The Magic of Christmas

Nostalgic songs and carols

Joy and nostalgia combined: Durbin, Crosby, Sinatra, Tauber, Glenn Miller and many others present the sound of Christmas past in an indulgent programme of our old Christmas favourites. From 'Joy to the world' to 'Silent night', they're all here in beautifully restored digital sound.

1 **O come, all ye faithful**
Deanna Durbin
2 **Silent Night** Bing Crosby
3 **O little town of Bethlehem**
Dick Haymes
4 **O Sanctissima (O holy one)**
Richard Tauber
5 **Mary had a baby, yes Lord**
Paul Robeson
6 **Coventry Carol** Elisabeth Schumann
7 **It came upon a midnight clear**
Frank Sinatra
8 **Faith of our Fathers** Bing Crosby
9 **Joy to the world** Dick Haymes
10 **Lullay, my liking**
The Celebrity Quartette
11 **Noel** Georges Thill
12 **Ave Maria** Deanna Durbin
13 **God rest ye merry, gentlemen**
Bing Crosby
14 **The Lord's prayer** Mario Lanza
15 **Sleep, my Saviour, sleep**
The Celebrity Quartette
16 **Amazing Grace** Mahalia Jackson
17 **The cradle song of the Virgin**
Dick Haymes
18 **Cradle song** Glenn Miller
19 **'Twas the night before Christmas**
Fred Waring & The Pennsylvanians

The Gift of Music®

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The joyous season of Christmas has, over the years, become the most widely celebrated of all festivals. Christians commemorate the birth of Christ, but millions of people of other faiths, all over the world, also celebrate this time as the birth of a new year. For whatever reason, it is a joyous time for all; a time for children and the family, for giving presents, sharing and coming together in a spirit of peace and renewal.

Christmas is the one time of the year when the human condition comes closest to achieving its ideals. The religious aspect has much to do with this, a fact that is warmly reflected in the many beloved carols and hymns to be heard throughout the season. Perhaps, in the broadest sense, it is the music – both the traditional and the popular – that most strongly illustrates just what a magical time of the year Christmas is. It is a time bathed in nostalgia – of Christmases past and the memories that cling to them. Happy ones, some tinged with sadness, but these very memories seem to bind us all together even tighter at this most reflective of times.

We travel back through the years with twenty seasonal souvenirs that will recall a Christmas or two and the special memories linked with them. The lovely voice of Deanna Durbin sets the scene perfectly, and she sings *O Come, All Ye Faithful* with such sincerity and warmth. This triumphant carol was sung in France and Germany during the 17th century but was first printed in sheet music form in 1782, with English words by Frederick Oakeley, a London clergyman. *Ave Maria*, the famous setting of the Roman Catholic prayer 'Hail Mary' by Gounod who added the noble tune to the first of Bach's 48 Preludes, is given a perfect rendition by Deanna Durbin as well.

Another nostalgic star, indelibly linked with the festive season, is Bing Crosby. Little did the humble Austrian choirmaster Franz Gruber think that his efforts would result in one of the most beloved of all Christmas hymns. Its melody has all the simplicity and freshness of an Alpine folk tune, while its words have a plain beauty that can still send a tingle down the spine and bring a lump to the throat. Bing Crosby's 1942 version sold over 30 million copies throughout the world. Bing also sings *Faith of Our Fathers* whilst, in contrast, he revels in all the joy and happiness of *God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen*.

Two golden voices whose worlds were that of opera and lieder contribute two glorious moments. *The Coventry Carol*, a beautiful carol that evolved from the Coventry Christmas Play, one of the so-called medieval 'Mysteries', is finely sung by Elisabeth Schumann and the much-loved lyric tenor, Richard Tauber, brings a vibrancy to *O Sanctissima (O Du Froehliche)*, the traditional German carol. The deep, rich bass voice of Paul Robeson resounds to *Mary Had a Baby, Yes Lord*, a favorite Negro spiritual. Mario Lanza provides a reverential performance of Albert Malotte's setting of *The Lord's Prayer*. Frank Sinatra, Dick Haymes and Glenn Miller are among the other stars who create all the charm and magic needed for this souvenir of an old-fashioned Christmas.