

NOTES FROM THE COMPOSER

Carols of Light

Duration: ca. 8 minutes

Dedicated to Linda Holzer, pianist and professor, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

The Christmas season is a time of lights—ranging from holiday decorations to candles lit in church, and most, profoundly, to the Holy Light shining above the Nativity. The universal image has inspired the *Carols of Light*.

The music opens with high, sparkling patterns described as *rays of light*. During this section, it is suggested that candles (or a small, battery light) be lit and placed near the front of the church, or on top of the piano.

The first carol, *The Holly and the Ivy*, is delicate and flowing. A favorite line from the lyrics inspires the music: *The rising of the sun, and the running of the deer*. Scales rise throughout. And the final, high notes sound as a single star.

The star guides *We Three Kings*, as the Magi move quietly with reverence beneath the mystery of the starlight. Star patterns (high *arpeggios*) are often inserted into the carol melody. *Guide us to thy perfect light*. This movement ends with a single star *tremolo*.

Bring a Torch, Jeannette, Isabella bears the *light* reference in its title. The stable is dark, and the *good folk of the village* want to see The Child! A favorite line from these lyrics is *Hush! hush! see how fast he slumbers!* The musical phrases are played very delicately and quietly so as to not awaken Baby Jesus! [The astute listener may hear hints of *Away in a Manger*. This carol, with its Nativity setting and focus on the sleeping Child, was a natural companion.]

At the end, candlelight sparkles as the music rises to the heights. The little rolled chord in the last measure may be a time when the candles are extinguished.

Folk Carols for Christmas

Duration: ca. 10 minutes

These folk carols (songs) are known for their starkly beautiful melodies and harmonies—simple, yet moving. In creating new piano adaptations, the composer has enjoyed revisiting the original tunes, exploring a few new trails of thought.

The *Cherry Tree Carol* is a ballad—a song of many verses telling a story. This piano adaptation allows for the steady flow from one verse to the next. The two opening verses are followed by a brief middle section, marked *delicately*, inspired by the small cherries which Mary gathers. This music grows in intensity in telling of Jesus' birth. And then, with sudden simplicity, the opening theme returns quietly as an ending.

Jesus, Jesus, Rest Your Head is a gentle lullaby with a refrain in chordal, hymn style. These refrains alternate with verses and interludes which are more rhythmic and freeflowing in character. Tenderness is an essential quality throughout.

Go Tell it on the Mountain is an exuberant song which this arrangement attempts to control in a recitative-style opening section. But the music erupts into an energetic refrain filled with rapid patterns marked *suggestive of guitar-picking style*.

The opening lyrics for this last song are *I wonder as I wander, out under the sky*. And it is this image of a solitary soul out walking at night beneath the stars that inspires this arrangement. Octaves in the high range of the keyboard are marked *as stars*. These stars dance lightly above the melody. A freely-notated middle section allow the stars to sparkle above a gentle *earth* underpinning. The sky fills with stars, and then the music quiets to the end. One lone star shines.

Folk Carols for Christmas is also available as string arrangements
from Galaxy Music Corporation:

String Quartet	1.3616
String Orchestra	1.3615

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The Holly and the Ivy

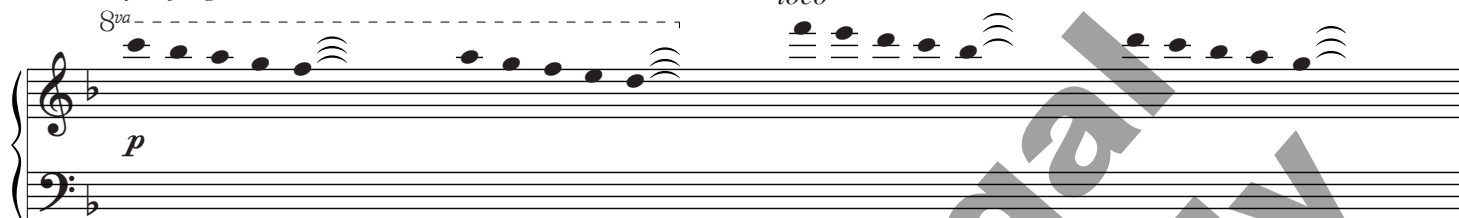
Gwyneth Walker

Candles or lamps may be placed at the front of the church or on the piano.

Introduction: *free tempo*

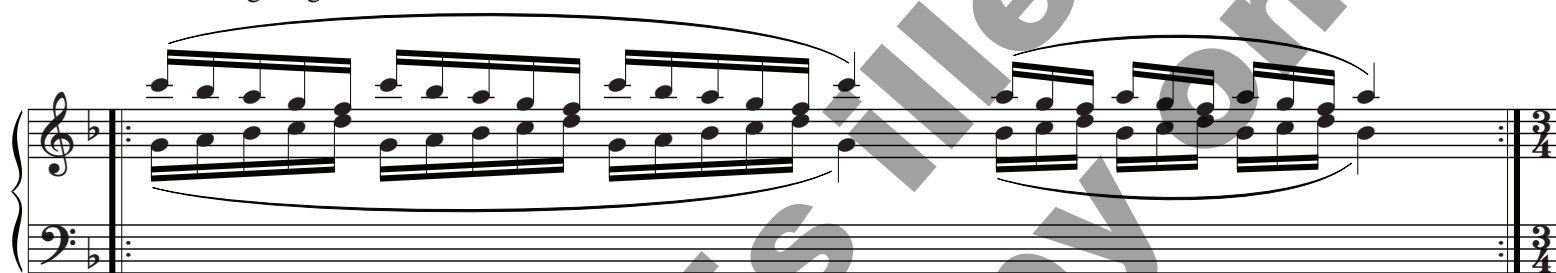
"rays of light"

loco



with much pedal

Time for lighting candles



A At a graceful tempo ♩ = 160



with pedal



Tune: *THE HOLLY AND THE IVY*, Traditional English carol (PD).

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We Three Kings

Gwyneth Walker

Moderate tempo ♩ = 120

"the star – mystery and reverence"

8va

p

with pedal

(8va)

8

(8va)

15

loco

Red.

21

A

(Red.)

with pedal

Red.

27

(Red.)

Tune: *KINGS OF ORIENT*, John Henry Hopkins Jr., 1820–1891, and written in 1857 (PD).

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Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella

Gwyneth Walker

Gently flowing ♩ = 66

lightly, as a single candle glowing in the dark

p

with slight pedal

mf warmly

with more pedal

A

delicately

B

p

mf

C

very quietly, hushed, so as not to awaken Baby Jesus

p

Tune: *BRING A TORCH*, Traditional French carol (PD).

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Cherry Tree Carol

Gwyneth Walker

Moderate tempo ♩ = 120

p gently

Red. *Red.* *simile*

6

11

16

21 **A** *p*

mf

mf

mf

Tune: *CHERRY TREE CAROL*, Traditional carol (PD).

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Jesus, Jesus, Rest Your Head

Gwyneth Walker

At a peaceful tempo ♩ = 108

p very gently

slight pedal ad lib.

6

10

poco rit.

A Slightly faster ♩ = 120
with rhythmic energy

14

mf

(p)

18

Tune: *REST YOUR HEAD*, Appalachian folk melody (PD).

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Go Tell It on the Mountain

Gwyneth Walker

Relaxed tempo ♩ = 108

as an introduction

tr

mf

ped. ad lib.

Red.

Red.

rit.

Start slowly and accel.

f *p playfully*

A Lively ♩ = 120

(accel.)

f

suggestive of a "guitar-picking" style

Tune: *GO TELL IT*, African American spiritual (PD).

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I Wonder as I Wander

(out under the sky)

Gwyneth Walker

Moderate tempo ♩ = 108

as stars

8va -

Ped. _____

with pedal

Tune: *I WONDER AS I WANDER*, Appalachian folk melody (PD).

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