



With Love,
Peter B. Allen

*Christmas
Present*

“...the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”
(Luke 2:10, 11 King James Version)

“I celebrate Christmas with my soul, my spiritual sense, and so commemorate the entrance into human understanding of the Christ conceived of Spirit, of God and not of a woman—as the birth of Truth, the dawn of divine Love breaking upon the gloom of matter and evil with the glory of infinite being...

“I love to observe Christmas in quietude, humility, benevolence, charity, letting good will towards man, eloquent silence, prayer, and praise express my conception of Truth’s appearing.”

(“What Christmas Means to Me,” by Mary Baker Eddy, First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany, pg. 262)

Dear Listener,

I have been writing and playing Christmas music for the last 30 years. It is a way for me to share with friends, family, and community, and to feel more deeply the spirit of the Christ. So I am very happy to enlarge this sharing to include you. There is a lot of good Christmas music, but much of it emphasizes the activity and distractions of the season and not the quiet birth of our Savior Christ Jesus. I chose some of my favorite Christmas carols and hymns from the *Christian Science Hymnal*, and wrapped them in new clothes. To me, these pieces express the deep spiritual nature of the arrival of the Christ to humanity. I kept the musical palette simple and free. Many pieces feature a soloist and create an intimate musical



experience. These are interspersed with traditional settings of carols. Also, there are a few bright, fast pieces. The words and music of these beautiful songs remind us to always express the Christ qualities and to keep *Christmas Present* throughout the year.

Peter B. Allen

September 2007

1. Angels We Have Heard On High (1:45)

There are four traditional Christmas carols on this recording, and this track is the first. It is a simple reading of an old French melody loved and sung by people all over the world.

Tune: Traditional French carol

2. Christmas Morn (5:45)

This piece begins with a quiet bassoon solo, signifying the humility of Christ Jesus' arrival in an obscure time and place. There are six settings of Mrs. Eddy's poem in the *Christian Science Hymnal*, and this piece weaves together three of my favorites into a seamless whole. The calm, comforting mood of the piece is based on the last two



Amy Duxbury

verses of Mary Baker Eddy's poem, which reads:

Thou gentle beam of living Love,
And deathless Life!
Truth infinite,—so far above
All mortal strife,

Or cruel creed, or earth-born taint:
Fill us today
With all thou art—be thou our saint,
Our stay, always.

Tunes: Christmas Morn by Albert F. Conant

Serenity by William V. Wallace

Kington by F. Llewellyn Edwards

Words: Mary Baker Eddy

3. A Grateful Heart (4:06)

Although this hymn is not traditionally sung during Christmas, it fits perfectly with this collection. Christmas is a natural time of year to count our blessings and to share with others. The spirit of gratitude is buoyant and cheerful, and opens the way for more blessings. This piece includes a lilting flute solo, which expresses the joy and happiness of a grateful heart. The hymn ends with a prayer that includes everyone:



Janet Ketchum

Grant then, dear Father-Mother, God,
Whatever else befall,
This largess of a grateful heart
That loves and blesses all.

Tune: Epsom, Traditional

Words: Ethel W. Dennis

4. **O Come, All Ye Faithful** (1:03)

This is the second traditional Christmas carol in the collection. These simple settings are performed by an ensemble of strings, woodwinds, and harp.

Tune: Adeste Fideles, Anonymous

5. **Angels at the Savior's Birth** (6:36)

Angels at the Saviour's birth
Woke with music all the earth,

Angels woke the earth with music, but it may have been a very gentle awakening. This piece continues the peaceful mood and features the trumpet. The stillness of the introduction gives way to the main melody played by the trumpet in broad, slow gestures, while the faster moving counter melody is played by the strings. The end of the hymn assures us of our unity with God.

Still the tidings angels bring
With their joyful caroling,
Telling that the dawn has come,
God and man fore'er at one.

Tune: Salzburg by Jakob Hintze

Words: Marion Susan Campbell

6. Praise the Lord (5:46)

The words of this hymn are a joyful poem in praise of God's wonderful creation. This piece moves through a variety of moods - from the playful, dancing figures in the woodwinds, to a rhapsodic clarinet solo over a rich string accompaniment, to a tender harp solo, to a bold statement of the melody by the bass and cello, and finally to a bright, sunny ending full of the optimism expressed in the words.



Jerry Simas

Praise the Lord, ye heavens, adore Him;
Praise Him, angels, in the height;
Sun and moon, rejoice before Him,
Praise Him, all ye stars of light;
Praise the Lord, for He hath spoken,
Worlds His mighty voice obeyed;
Laws that never shall be broken
For their guidance hath He made.

Tune: Sursum Voces by H. Elliot Button

Words: Henry Francis Lyte

7. The First Noel (1:19)

This is the third traditional Christmas carol in the collection.

Tune: Traditional English carol

8. We Three Kings (7:20)

After a simple presentation of the main melody, this piece develops through a series of variations featuring the violin. The first and second variations use a light accompaniment of strings and woodwinds, and gain momentum as they progress. The third variation is a romantic version of the melody which builds to a full statement of the melody on the words:

Star of wonder, star of light,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light.

The last variation is a baroque treatment of the material, which builds to a bold, radiant coda.



Dawn Harms

Tune: We Three Kings by John H. Hopkins, Jr.
Words: John H. Hopkins, Jr.

9. What Child Is This (7:19)



Vanessa Ruotolo

An introspective cello solo with a searching, longing quality begins this piece. This leads to a tender descending melody accompanied by the harp. This cello theme recurs throughout the entire piece and

serves as a dialogue with

main melody played by the oboe. The words suggest the quiet, humble origins of Christ Jesus.



Laura Griffiths

10. Joy to the World (4:24)

This entire piece features the trumpet with a full accompaniment of strings, harp and bells. The trumpet varies and develops the main melody and contrasts it with new material. The mood ranges from bold and confident to colorful and playful. Sometimes breaking into song is the only way to express the joy of receiving God's great gift.



Scott Morcamber

Joy to the world, the Lord is come,
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare him room,
And heaven and nature sing.

Tune: Antioch by Georg F. Handel

Words: Isaac Watts

11. Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (1:39)

This is the fourth traditional Christmas carol in the collection.

Tune: Mendelssohn by Felix Mendelssohn

12. Our God Is Love (7:04)

The words of this hymn praising God's unchanging, infinite Love fit perfectly with this poignant melody. Some people consider a melody in a minor key to be "sad," but there is nothing lacking here, simply the beauty of God's all-embracing love. This piece is the third and final trumpet feature, and contrasts nicely with "Joy to the World." Here the trumpet is spacious, lyrical, and warm. It alternates with tender passages in the woodwind and string sections. After two versions of the hymn tune, the piece ends solemnly with an unaccompanied trumpet solo.

Our God is Love, unchanging Love,
And can we ask for more?
Our prayer for Love's increase is vain;
'Twas infinite before.
Ask not the Lord with breath of praise
For more than we accept;
The open fount is free to all,
God's promises are kept.

Tune: Kingsfold, Traditional English Melody

Words: Frederic W. Root

13. **Silent Night** (5:59)

This is a slow, “bluesy” version of this well-known melody and features the bass in a jazz setting. The relaxed mood of the bass solo establishes a peaceful “late-night” feeling and sets us up for the main melody played by the clarinet and strings. The sensitive performance



Richard Worn

by the musicians communicates the feeling of the lyrics:

Silent night, holy night,
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and Child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

After the strings play a few choruses of a 12-bar blues, the bassoon plays a “tip-toe” quiet bass line. Then the high woodwinds give us the main melody one more time, before a very gentle ending.

Tune: Silent Night by Franz X. Gruber

Words: Josef Mohr

14. What Is Thy Birthright (5:05)

I included this hymn because it states that everyone's birthright is as a child of God and not a mortal.

What is thy birthright, man,
Child of the perfect One;
What is thy Father's plan
For His beloved son?

Thou art Truth's honest child,
Of pure and sinless heart;
Thou treadest undefiled
In Christly paths apart.

Humility, quietness, and obedient listening are a central part of the Christmas story. These qualities are embodied in the somber clarinet solo that begins the piece, and by the extended introduction that follows. The oboe presents the main melody with absolute purity, and the violin and cello in triple octaves

continue this gesture. There is nothing hurried, nothing rushed or forced. As the hymn states:

Thou hast the gift of God—
Dominion over all.

Tune: St. Cecilia by Leighton G. Hayne

Words: Emily F. Seal

15. **Mother's Evening Prayer** (5:57)

The final piece is written for unaccompanied handbell choir. The heavenly sound of the bells highlights Mary Baker Eddy's words.



Velocity Handbell Ensemble

O gentle presence, peace and joy and power;
O Life divine, that owns each waiting hour,
Thou Love that guards the nestling's faltering flight!
Keep Thou my child on upward wing tonight.

The *Christian Science Hymnal* has six different versions of this hymn, and this piece is based on two of them. The very quiet ending leaves us with the assurance expressed in the last verse of Mrs. Eddy's poem.

No snare, no fowler, pestilence or pain;
No night drops down upon the troubled breast,
When heaven's aftersmile earth's tear-drops gain,
And mother finds her home and heav'nly rest.

Tunes: Expectation by Andreas P. Berggreen

Benediction by Edward J. Hopkins

Words: Mary Baker Eddy

Credits

Peter B. Allen

Janet Ketchum

Laura Griffiths

Jerry Simas

Amy Duxbury

Scott Morcamber

Dan Levitan

Dawn Harms

Sara Usher

Emily Onderdonk

Vanessa Ruotolo

Richard Worn

Composer, Conductor

Flute, Alto Flute, Piccolo

Oboe

Clarinet, Bass Clarinet

Bassoon

Trumpet

Harp

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

Bass

Velocity Handbell Ensemble

P. L. Grove Artistic Director

Chavonta Edington Ringer

Michael Raposo Ringer

Joel Gingrich Ringer

Amy Chun Music Editor

Mark Wilsher Engineer, Mastering

Emily Payne Photographer

Haydn Adams Graphic design

Michael Taylor, CS Special Thanks

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Words to “Christmas Morn” and “Mother's Evening Prayer” used courtesy of The Mary Baker Eddy Collection.

Christmas Present

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5. <i>Angels at the Savior's Birth</i>	6:36	13. <i>Silent Night</i>	5:59
6. <i>Praise the Lord</i>	5:46	14. <i>What is Thy Birthright</i>	5:05
7. <i>The First Noel</i>	1:19	15. <i>Mother's Evening Prayer</i>	5:57
8. <i>We Three Kings</i>	7:20	<i>Total Time</i>	<i>71:13</i>

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Music Publishing

San Francisco, CA

www.pbamusic.com

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This gift of music contains many favorite Christmas melodies performed by small orchestra, harp, trumpet, and handbell ensemble. The melodies express the quietness, and prayerful inspiration of the season highlighted by moments of joy and celebration, all performed by an ensemble of wonderful musicians.



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