

# Impressions of Christmas

## Musical footsteps in the snow

A musical view of Christmas and the time of snow with contributions from choirs, orchestras, children, instrumentalists and carol singers.

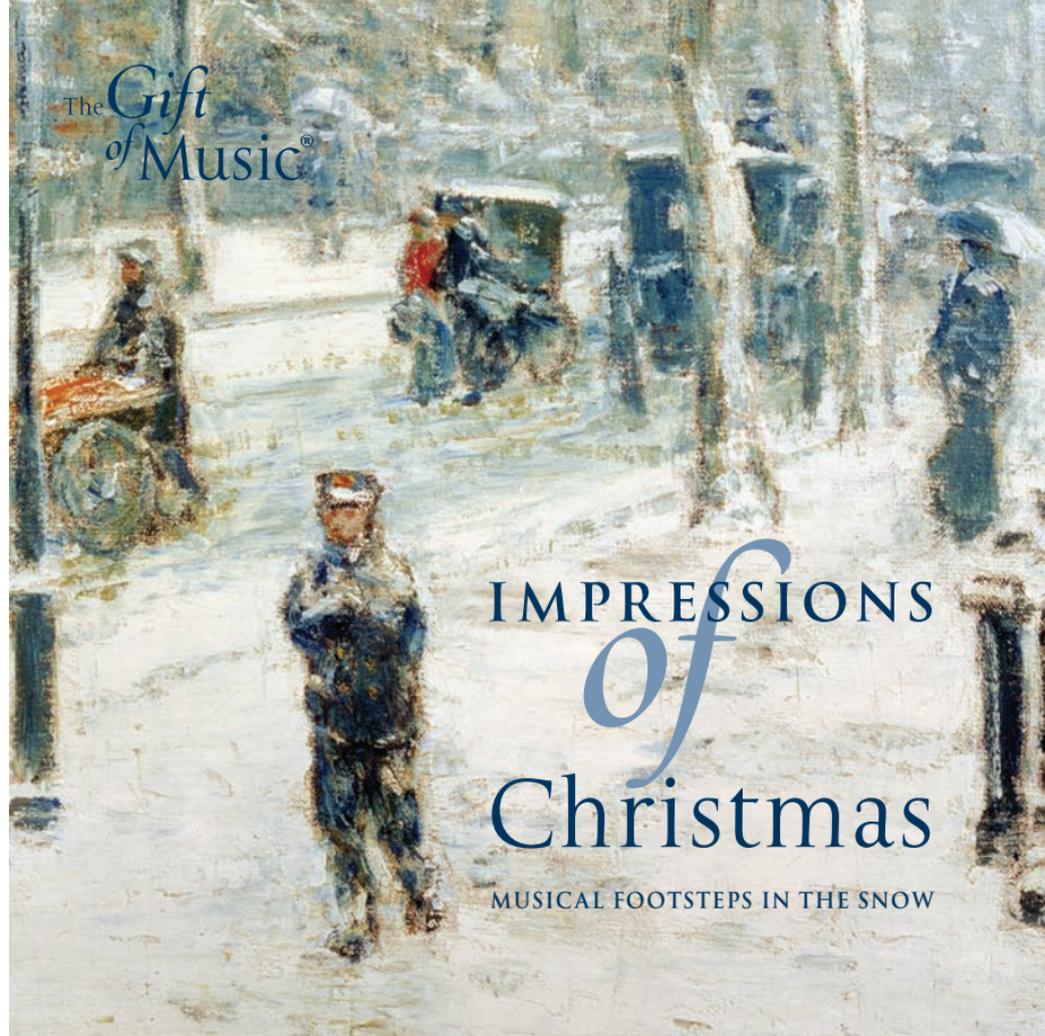
- 1 The time of snow** Bob Chilcott (1955–)  
*The Southend Boys & Girls choir directed by Roger Humphreys, Susan Graham Smith, piano*
- 2 Footsteps in the snow**  
Claude Debussy (1862–1918)  
*Martin Souter, piano*
- 3 See amid the winter's snow**  
Sir John Goss (1800–1880)  
*The Chenwell Singers directed by Julia Craig-McFeely*
- 4 The Shepherds' Farewell**  
Hector Berlioz (1803–1869)  
*The Choir of Worcester College, Oxford directed by Christopher Sparkhall*
- 5 Waltz of the Snowflakes**  
Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)  
*The London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Don Jackson*
- 6 Once in royal David's city**  
HJ Gauntlett (1805–1876)  
*The Choir of Worcester College, Oxford directed by Christopher Sparkhall*
- 7 The twelve days of Christmas** Traditional  
*Ian Giles, John Spiers, Jon Boden, Giles Lewin*
- 8 The Seasons: Winter – Cavatina**  
Josef Haydn (1732–1809)  
*Orchestra of the Ludwigsburger Schlossfestspiele & the South German Madrigal Choir conducted by Wolfgang Gönnenwein*
- 9 The Four Seasons: Winter – Allegro/Largo/Allegro** Antonio Vivaldi (1678–1741)  
*Pavel Popov, violin, The St Petersburg Radio & TV Orchestra conducted by Stanislav Gorkovenko*
- 10 Knecht Ruprecht (Father Christmas)**  
Robert Schumann (1810–1856)  
*Martin Souter, piano*
- 11 Who killed cock Robin?** Traditional  
*Sana Stowe and Matthew Spring*
- 12 O little town of Bethlehem** Traditional  
*The Chenwell Singers directed by Julia Craig-McFeely*
- 13 We've been a while a wandering** Traditional  
*Sana Stowe and Matthew Spring*
- 14 Cantique de Noël** Adolphe Adam (1803–1856)  
*Martin Souter, organ*

CCL CDG1174

Cover image: *Snow Storm, Fifth Avenue*  
1907 Childe Hassam (1859–1935) Private Collection,  
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# IMPRESSIONS of Christmas

MUSICAL FOOTSTEPS IN THE SNOW



# Impressions of Christmas

## Musical footsteps in the snow

'The time of winter, the time of snow': an elegant album of music to complement the beautiful painting by Childe Hassam which we have selected for our front cover. New York's Fifth Avenue has never looked snowier! We begin with a lovely song by Bob Chilcott, sung by a children's choir. This sets the cold and snowy mood, which continues with the stillness of Debussy's 'Footsteps in the snow', one of his best-loved piano pieces, played here on a Broadwood piano from the second decade of the twentieth century, almost a contemporary of the date of the composition.

A sequence of nineteenth-century music follows. Sir John Goss was organist at St Paul's Cathedral in London. He and HJ Gauntlett were amongst the leaders of the revival of Christmas music which had begun in the middle of the century. Goss's piece, 'See amid the winter's snow' is an inspired piece of Victoriana, as is Gauntlett's 'Once in royal', which is performed here in the now traditional way, with a solo first verse, the choir joining in later and gradually increasing the musical intensity as the carol progresses. Tchaikovsky's 'Waltz of the Snowflakes' is taken from 'The Nutcracker', an atmospheric ballet frequently staged around Christmas time, since it features fantasy, imagination and toys.

Then the carol singers appear – like Shakespeare's or Thomas Hardy's 'rude mechanicals', full of rustic charm and a sharp contrast with Tchaikovsky's sophisticated orchestra. Josef Haydn's 'The Seasons' is a huge work which

celebrates the glories of nature and man and God's relationship with it. The lovely 'Cavatina' is taken from 'Winter'. And then we have Vivaldi's iconic depiction of winter, the fourth violin concerto from his set of four, known as 'The Four Seasons'. Each concerto comes complete with programme notes: here is Vivaldi's evocative text to accompany 'Winter':

*Allegro:*

Bitter frostbite and freezing snow, cruel wind, running and the stamping of feet against the cold, teeth chattering from the extreme cold

*Largo:*

Spending days by the fire, peaceful and content, outside – the rain

*Allegro:*

Walking on ice, cautiously and fearfully, a fall, running swiftly until the ice breaks and opens, the flustering of the Scirocco and Bora winds

After Schumann's depiction of Father Christmas (or 'Knecht Ruprecht') three more traditional songs and carols lead us to the suitably grand finale of the album: Adam's 'Cantique de Noël', played on the magnificent organ in the chapel of Magdalen College, Oxford.