

James Galway - Christmas Carol (1986)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 22 December 2019 16:38 -

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1 *Silent Night* 4:07 2 *Shepherd's Pipe Carol* 3:09 3 *Air From Suite No. 3 In D* 3:58 4 *Fantasia On 'I Saw Three Ships'* 3:08 5 *Greensleeves* 3:34 6 *Zither Carol* 2:52 7 *The Holy Boy* 2:43 8 *Patapan* 1:21 9 *Past Three O'Clock* 2:58 10 *Sonfonia From The Christmas Oratorio* 2:53 11 *Ave Maria* 2:42 12 *Chorale From The Christmas Oratorio* 1:38 13 *I Wonder As I Wander* 2:50 14 *Sheep May Safely Graze* 5:46 15 *Jesus Christ The Apple Tree* 3:25 16 *We Wish You A Merry Christmas* 1:35 Royal Philharmonic Orchestra BBC Singers Chapel Choir of King's Scool, Cantebury James Galway - flute/conductor (1986)

James Galway's Christmas Carol is a richly varied collection of traditional, classical and Irish carols, all delivered with grace and style. Although Galway never takes risks, it's for the best, because this music sounds best when it's delivered straight. That's the case here -- there may be no surprises on Christmas Carol, but it delivers exactly what his fans want from a Galway holiday album. ---Stephen Thomas Erlewine, AllMusic Review

Although I'm a fan of the Christmas recordings that Sir David Willcocks and Stephen Cleobury did with the King's College Choir, this little gem of a classical Christmas album has its own unexpected beauties. I discovered this Christmas album in the collection of a family member, and was struck by its transcendent loveliness. It's a joyful, uplifting, and exquisite celebration of Christmas, and specifically the Reason for the Season, and it's a skilful blend of the old and the new. It's a perfect blend of instrumental and vocal, lively and tender moments, and James Galway's flute wraps around you like a rich velvety fur coat.

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The opening track of Silent Night sets the tone of the recording almost immediately. The choir sings it beautifully, accompanied by Galway's obligato descant. Although I would have liked them to sing the original John Freeman Young translation that we all know, it's still a lovely rendition. The choir shines on some of the other tracks, such as John Rutter's famous Shepherd's Pipe Carol and the Czech Zither Carol, but most of the time Galway accompanies them, contrasting the tenderness of What Child Is This and I Wonder as I Wander with the boisterous Past Three A Clock. Elsewhere, Galway really shines in the many solos he plays throughout the recording. His rendition of John Ireland's The Holy Boy is beautiful beyond words and reason. In more upbeat mood the Fantasia on I Saw Three Ships blends the well-known carol with other carols, and one can really hear a certain joie de vivre here. It's as if Galway really enjoyed playing this piece, and I think the listener can soak in the infectious gaiety here. By the time you reach the closing minutes of this album, you feel like you're in good Christmas cheer, after you've soaked in the distinctly old-world charm of this Christmas offering, far away from the cacophony of commercialism that has ravaged the season many times.

In short, a self-recommending Christmas album that can serve as lovely background music to a Christmas party and yet it stands up well to serious listening. I'm convinced it appeals to those who haven't yet grown to love the ethereal, plaintive yet crystal-clear timbre of the flute, and I think it has something to please everyone, in varying moods and style. ---Yi-Peng, amazon.com

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