

A Christmas Songbook

edited by

Daniel Sadowsky

F Reed Score

2025 edition

“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

Table of Contents

Part I

Adeste Fideles	2
Ding Dong Merrily on High	3
O Little Town of Bethlehem	4
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing	5
It Came Upon the Midnight Clear	6
Angels We Have Heard on High	7
Once in Royal David's City	8
In the Bleak Mid-Winter	9
Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming	10
Joy to the World	11

Part II

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel	13
We Wish You a Merry Christmas	14
The Snow Lay on the Ground	15
Here We Come A-wassailing	16
What Child Is This?	17
I Saw Three Ships	18
Masters in This Hall	19
The Holly and the Ivy	20
Deck the Hall	21
Away in a Manger	22
Silent Night	23
God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen	24
Auld Lang Syne	25

Part III

O Tannenbaum	27
In dulci jubilo	28
Puer natus in Bethlehem	29
Quem Pastores	30
Los Peces en el Río	31
Fum, Fum, Fum	32
Guillô, pran ton tamborin	33
Minuit, chrétiens	34
How Great Our Joy	35
Eesus Ahatonyah	36
Boh predvičný narodilsja	37

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

8

15

f *tr* *f* *tr* *x3*

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.), Continuo (Cont.), Bass (Basso), and Rhythm (Rhyt.). The key signature is D major (two sharps) 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 12-16 and ends with a repeat sign and a 'x3' multiplier. The Rhythm staff uses 'x' for a full measure rest and a vertical line for a half measure rest. The Continuo and Bass staves use various chords and single notes to support the melody.

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 4/2 time and consists of three systems of music. The first system (measures 1-5) introduces the melody. The second system (measures 6-10) continues the vocal and piano parts. The third system (measures 11-15) concludes the piece with a repeat sign and a 'x2' marking. The piano accompaniment features a steady bass line and harmonic support for the vocal parts.

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Charles Wesley, 1739 (alt.)

Felix Mendelssohn, 1840

adapt. William H. Cummings, 1855

S
A
T
B

Four vocal staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in common time. The melody is written in treble clef for Soprano, Alto, and Tenor, and bass clef for Bass. The music consists of seven measures of a simple, hymn-like melody.

8

Four piano accompaniment staves (Right Hand Treble, Right Hand Bass, Left Hand Treble, Left Hand Bass) in common time. The music consists of seven measures of a simple, hymn-like accompaniment.

15 x3

Four vocal and piano staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, and Right Hand Treble, Right Hand Bass, Left Hand Treble, Left Hand Bass) in common time. The music consists of six measures of a simple, hymn-like melody and accompaniment, followed by a repeat sign and a 'x3' multiplier.

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear

Edmund Sears, 1849

Richard Storrs Willis, 1850

arr. Uzziah Christopher Burnap

The musical score is written for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 8/8. 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 bass line and a more active treble line with various melodic motifs and chords. The vocal parts are written in a simple, homophonic style, with the Soprano and Alto parts often carrying the main melody.

Angels We Have Heard on High

traditional (Languedoc)

Ibid.

trans. James Chadwick, 1862

arr. Edward Shippen Barnes (1887-1958)

The musical score is written for four voices: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). It is in common time (C) and consists of two systems. The first system contains 8 measures. The second system begins with a repeat sign and a measure number '9'. It contains 12 measures, with a first ending bracketed over measures 11 and 12, and a second ending bracketed over measures 13 and 14. The score ends with a double bar line and a 'x3' marking, indicating a triple repeat of the final measure.

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 top system shows the vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and the piano accompaniment. The bottom system continues the vocal parts and piano accompaniment, ending with a repeat sign and a 'x4' marking. The piano part features a steady accompaniment with chords and moving lines in both hands.

In the Bleak Mid-Winter

Christina Rossetti, 1872

Gustav Holst, 1905

S
A
T
B

8 x3

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

anonymous, 1599, alt.

Ibid.

trans. Theodore Baker, 1894

arr. Michael Praetorius, 1609

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 8, and the second system contains measures 9 through 16. Each system features four staves labeled S (Soprano), A (Alto), T (Tenor), and B (Bass) on the left. The music is written in common time (C) and uses a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The notation includes various note values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and accidentals (sharps and flats). The score concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign (two vertical lines) at the end of measure 16, with an 'x2' marking above the final measure.

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 staves. The Descending staff (Desc.) is in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a common time signature (C). It contains rests for the first three measures, followed by eighth and quarter notes in the last two measures. The Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (Basso) staves are in treble clef. The Soprano and Alto parts have a melodic line with dotted notes and rests. The Tenor and Bass parts provide harmonic support with quarter and eighth notes. The system concludes with a long note in the Soprano and Alto parts.

8

The second system of the musical score continues the melody and accompaniment. It begins with a measure rest marked with an '8'. The Soprano and Alto parts continue their melodic line, while the Tenor and Bass parts provide harmonic support. The system concludes with a long note in the Soprano and Alto parts.

14 x4

The third system of the musical score continues the melody and accompaniment. It begins with a measure rest marked with a '14'. The Soprano and Alto parts continue their melodic line, while the Tenor and Bass parts provide harmonic support. The system concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign, indicating a four-measure repeat (x4).

Part II

Music for Christmas, mostly in one or two parts.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

anonymous, 1710

anonymous, 15th c.

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

Prin.

Org.

9

x3

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

8

16 x4

Here We Come A-wassailing

traditional (England)

Ibid.

arr. ed.

The musical score is arranged in four staves: Mel. (Melody), Harm. (Harmony), Cont. (Continuo), and Basso (Bass). The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 6/8. The first system contains 8 measures. The second system, starting at measure 9, contains 12 measures and ends with a repeat sign and a 'x3' multiplier. The melody is primarily in the treble clef, while the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The continuo part features a steady eighth-note pattern. The bass part provides a rhythmic foundation with eighth and sixteenth notes.

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

The musical score is written for four parts: Melody (Mel.), Harmony (Harm.), Continuation (Cont.), and Bass (Basso). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 6/8. The melody is a simple tune, and the harmony provides accompaniment. The continuation part features chords, and the bass part has a simple bass line. The score is marked with a repeat sign and a 'x9' indicating nine repetitions.

Masters in This Hall

William Morris, c. 1860

Marin Marais, 1706

arr. ed.

Mel. Harm. Cont. Basso

9

17

4th verse only

19

The Holly and the Ivy

traditional (Gloucestershire)

transcr. Cecil Sharp, 1911

arr. David McCarthy, 2021

The musical score is arranged in four staves: Mel., Harm., Cont., and Basso. The time signature is 3/4. The melody is written in treble clef, while the harmony, continuation, and bass are in bass clef. The score consists of two systems of music. The first system has 8 measures, and the second system has 8 measures, with a repeat sign and 'x3' at the end of the second system. The melody is a simple, folk-like tune, and the accompaniment consists of chords and single notes in the lower registers.

Deck the Hall

Thomas Oliphant, 1862

traditional (Wales)

Mel.

Cont.

Basso

The first system of the musical score for 'Deck the Hall' consists of three staves: Melody (Mel.), Continuation (Cont.), and Bass (Basso). The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is common time (C). The melody is written in a treble clef and features a series of eighth and quarter notes. The continuation is written in a treble clef and features a series of chords. The bass is written in a bass clef and features a series of quarter and eighth notes.

8

x3

The second system of the musical score for 'Deck the Hall' consists of three staves: Melody (Mel.), Continuation (Cont.), and Bass (Basso). The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is common time (C). The melody is written in a treble clef and features a series of eighth and quarter notes. The continuation is written in a treble clef and features a series of chords. The bass is written in a bass clef and features a series of quarter and eighth notes. The system is marked with a repeat sign and a 'x3' multiplier, indicating that the preceding measures are to be repeated three times.

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 four systems, each containing four staves. The staves are labeled S (Soprano), A (Alto), Cont. (Continuo), and Basso (Bass). The music is in 6/8 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The first system shows the initial vocal entries and the continuo accompaniment. The second and third systems continue the vocal parts and the continuo accompaniment. The fourth system concludes the piece with a final chord and a repeat sign. The score is written for a four-part vocal ensemble and a continuo player.

God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen

traditional (London)

Ibid.

arr. ed.

Mel.

Desc.

Cont.

Basso

10.

x4

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

First system of musical notation for Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B) voices. The music is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The Soprano part begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The Alto, Tenor, and Bass parts begin with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The music is written in a four-part setting.

Second system of musical notation, starting at measure 10. It continues the four-part vocal setting for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass voices.

Third system of musical notation, starting at measure 21. It continues the four-part vocal setting for Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass voices. The system concludes with a repeat sign and a 'x3' instruction, indicating that the final measure is repeated three times.

Puer natus in Bethlehem

Anonymous, 1582

Ibid.

arr. Johann Sebastian Bach, BWV 65

The musical score is written for four voices: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). It is in the key of D major (indicated by two sharps) and 3/4 time. The first system consists of 8 measures. The second system, starting at measure 9, consists of 8 measures and ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign. The notation includes various musical symbols such as clefs, key signatures, time signatures, and note values.

Quem Pastores

Anonymous, 14th c.

Ibid.

arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1928

S
A
T
B

x3

Los Peces en el Río

traditional (Jerez)

Ibid.

Mel. Harm. Cont. Basso

9

17

25 x3

Fum, Fum, Fum

traditional (Catalonia)

Ibid.

Mel.

I

II

III

Basso

9

x3

Guillô, pran ton tamborin

Bernard de la Monnoye, c. 1700

Ibid.

arr. ed.

Mel.

Harm.

Cont.

Basso

7

Minuit, chrétiens

Placide Cappeau, 1843

Adolphe Adam, 1847

Mel.

Cont.

Basso

The first system of musical notation for 'Minuit, chrétiens' consists of three staves: Melody (Mel.), Contralto (Cont.), and Bass (Basso). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The melody begins with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note G4, then a series of eighth and quarter notes. The contralto and bass parts provide harmonic support with chords and single notes.

5

The second system of musical notation continues the piece from measure 5. It features the same three staves (Mel., Cont., Basso) with the melody and accompaniment progressing through measures 5 to 9.

10

The third system of musical notation continues the piece from measure 10. It features the same three staves (Mel., Cont., Basso) with the melody and accompaniment progressing through measures 10 to 14.

15

The fourth system of musical notation continues the piece from measure 15. It features the same three staves (Mel., Cont., Basso) with the melody and accompaniment progressing through measures 15 to 20.

21

x3

The fifth system of musical notation continues the piece from measure 21. It features the same three staves (Mel., Cont., Basso) with the melody and accompaniment progressing through measures 21 to 24. The system ends with a repeat sign and a 'x3' marking, indicating that the final measure is repeated three times.

How Great Our Joy

anonymous, 1623

Ibid.

trans. Theodore Baker, alt.

arr. ed.

S A T B

The first system of the musical score is for four voices: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). It is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The Soprano part begins with a melodic line, followed by the Alto, Tenor, and Bass parts. The system concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

12

The second system of the musical score continues the vocal parts from the first system. It includes a measure number '12' at the beginning. The system features a '12-measure rest' for the Soprano part, indicated by a large '12' and a rest symbol. The system concludes with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Eesus Ahatonyah

Jean de Brébeuf, 1643

transcr. John Steckley

traditional

arr. ed.

The musical score is written for four voices (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is common time (C). The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 8. The second system, starting with a measure number '9' at the beginning, contains measures 9 through 16. The piano part is written in the bass clef. The vocal parts are written in the soprano, alto, tenor, and bass clefs. The score concludes with a double bar line and a 'x3' marking, indicating a repeat.

Boh predvičny narodilsja

traditional (Transcarpathia)

Ibid.

trans. Joseph Roll (alt.)

arr. ed.

16 x3

The image displays a musical score for a four-part vocal ensemble (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first system covers measures 1 through 15. The second system, starting at measure 16, repeats the musical material from the first system and is marked with a repeat sign and 'x3' at the end. The vocal parts are labeled S, A, T, and B on the left. The piano part is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals.