christ-mas day: the old heathens feasting day, in honour to Saturn their idol-god; the Papists massing day; the prophane mans ranting day; the superstitious mans idol day; the multitudes idle day; whereon, because they cannot do nothing: they do worse then nothing[...].”

-Ezekias Woodward, 1656

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Notes on the Collection

There are three types of vocal pieces that are worth singing during the Advent and Christmas seasons in the English-speaking world. There are the classics: a repertoire mostly of hymns and mostly in four parts which are all widely known in excellent, singable arrangements. There is also a large repertoire of carols which, in part due to their origin as such, have only melodies which are well-known; attempts to arrange such tunes in four parts have been largely unsuccessful, and no such attempts are made here. And finally, there is a repertoire which originates outside of the English-speaking world that many would find either too difficult or unfamiliar, but which is too delightful to neglect entirely.

Each of the three parts in this collection takes on one of these three repertoires and is designed both to sample the best literature in the public domain and also to be sung through as a set. The entire collection is edited with spontaneous groups of singers and/or instrumentalists in mind. Directions to the performers, for example, are kept at a bare minimum in order to allow users of the scores maximum flexibility. For most groups, especially large ones, the first part of the collection contains the pieces which should form the core repertoire. Ensembles for which four-part harmony is not an option might consider the second part of the collection, which contains several two-part arrangements. And while it may be that only relatively adventurous groups of vocalists will approach the third part of the collection, there is plenty of excellent material for instrumental groups to be found there.

Notes on the License

This collection draws from a wealth of texts, music, and arrangements which are in the public domain. Some pieces appear with arrangements which are the original work of the editor (and which are distinguishable as such by the abbreviation “arr. ed.”) while others, long ago perfected, appear with nothing original but the name of the editor. All engravings, regardless of their novelty, are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, as are any novel arrangements. The intent in using such a license is to allow, for example, for individual pages from the collection to be reproduced and distributed freely; the easiest way to comply with the terms of the license is to ensure that the icon and text at the bottom of each page is preserved in all copies. For more information, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>.



Notes on the Songs

Ding Dong Merrily on High The arrangement here borrows heavily from the original 4-part harmonization by Charles Wood, but has been considerably simplified. It should be performed at a lively tempo.

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming The anonymous text and melody first appears in the Speyerer Gesangbuch of 1599. The setting by Praetorius is best performed either a cappella or, if necessary, with light keyboard accompaniment. The German lyrics provided are taken from Friedrich Layritz's 1844 edition of the text, which makes slight alterations to the original.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel While the oldest known manuscript containing the melody dates to the 15th century and the text is a paraphrase of the much older O Antiphons, the marriage of the two dates only to 1851. However, the 15th century manuscript, in which the melody is only one of two voices in a parallel organum, was probably unknown to the melody's 19th century popularizers and was only rediscovered in 1966. The practice of setting the text to both parts of the organum seems to be first suggested in 2015 by Jeff Ostrowski, choirmaster of St. Vitus Roman Catholic Church in San Fernando, CA.

The Snow Lay on the Ground An Anglo-Irish carol of unknown origin. The arrangement here borrows heavily from Julius Henry Waterbury's 1871 "Children's Praise".

I Saw Three Ships Several variants of this folk song have been recorded; the two-part arrangement here is based on two separate arrangements published by William Sandys in 1833 and 1862 based on a variant collected in Derbyshire. One possibility for performance is to have women sing the melody while men sing the second line down an octave. Alternatively, both parts can be sung by mixed groups of men and women. However it is sung, the melody should be heard first alone.

Deck the Hall This song originated with a 1862 publication of several popular Welsh songs. Alongside the lyrics to the traditional New Year's carol, Nos Galan, the publication included a very loose English paraphrase by Thomas Oliphant. These lyrics, as well as the tune of Nos Galan, were the basis of a 1877 publication, "Deck the Hall with Boughs of Holly", by the Pennsylvania State Education Association. This version notably censored all mention of alcoholic beverages and, in doing so, introduced the notorious lyric "Don we now our gay apparel". Here, Oliphant's 1862 lyrics are restored, with one minor alteration. The arrangement featured here makes an attempt to reconnect with the song's roots as a dance tune, and should be played at a lively tempo.

Away in a Manger The two-part setting which has been reproduced here with minimal alteration is the version that is best known in the United Kingdom, despite the lyrics and setting both being of North American authorship.

Silent Night The duet arrangement here reproduces the vocal parts that appear in Gruber's 1818 manuscript, although the bass line has been altered. It should not be performed at a slow tempo.

God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen While the earliest known text, "Sit you merry Gentlemen", dates to c. 1650, the earliest extant printing of the tune reproduced here is Edward F. Rimbault's 1846 "A Little Book of Christmas Carols". Rimbault and other authors suggest that the association of the tune with the carol originates in London. The text used here comes from the J. & C. Evans (1822-1828) broadside, which contains eight verses, the first two and final two of which are reproduced here. Two customary alterations of the text are also accepted: the line "And it's tidings" has been altered to "O tidings", and the "To save pour souls from Satan's Power, Which had long time gone astray" has been altered to "To save us all from Satan's pow'r, When we were gone astray". This carol should be sung at a lively tempo, and to encourage this, a four-part arrangement is not used. However, an optional descant has been composed. If the descant is used, it should not be used on the first and final verses.

Auld Lang Syne The original poem in the Scots language by Robert Burns is reproduced here along with a minimalist English translation.

Puer natus in Bethlehem Like most choral settings of this tune, the setting by Bach from the cantata BWV 65, "Sie werden aus Saba alle kommen" that is used here was originally set to a 1545 German text by Cyriakus Spangenberg. The Spangenberg text is a loose translation of the original Latin, which is thought to date to the 13th century. Here, the first four verses found in the Piae Cantiones manuscript of 1582 are used.

Los Peces en el Río This score is based on the 1958 recording by Manolo Escobar, where the song is presented as one of three "aires navideños jerezanos", as well as a later recording by Escobar. The song is often suggested to be of Extremaduran, and ultimately Arabic, origin; however, there does not seem to be any documentation of this.

Fum, Fum, Fum A traditional Catalan carol originating in either the 16th or 17th centuries. The best known English translations are not in the public domain.

How Great Our Joy This piece, often known as the “Echo Carol”, should be performed in such a way that the sections marked “echo” are distinct from the sections that precede them. This can be done to good effect with two different groups of singers or a group of singers and a group of instrumentalists, if such forces are available. Another possibility is to simply make a dynamic contrast between the two.

Eesus Ahatonyah A recent transcription by John Steckley of Brébeuf’s original Wendat lyrics has been used here with permission. The text should be pronounced as it would be in North American English, with the exception of “th” and “sth”, which should be executed as “t” and “st”, respectively, and followed by an aspiration. Brébeuf wrote six verses; the first, second, and final verses appear here.

Boh predvičny narodilsja A traditional Rusyn-language carol from the Carpathian mountains dating as early as the late eighteenth century. The lyrics reproduced here are the first two verses and the final verse from the Užhorod Pisennik of 1913. The “c” in Rusyn is pronounced as a “ts” in English, the “č” as a “ch”, the “j” as a “y”, the “š” as a “sh”, the apostrophe as a consonant “y”, the “ž” like the “s” in ‘measure’, and the “r” is always trilled.

Part I

Music for Christmas, mostly in four parts.

Adeste Fideles

John Francis Wade(?), 1744

Ibid.

trans. Frederick Oakeley, 1841

Desc.

S

A

T

Basso

15

Ding Dong Merrily on High

George Ratcliffe Woodward, 1910

Thoinot Arbeau, 1589

Mel.

Cont.

Basso

Rhyt.

6

12

x3

The musical score is arranged in four staves: Melody (Mel.), Continuation (Cont.), Bass (Basso), and Rhythm (Rhyt.). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is common time (C). The score is divided into three systems. The first system contains measures 1-5. The second system, starting at measure 6, contains measures 6-11. The third system, starting at measure 12, contains measures 12-15 and ends with a repeat sign and a 'x3' multiplier. The Rhythm staff uses 'x' marks to indicate rhythmic patterns. The Continuation and Bass staves use various note values and rests to provide harmonic support. The Melody staff features a mix of eighth and quarter notes, with some measures containing beamed eighth notes.

O Little Town of Bethlehem

Phillips Brooks, 1868

traditional (SE England)

arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1903

The musical score is arranged for SATB voices and piano. It is in the key of D major (indicated by two sharps) and 4/2 time. The score is divided into three systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 5. The second system contains measures 6 through 10. The third system contains measures 11 through 14, with a double bar line and a repeat sign at the end, followed by 'x2' indicating a repeat. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and the piano accompaniment (four staves) are all written in treble clef. The piano part includes a bass line starting on a lower staff in the first system. The lyrics are: 'O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie, where infants so peacefully asleep, our Savior born have lie.' The score concludes with a final double bar line and a repeat sign, followed by 'x2'.

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Charles Wesley, 1739 (alt.)

Felix Mendelssohn, 1840

adapt. William H. Cummings, 1855

The musical score is arranged for SATB voices and piano accompaniment. It consists of three systems of music. The first system (measures 1-7) features the vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and the piano accompaniment. The second system (measures 8-14) continues the vocal and piano parts. The third system (measures 15-21) includes a repeat sign at the end, indicating the final measure is repeated three times (x3). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The piano part includes a bass line with an 8-measure rest at the beginning of the first system.

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Edmund Sears, 1849

Richard Storrs Willis, 1850

arr. Uzziah Christopher Burnap

The musical score is arranged for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 6/8. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains 8 measures, and the second system contains 8 measures, with a repeat sign and a 'x3' marking at the end of the second system. The piano part features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand and a more melodic line in the right hand. The vocal parts have various melodic lines, including some with ties and accidentals.

Angels We Have Heard on High

traditional (Languedoc)

Ibid.

trans. James Chadwick, 1862

arr. Edward Shippen Barnes (1887-1958)

The musical score is for the hymn "Angels We Have Heard on High". It is arranged for SATB voices and piano. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 1-8) features the vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and the piano accompaniment. The second system (measures 9-12) includes a repeat sign and two endings, labeled 1 and 2, which are repeated three times (x3). The piano part includes a variety of musical textures, including arpeggiated chords and flowing sixteenth-note passages.

Once in Royal David's City

Cecil Frances Alexander, 1848, alt.

Henry John Gauntlett, 1849

arr. Arthur Henry Mann, 1919

The musical score is arranged for SATB voices and piano. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass) are written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The piano accompaniment is written in four staves (right hand and left hand in treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature and time signature. The score consists of two systems. The first system contains six measures, and the second system contains seven measures, ending with a repeat sign and a 'x4' marking. The piano part features a steady accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the vocal parts have a more melodic line with some rests and ties.

In the Bleak Mid-Winter

Christina Rossetti, 1872

Gustav Holst, 1905

S

A

T

B

8

9

x3

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

anonymous, 1599, alt.

Ibid.

trans. Theodore Baker, 1894

arr. Michael Praetorius, 1609

The musical score is written for SATB voices and piano. It is in the key of D major (one sharp) and common time (C). The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 8. The second system, starting at measure 9, contains measures 9 through 16 and ends with a repeat sign and a double bar line, with a 'x2' marking indicating a repeat. The vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) are written on four staves. The piano accompaniment is written on four staves. The piano part features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The vocal parts have lyrics written below the notes.

Joy to the World

Isaac Watts, 1719

Lowell Mason, 1839

Desc

S

A

T

Basso

The first system of the musical score for 'Joy to the World' features five vocal parts: Descending (Desc), Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (Basso). The music is written in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a common time signature (C). The Desc part begins with a whole rest, while the other parts enter with a half note. The system concludes with a double bar line.

8

The second system of the musical score continues the vocal parts from the first system. It begins with a measure rest marked '8'. The system concludes with a double bar line.

14

x4

The third system of the musical score continues the vocal parts. It begins with a measure rest marked '14'. The system concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign, with a 'x4' marking indicating four repetitions.

Part II

Music for Christmas, mostly in one or two parts.

0 Come, 0 Come, Emmanuel

anonymous, 1710

anonymous, 15th c.

trans. John Mason Neale, 1861 (v. 1, 4-7); Henry Sloane Coffin, 1916 (v. 2-3)

The image displays a musical score for the song "The Rose Tree". It is written for two parts: "Prin." (Principal) and "Org." (Organ). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#), and the time signature is common time (C). The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains 8 measures. The second system starts with a measure number "9" and contains 10 measures, ending with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The organ part provides a harmonic accompaniment to the principal's melody. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some measures featuring a dotted half note. The organ part uses a variety of note values, including eighth, quarter, and half notes, to support the melody.

We Wish You a Merry Christmas

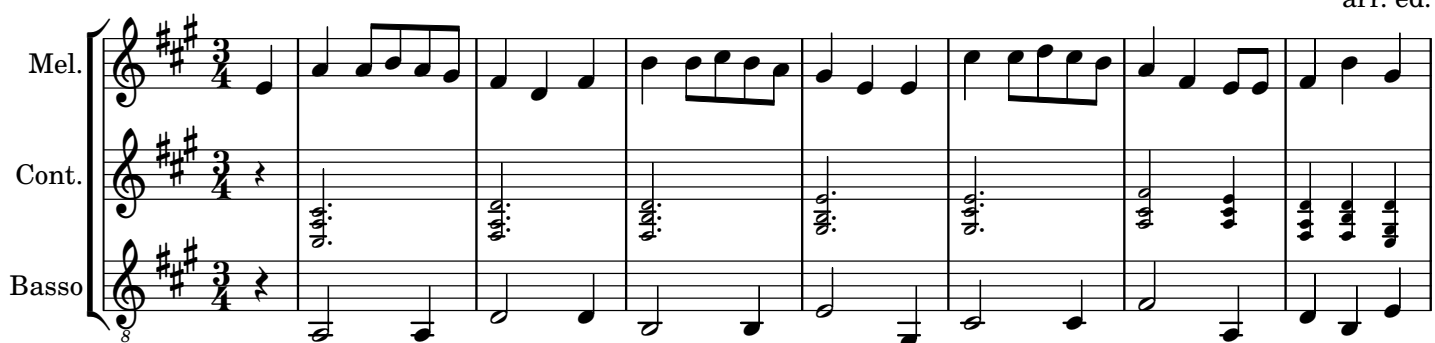
Traditional (England)

Ibid.
arr. ed.

Mel.

Cont.

Basso



8

x4



The Snow Lay on the Ground

traditional (Ireland)

Ibid.

S
A
T
B
Basso

16 x4

Here We Come A-wassailing

traditional (England)

Ibid.

arr. ed.

Mel. Harm. Cont. Basso



What Child Is This?

William Chatterton Dix, 1865

traditional

Mel.

Desc.

Cont.

Basso

6

11

I Saw Three Ships

traditional (Derbyshire)

Ibid.

arr. William Sandys, 1833

Mel. Harm. Cont. Basso

x9

8

Masters in This Hall

William Morris, c. 1860

Marin Marais, 1706

arr. ed.

Mel.

Harm.

Cont.

Basso

9

17 4th verse only

The Holly and the Ivy

traditional (Gloucestershire)

transcr. Cecil Sharp, 1911

arr. David McCarthy, 2021

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system contains four staves: Mel. (Melody), Harm. (Harmony), Cont. (Continuo), and Basso (Bass). The second system contains four staves: 8 (Eight), 8 (Eight), 8 (Eight), and 8 (Eight). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The melody is written in the first staff of the first system. The harmony is written in the second staff. The continuo is written in the third staff. The bass is written in the fourth staff. The score includes a repeat sign at the end of the first system, followed by a double bar line and a repeat sign at the end of the second system. The score is marked with a '3' at the end of the second system, indicating a triple repeat.

Deck the Hall

Thomas Oliphant, 1862

traditional (Wales)

Mel.

Cont.

Basso

6

11

x3

Away in a Manger

anonymous, 1883

William J. Kirkpatrick, 1895, alt.

S
A
Cont.
Basso

9 x2

Silent Night

Joseph Mohr, 1816, alt.

Franz Xaver Gruber, 1818

trans. John Freeman Young, 1859

The musical score for 'Silent Night' is presented in a four-part setting for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Contralto (Cont.), and Bass (Basso). The score is written in 6/8 time and consists of three systems of music. The first system contains measures 1 through 8, with measure numbers 4, 8, and 8 indicated at the beginning of the staves. The second system contains measures 9 through 16, with measure numbers 7, 8, and 8 indicated at the beginning of the staves. The third system contains measures 17 through 24, with measure numbers 10, 8, and 8 indicated at the beginning of the staves. The score concludes with a double bar line and a 'x3' marking, indicating that the final measure should be repeated three times. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and bar lines, and the staves are labeled with their respective vocal parts.

God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

traditional (London)

Ibid.

arr. ed.

The image displays a musical score for the hymn "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen". The score is written for four parts: Mel. (Melody), Desc. (Descant), Cont. (Continuo), and Basso (Bass). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 9. The second system begins at measure 10, indicated by a bracket and the number "10" on the left, and ends with a repeat sign and a "x4" multiplier on the right. The notation includes various musical symbols such as treble and bass clefs, key signatures, time signatures, and various note values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, rests, and accidentals).

Auld Lang Syne

Robert Burns, 1788, alt.

traditional

Mel.

Cont.

Basso

8

x5

Part III

Music for Christmas, mostly not in English.

O Tannenbaum

Ernst Anschütz, 1824

traditional

Mel.

Cont.

Basso

7

x3

In dulci jubilo

Heinrich Seuse, c. 1328

traditional

arr. Robert Lucas de Pearsall, 1837

The musical score is arranged for SATB voices and piano accompaniment. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 1-9) includes vocal staves for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B), and a piano accompaniment staff. The second system (measures 10-19) continues the vocal and piano parts. The third system (measures 20-28) concludes the piece, with a repeat sign at the end of measure 28 and a 'x3' marking indicating a triple repeat. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line and a more active upper line with chords and single notes.

Puer natus in Bethlehem

Anonymous, 1582

Ibid.

arr. Johann Sebastian Bach, BWV 65

The musical score is written for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a keyboard instrument. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system contains measures 1 through 8. The second system contains measures 9 through 12, which are marked to be repeated four times (x4). The vocal parts are written in treble clef, and the keyboard part is written in four staves (treble and bass clef). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

Quem Pastores

Anonymous, 14th c.

Ibid.

arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1928

8

9

x3

Los Peces en el Río

traditional (Jerez)

Ibid.

Mel.

Harm.

Cont.

Basso

9

17

25

x3

The musical score is written for four staves: Melody (Mel.), Harmony (Harm.), Continuo (Cont.), and Bass (Basso). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The score is divided into four systems, each containing four staves. The first system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The second system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The third system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The fourth system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals. The Continuo and Bass parts feature complex rhythmic patterns. The score is marked with measure numbers 9, 17, and 25. The final measure of the fourth system is marked with a repeat sign and a 'x3' multiplier.

Fum, Fum, Fum

traditional (Catalonia)

Ibid.

Mel.

I

II

III

Basso

10

x3

Guillô, pran ton tamborin

Bernard de la Monnoye, c. 1700

Ibid.
arr. ed.

Mel.

Harm.

Cont.

Basso

7

x4

Minuit, chrétiens

Placide Cappeau, 1843

Adolphe Adam, 1847

Mel.

Cont.

Basso

5

10

15

21

x3

How Great Our Joy

anonymous, 1623

Ibid.

trans. Theodore Baker, alt.

arr. ed.

echo

The musical score is written for four voices: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). It is in 2/4 time. The first system consists of 11 measures. The second system, starting at measure 12, includes an 'echo' section and ends with a repeat sign and 'x3'. The piano accompaniment is written in the bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

Eesus Ahatonyah

Jean de Brébeuf, 1643

traditional

transcr. John Steckley

arr. ed.

The musical score is written for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a keyboard instrument. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 8, and the second system contains measures 9 through 16. The keyboard part is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The vocal parts are written on single staves. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals. The piece concludes with a repeat sign and a 'x3' marking, indicating that the final measure should be repeated three times.

Boh predvičny narodilsja

traditional (Transcarpathia)

Ibid.

trans. Joseph Roll (alt.)

arr. ed.

The image displays a musical score for a four-part vocal setting. The title is "Boh predvičny narodilsja". The score is in G major (two sharps) and 2/4 time. It consists of two systems of four staves each, labeled S (Soprano), A (Alto), T (Tenor), and B (Bass). The first system contains measures 1 through 15. The second system begins with a measure rest labeled "16" and continues with measures 16 through 30. The final measure of the second system is marked with a repeat sign and "x3", indicating a triple repeat. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals, with a key signature change to one sharp (F#) in the final measure of the second system.