

# A Christmas Collection

## Favourite songs and carols

An unusual compilation of Christmas music – from orchestral to instrumental, from carols to songs, extracts from Handel's famous 'Messiah', medieval music to modern. Great variety – something for all the family when they are assembled around the tree on Christmas Eve.

- 1 Away in a manger** WJ Kirkpatrick (1838–1921)  
*The Choir of Worcester College, Oxford directed by Christopher Sparkhall*
- 2 Journey through the snow**  
Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893)  
*The London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Don Jackson*
- 3 Christmas Piece Op72 No1 – Allegro non troppo**  
Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847)  
*Martin Souter, piano*
- 4 Silent Night** Franz Gruber (1787–1863)  
*Ian Giles, John Spiers, Jon Boden, Giles Lewin*
- 5 While shepherds watched**  
Christopher Tye (c.1505–1573)  
*The Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford conducted by Stephen Darlington*
- 6 Great Organ Mass – Benedictus**  
Josef Haydn (1732–1809)  
*Christof Roos, organ, Württemberg Chamber Orchestra & The Stuttgart Chamber Choir conducted by Frieder Bernius with soloists Krisztina Laki, Hildegard Laurich, Aldo Baldin & Richard Anlauf*
- 7 Messiah – For unto us a child is born**  
George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)
- 8 Messiah – Pastoral Symphony**  
George Frideric Handel  
*Amadeus Ensemble conducted by Valentin Radu*
- 9 Coventry Carol** Traditional  
*The Choir of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford conducted by Stephen Darlington*
- 10 Nowell: Dieus wous garde**  
Richard Smart (fl. 1428–1477)
- 11 Lullay, lullow: I saw a swete semly syght**  
15th century
- 12 Ther is no rose of swych vertu** 15th century
- 13 Verbum supernum** Plainchant  
*The Choir of Queens' College, Cambridge conducted by James Weeks*
- 14 Christmas Oratorio – Cradle Song**  
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)  
*Martin Souter, organ*
- 15 The first Nowell** Traditional  
*The Chenwell Singers directed by Julia Craig-McFeely*
- 16 Messiah – Hallelujah** George Frideric Handel  
*Amadeus Ensemble conducted by Valentin Radu*

CCL CDG1173

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FAVOURITE SONGS AND CAROLS

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This unusual compilation of Christmas music brings together some of the best loved tunes of the season. And the thread which binds them all together? It's a reverence for the best of the past, with a clear emphasis on the nineteenth century. Even Worcester College chapel, the venue of the first recording, has a beautiful nineteenth century interior with a fine, rich acoustic.

We begin there with a slow and gentle rendition of 'Away in a manger', and finish with a very dynamic performance of the famous 'Hallelujah' chorus from 'Messiah', George Frideric Handel's best-known work. The 'Great Organ Mass' by Josef Haydn and Handel's 'Messiah' are stalwarts of the Christmas musical scene, and they are performed by choral societies and orchestras all over the world. Our Haydn extract features some beautiful organ playing and stunning soloists in the gentle and pastoral 'Benedictus'. Our other Handel pieces are one of the brightest choruses from 'Messiah' and the famous 'Pastoral Symphony' which meanders along and brings an expression of wonder to the moment when the shepherds were 'abiding in the fields by night', with a different feel from Christopher Tye's 'While shepherds watched', which is performed here with a gentle harp accompaniment. Bach's 'Christmas Oratorio' is also

seasonally famous and its 'Cradle Song' presents another step in the Christmas story, as the baby Jesus sleeps in a manger.

Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky were two of the nineteenth century's greatest musical names. And for many people, the very thought of Tchaikovsky is synonymous with Christmas. 'The journey through the snow' comes from 'The Nutcracker' ballet, a real perennial seasonal favourite. Mendelssohn's 'Christmas Pieces' are meant for the Victorian parlour. The 'allegro non troppo' is brief and cheerful in the best Christmas tradition! Franz Gruber's 'Silent Night' is probably one of the best-loved carols of all, and was first heard in Austria in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The central section of our album presents a series of four medieval carols and a plainsong hymn which perfectly express the wonder of the Christmas story. Just before 'Hallelujah' we have another famous hymn which tells once more a version of the Christmas story.

We hope you enjoy this selection and wish you a very merry Christmas!