

My First Christmas Album



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The great thing about Christmas is that you know lots of good things will happen. You know that pretty lights will start popping up all over the place. You know you'll get a holiday from school. You're probably ready to eat a special meal and to see family and friends. All these things are part of what we call a tradition. Christmas is a big tradition – it celebrates the birth of Jesus. People who want to celebrate this do it in different ways. But whatever happens, there is always music! Some of it is many years old, and because we only hear it at that one time of the year it feels exciting and special.

Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without pictures of carol singers with lanterns and bobble hats. Some Christmas carols are well known and simple, and everybody can sing them. Other carols are a bit more complicated and they are often 'performed' by a choir of singers.



Then there are songs and pieces played by orchestras, with sleigh bells jingling to get you in the mood and make you think of snow, Santa Claus, his reindeer, and all the other essential ingredients of a perfect Christmas.

Every year we hope to see snow. Quite often we just get rain instead! But it's part of the tradition that we dream of a 'white Christmas', hoping that the real thing will look like the scenes on cards and in films. The whole season is like a dream – a dream full of music!

For full track and performer details, see pages 16-17.

H.J. Gauntlett

1 **Once in royal David's city**

Keyword: Solo

The first verse of this well-known carol is often sung by a solo voice. Listen here to the boy who sings it – imagine him standing bravely and singing by himself, with lots of people around him. Then everyone joins in for the second verse, and the boy can feel pleased that he's finished his bit!



3:19

J. Carmichael, arr. P. Lane

2 **Sleighride to Thredbo**

Keyword: Exciting

'Thredbo' is a ski resort in Australia, and this lively music describes the snow sports and the scenery as the ride on the sleigh goes up and down the winter slopes. You can hear horns and trumpets in the crisp, cold air.



1:50

J.H. Hopkins, Jr., arr. A. Pitts

3 **We three kings of Orient are**

Keyword: Presents

The story in the Bible of the 'three kings' or 'wise men' says that they visited Jesus after he was born. Each one brought a present: one brought gold, one brought frankincense and one brought myrrh. Frankincense and myrrh come from trees, and are used in making perfume. Listen to each king singing on his own about what he's brought.

3:07

Traditional, arr. J. Rutter

4 **Sans Day Carol**

Keyword: Tinkling

Cornwall is a beautiful place in the south-west of England, with beaches and rocks... and clotted cream! It is where the *Sans Day Carol* comes from. The words are a bit similar to *The Holly and the Ivy*, and in this version by John Rutter you can hear the organ tinkling with a pretty little introduction.



3:19

F. Bernard, arr. Anon.

5 **Winter Wonderland**

Keyword: Snow

A 'winter wonderland' is what we like to imagine at Christmas. It means that everything is perfectly covered in snow. If it's grey and raining, we think it's all wrong! This version of the song is just for instruments – you can hear a harmonica playing the tune. A bit later it's the piano. And sleigh bells are ringing... are you listening?

2:14

Traditional, arr. H.W. Davies

6 **The holly and the ivy**

Keyword: Holly



This happy little carol is a kind of folksong: the tune was written down about 100 years ago by a man who had heard a woman whistling it. Nobody knows who actually wrote it. People often use holly as a decoration at Christmas – its dark green, prickly leaves and its bright red berries are good Christmas colours!

3:19

G.F. Handel

7 **Messiah: For unto us a Child is born**

Keyword: **Cheerful**

George Frideric Handel is a big name in music. He lived about 350 years ago and wrote a lot of things for choirs to sing. *Messiah*, all about Jesus, is really famous. 'For unto us a Child is born' is when the choir sings about his birth. You can hear what a happy time it is, with the voices and instruments bouncing cheerfully along.



3:51

L.E. Galian

8 **Esta bella noche**

Keyword: **Spanish**

Christmas is celebrated in different countries all over the world. This carol was written by a man called Luis Eduardo Galián in the South American country of Venezuela. People in Venezuela speak Spanish, and *Esta bella noche* is Spanish for 'This beautiful night'.

3:16



2:02

A. Corelli

9 **'Christmas Concerto': movement 2**

Keyword: **Violins**

Pieces for instruments and no voices can be for Christmas, too! Arcangelo Corelli was another famous composer, born a few years before Handel. You can hear string instruments here, violins especially. They have long notes while the lower cellos run around with short notes underneath – bom bom bom bom bom... You can run around with them if you like!

Traditional

10 **King Jesus hath a garden**

Keyword: **Garden**

Time for a gentle carol. This one comes from the country of Holland, although the words here are English. We don't know who wrote it, which is why it says 'Traditional'. The choir sings six verses and between each one is a 'refrain' – a few lines that are the same each time. This is the refrain:

There naught is heard but Paradise bird,
Harp, dulcimer, lute,
With cymbal, trump and tymbal,
And the tender, soothing flute.

B. Britten

11 **A Ceremony of Carols: This Little Babe**

Keyword: **Overlap**

The composer Benjamin Britten lived in Britain! He wrote *A Ceremony of Carols* while he was on ship sailing from America to England. It is just for high voices (children or women) and one instrument: a harp. 'This Little Babe' has three groups of singers that start to separate and overlap with each other – it makes a clever echo effect.



1:26



2:26

H. Darke

12 **In the bleak midwinter**

Keyword: Beautiful

In the bleak midwinter by Harold Darke was voted the greatest Christmas carol of all time in 2009. Experts in the US and UK knew that it was special, and particularly beautiful. Listen to the gentle organ introduction. It's like a warm invitation to the voices, who come in and sing their lovely soaring melody.



4:54

Traditional, arr. R. Jacques

13 **Good King Wenceslas**

Keyword: Story

Some carols tell a story. In this one, a Czech king and his young servant walk through the freezing cold snow to take food to a poor man. The tune is much older than the words, and it comes from Finland - one of the most northern countries in the world. There's plenty of snow there! The carol is simple and popular.



3:05

J.L. Pierpoint, arr. P. Breiner

14 **Jingle Bells**

Keyword: Jingling

You've probably heard this one before... This version is just for instruments, so if you know the words you can sing along! Here they are:

Dashing through the snow
In a one-horse open sleigh
O'er the fields we go
Laughing all the way.

Bells on bobtail ring
Making spirits bright
What fun it is to ride and sing
A sleighing song tonight!

*Jingle bells, jingle bells,
Jingle all the way.
Oh! what fun it is to ride
In a one-horse open sleigh.*



1:00

Traditional
15 **Carol of the Bells**
Keyword: **Ukraine**

There are more bells here, but the sound of these is made by just voices. Nothing is jingling! Sometimes they sing 'Ding' and 'Dong' underneath the main tune – can you hear them? People think this carol came from Ukraine, but nobody knows for sure. Wherever it came from, it is a sparkling and sprightly piece!



1:30



P.I. Tchaikovsky
16 **The Nutcracker: Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy**
Keyword: **Magic**

It is Christmas Eve, and the Sugar Plum Fairy is dancing in her castle made of sugar. She rules the Land of Sweets, where Clara has been taken by the Prince. The Prince used to be just a nutcracker in the shape of a wooden soldier doll. He sat completely still under the Christmas Tree... until he came alive... Christmas is a time for magic!

1:48

J. Rutter
17 **Tomorrow shall be my dancing day**
Keyword: **Smiley**

A children's choir sings this gentle, smiley carol, *Tomorrow shall be my dancing day*. Can you hear the piano playing too? The voices start off singing exactly the same thing, but then they begin to do different things – some of them have a part that goes high over the top, and some sing underneath.

3:31

Traditional
18 **Gaudete Christus est natus**
Keyword: **OLP**

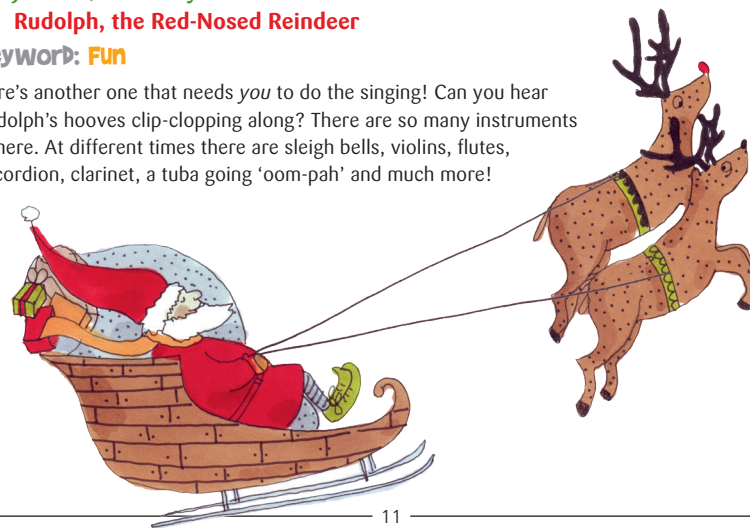
Time to rewind the years! *Gaudete Christus est natus* is *really* old. It has medieval Latin words, which means that it could have been written 600 years ago. The words are all about celebrating the birth of Jesus. It has a strong beat, which is helped by the tambourine. Can you hear it jangling when it is tapped in time to the music?

1:38

J. Marks, arr. R. Hayman
19 **Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer**
Keyword: **Fun**

Here's another one that needs *you* to do the singing! Can you hear Rudolph's hooves clip-clopping along? There are so many instruments in here. At different times there are sleigh bells, violins, flutes, accordion, clarinet, a tuba going 'oom-pah' and much more!

2:37



W.J. Kirkpatrick, arr. D. Hunt

20 **Away in a manger**

3:11

Keyword: Baby

People often sing *Away in a manger* at Christmas. Maybe you have sung it before? You can imagine the nativity scene when you listen to this – the stable, the hay, the baby in a manger, the night sky with bright stars. The music seems to describe it all so kindly, disturbing none of the details while the baby sleeps peacefully.

W. Lutosławski

21 **Hurrying to Bethlehem**

0:51

Keyword: Polish

Things have sped up a bit... and what language is this? It is Polish. This is a short Christmas carol from Poland, describing the shepherds hurrying to Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus. Even if you don't understand the words, you can really hear in the music that there was no time to waste!

O. Kotilainen

22 **Kun Joulu on (At Christmas time)**

2:16

Keyword: Finnish

Moving north, this is a pretty carol from Finland. The voices sing the verses with an organ playing all the time underneath. It was written over 100 years ago: Otto Kotilainen wrote the music and Alpo Noponen wrote the words, and they were friends at school years earlier.



F.X. Gruber

23 **Silent Night**

3:05

Keyword: Peaceful

Silent Night is famous in many countries. It was in German to start with, called *Stille Nacht*, because it was written by an Austrian man. It is like a lullaby – beautiful, still, peaceful.



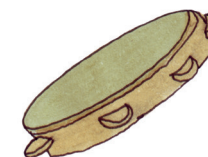
M.A. Charpentier

24 **Noël: Vous qui désirez sans fin**

2:23

Keyword: Tambourine

Like Corelli's 'Christmas Concerto', this piece never had any words. It's just for instruments. It's very cheerful, and there's one instrument playing quite a big part. It starts the whole thing off... do you know what it is? It was in our medieval carol *Gaudete Christus est natus* too. It's the tambourine. It helps to make the music dance.



Traditional, arr. A. Carter

25 **A maiden most gentle**

2:53

Keyword: Friendly

Listen to the pretty organ part in this carol. It weaves around the voices. Sometimes the voices sing on their own, and then back comes the organ with its lovely line, like a friend to their melody.

R. Vaughan Williams

26 **Wassail Song**

Keyword: Cheers!

It's time to celebrate with a drink! That's what this song is all about. There's nothing peaceful or silent in this one - people are having fun. 'Wassail' is a kind of wine or ale. The English composer Vaughan Williams has used a whole orchestra as well as a choir. You can hear the shiny brass instruments, as everybody raises a glass!



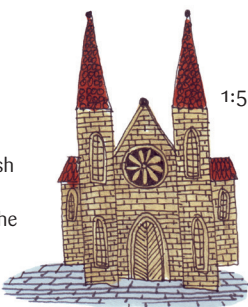
2:26

P.I. Tchaikovsky

27 **The Nutcracker: Russian Dance (Trepak)**

Keyword: Russia

The 'Russian Dance' is from Tchaikovsky's Christmas ballet *The Nutcracker* - it comes after the 'Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy'. Clara is still in the Land of Sweets, watching different dances to celebrate sweets all round the world. Here, the sugar canes of Russia have an energetic and exciting dance to delight her. Why not join in with them?



1:54

Traditional, arr. D. Willcocks

28 **Unto us is born a Son**

Keyword: Traditional

This is a very traditional English sound, with a choir from an English cathedral singing a very traditional carol. At one time, the words would have been in Latin. Now they are in English, and although the carol appeared over 500 years ago it is still much loved today.

Traditional, arr. D. Willcocks

29 **Ding dong merrily on high**

Keyword: Bells

Where there is celebration, there are bells! This very popular carol describes how they're ringing in heaven at Christmas. The organ, at the beginning, is imitating them. When we get to 'Gloria', there lots of notes, all sung to the first part of the word: 'Glor'. Can you hear where they *finish* the word, and sing 'ia'?



2:07

Traditional

30 **Rocking**

Keyword: Goodnight

A gentle, traditional, lullaby ending to say goodnight.



1:45

Full Track Details

1 Henry John Gauntlett (1805–1876): Once in royal David's city · 3:19 · Robert Stringer, treble; Worcester Cathedral Choir; Raymond Johnston, organ; Donald Hunt · 8.550589 **2** John Carmichael (b. 1930), arr. Philip Lane: Sleighride to Thredbo (arr. for orchestra) · 1:50 · BBC Concert Orchestra; Barry Wordsworth · 8.570331 **3** John Henry Hopkins, Jr. (1820–1891), arr. Antony Pitts: We three kings of Orient are · 3:07 · Tonus Peregrinus; Antony Pitts · 8.557330 **4** Traditional, arr. John Rutter: Sans Day Carol · 3:19 · Tewkesbury Abbey Choir; Andrew Sackett · 8.553077 **5** Felix Bernard (1897–1944), arr. Anon.: Winter Wonderland · 2:14 · Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra · 8.990013 **6** Traditional, arr. Sir Henry Walford Davies: The holly and the ivy · 3:19 · Tewkesbury Abbey Choir; Andrew Sackett · 8.553077 **7** George Frideric Handel (1685–1759): Messiah: For unto us a boy is born · 3:51 · Oxford New College Choir; Academy of Ancient Music; Edward Higginbottom · 8.570131–32 **8** Luis Eduardo Galian: Esta bella noche · 3:16 · Mats Norrefalk, guitar; Mats Nyström, percussion; Mats-Erik Björklund, congas; Stefan Bäcklund, double bass; Örebo Kammarkör; Fred Sjöberg · 8.554490 **9** Arcangelo Corelli (1881–1945): Concerto grosso in G minor, Op. 6 No. 8 'Christmas Concerto': II. Allegro · 2:02 · Capella Istropolitana; Jaroslav Krček · 8.550567 **10** Traditional: King Jesus hath a garden · 2:26 · Elora Festival Singers; Noel Edison · 8.554179 **11** Benjamin Britten (1913–1976): A Ceremony of Carols: This Little Babe · 1:26 · Skaila Kanga, harp; New London Children's Choir; Ronald Corp · 8.553183 **12** Harold Darke (1888–1976): In the bleak midwinter · 4:54 · Elora Festival Singers; Noel Edison · 8.554179 **13** Traditional, arr. Reginald Jacques: Good King Wenceslas · 3:05 · Tewkesbury Abbey Choir; Andrew Sackett · 8.553077 **14** James Lord Pierpont (1822–1893), arr. Peter Breiner: Jingle Bells · 1:00 · Slovak State Symphony Orchestra, Košice; Alfred Walter · 8.550188 **15** Traditional: Carol of the Bells · 1:30 · La Petite Bande de Montréal; Martin Dagenais · 8.554435 **16** Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893): The Nutcracker: Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy · 1:48 · Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra; Michael Halász · 8.550050 **17** John Rutter (b. 1945): Tomorrow shall be my dancing day · 3:31 · Finchley Children's Music Group; John Evanson; Grace Rossiter · 8.557581

· **18** Traditional: Gaudete Christus est natus · 1:38 · Oxford Camerata; Jeremy Summerly · 8.550751 · **19** Johnny Marks (1909–1985), arr. Richard Hayman: Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer · 2:37 · Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra · 8.990013 · **20** D William J. Kirkpatrick (1838–1921), arr. Donald Hunt: Away in a manger 3:11 · Worcester Cathedral Choir; Raymond Johnston, organ; Donald Hunt · 8.550589 · **21** Witold Lutosławski (1913–1994): Hurrying to Bethlehem · 0:51 · Polish Radio Chorus, Krakow; Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra (Katowice); Antoni Wit · 8.555994 · **22** Otto Kotilainen (1868–1936): Kun Joulun on (At Christmas time) · 2:16 · Chorus Resonus; Sauli Hannuksela · 8.503109 · **23** Franz Xaver Gruber (1787–1863): Silent Night · 3:05 · Elora Festival Singers; Noel Edison · 8.554179 · **24** Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643–1704): Noël: Vous qui désirez sans fin · 2:23 · Aradia Ensemble; Kevin Mallon · 8.554514 · **25** Traditional, arr. Andrew Carter: A maiden most gentle · 2:53 · Tewkesbury Abbey Choir; Andrew Sackett · 8.553077 · **26** Ralph Vaughan Williams (b. 1872–1958): Folksongs of the Four Seasons – Winter: II. Wassail Song · 2:26 · City of London Choir; Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra; Hilary Davan Wetton · 8.572102 · **27** Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893): The Nutcracker: Russian Dance (Trepak) · 1:08 · Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra; Michael Halász · 8.550050 · **28** Traditional, arr. David Willcocks: Unto us is born a Son · 1:54 · Worcester Cathedral Choir; Raymond Johnston, organ; Donald Hunt · 8.550589 · **29** Traditional, arr. David Willcocks: Ding dong merrily on high · 2:07 · Elora Festival Singers; Noel Edison · 8.554179 · **30** Traditional: Rocking · 1:45 · Worcester Cathedral Choir; Raymond Johnston, organ; Donald Hunt · 8.550589 · **TT 75:46**

Illustration: [Karin Eklund](#)

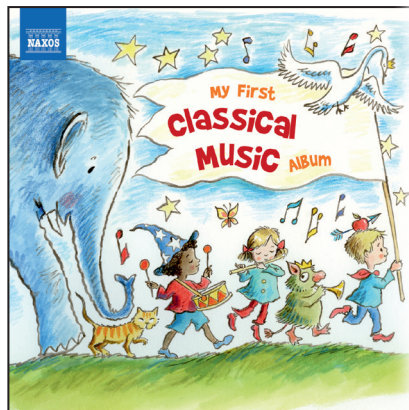
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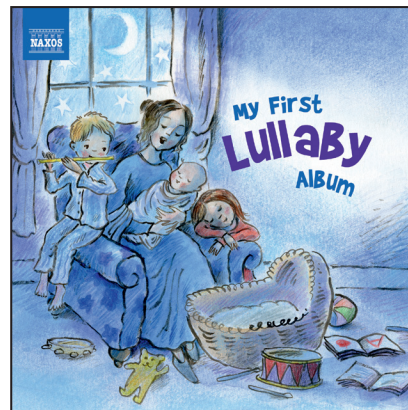
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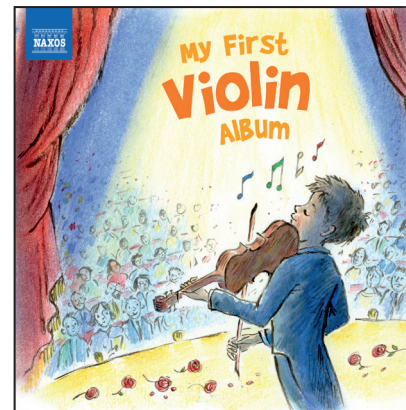
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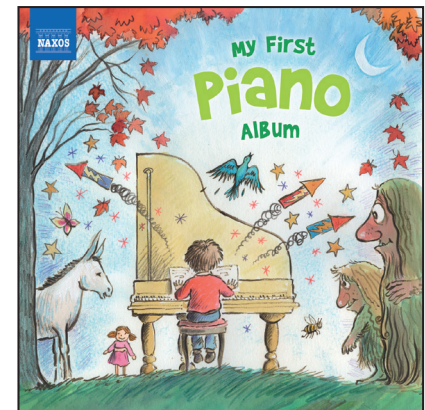
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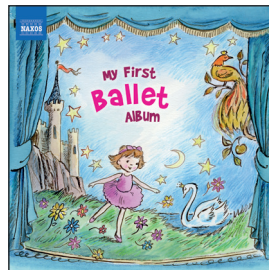
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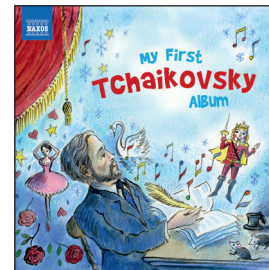
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