

Sumi Jo - The Christmas Album (2001)

Written by bluesever

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1. *I Wonder as I Wander* 2. *Bach, JS : Weihnachtsoratorium [Christmas Oratorio] BWV248 : Part 6 "Ich steh an deiner Krippen hier" [Choir]* 3. *Scarlatti : Cantata pastorale per la nascita di Nostro Signore : I Allegro* 4. *Scarlatti : Cantata pastorale per la nascita di Nostro Signore : II "O di Betlemme altera"* 5. *Scarlatti : Cantata pastorale per la nascita di Nostro Signore : III "Dal bel sono, d'una stella"* 6. *Scarlatti : Cantata pastorale per la nascita di Nostro Signore : IV "Preso d'uomo la forma"* 7. *Scarlatti : Cantata pastorale per la nascita di Nostro Signore : V "L'antor d'ogni mio bene"* 8. *Scarlatti : Cantata pastorale per la nascita di Nostro Signore : VI "Fortunati, fortunati pastori!"* 9. *Scarlatti : Cantata pastorale per la nascita di Nostro Signore : VII "Toccò la prima sorte"* 10. *Crüger : "Fröhlich soll mein Herze springen"* 11. *O Holy Night* 12. *Bernhard : Fürchtet euch nicht! : I Sonata* 13. *Bernhard : Fürchtet euch nicht! : II Fürchtet euch nicht!* 14. *Bernhard : Fürchtet euch nicht! : III Sonata* 15. *Bernhard : Fürchtet euch nicht! : IV Denn euch ist heute* 16. *Bernhard : Fürchtet euch nicht! : V Sonata Sumi Jo* 17. *Bernhard : Fürchtet euch nicht! : VI Ehre sei Gott* 18. *Bernhard : Fürchtet euch nicht! : VII Sonata* 19. *Bernhard : Fürchtet Euch Nicht! : VIII Alleluja!* 20. *Mozart : Symphony No.19 in E flat major K132 : II Andante grazioso* 21. *"Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht!" [Silent Night]* 22. *Praetorius : "Es ist ein Ros entsprungen"* 23. *Concerto in E major RV270, 'Il riposo' / '...per il Natale' : I Allegro* 24. *Concerto in E major RV270, 'Il riposo' / '...per il Natale' : II Adagio* 25. *Concerto in E major RV270, 'Il riposo' / '...per il Natale' : III Allegro* 26. *Scheidt : O Jesulein süß* 27. *Mozart : Exsultate, jubilate K165 : I "Exsultate, jubilate"* 28. *Mozart : Exsultate, jubilate K165 : II "Fulget amica dies"* 29. *Mozart : Exsultate, jubilate K165 : III "Tu virginum corona"* 30. *Exsultate, jubilate K165 : IV "Alleluja!"* 31. *Grüber : Silent Night*

Sumi Jo's performances on this record are so splendid that they transcend its rather odd mix of vocal and instrumental combinations, languages, and styles. Using Christmas as its unifying element, the program juxtaposes the familiar and the unknown and is anchored by three cantatas: one by Alessandro Scarlatti, sung in Italian; one by Christoph Bernhard in German; and Mozart's famous "Exultate, jubilate" in Latin. They alternate with songs and chorales for both solo and choir, including the well-known unaccompanied folksong "I wonder as I wander," which opens the program. Bach is represented only by a chorale from his Christmas Oratorio. The selection of the instrumental pieces seems less felicitous. Vivaldi's E major Violin Concerto,

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though associated with Christmas, is not one of his best. The slow movement of an early Mozart Symphony, which is supposed to contain a quote from a German carol, is an even stranger choice; however, it is so beautiful that the incongruity hardly matters. Inevitably, the record includes that most popular of all Christmas songs, "Silent Night," not once but twice: first in German with a fine contralto in her only appearance and an orchestral accompaniment straight out of the movies, and to close the program, in English with violin and fortepiano. Both versions use a melody substantially different from the familiar one. Sumi Jo's crystal-clear, perfectly focused voice sheds a silvery shimmer over everything she touches. Her vibrato is a little too narrow, but the coloratura is impeccable, the phrasing natural. She radiates an infectious joy in her own singing and the music, whether simple or sophisticated, that should light up any Christmas celebration. The accompanying forces are excellent. ---Edith Eisler, Editorial Reviews

Sumi Jo has produced a stunning holiday album, filled with gorgeous singing of many styles. It isn't just an album of her singing, though; there are wonderful orchestral and choral selections too, all of which sparkle with perfection. This is a great addition to my Christmas music collection, and another winner from Sumi Jo. --- George G. Morgan "Rabid Genealogist" (Florida)

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