

This Christmas season, I invite you to reflect on the Savior Jesus Christ and His life. I hope that these songs celebrating His birth will remind you of His love; that they will increase your faith in Him and His power and grace; that they inspire you to love one another and find ways to serve His children; and in this way, I hope these songs and this message will encourage you on your journey to follow in His path.

With love,

Jordan

### Day 1: Joy to the World

This rendition of Joy to the World was arranged by James Koerts -- <http://koertsmusic.com>

Joy to the World is a song written hundreds of years ago -- so long ago that we are not completely sure who the composer is. (The lyricist is Isaac Watts.) Many people attribute the music to George Frederic Handel, because pieces of the music resemble parts of the Messiah oratorio, but there is no autographed score nor other concrete evidence to prove that he wrote the song.

The song focuses on the praise and joy that will occur when the Christ returns again. Despite the message being written about the Second Coming, and the composer being unknown, Joy to the World is now one of the most popular Christmas hymns. When I play this song, I play it as a praise, and with the hope that Christmas time brings.

### Day 2: Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella

This rendition of "Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella" was arranged by Sally DeFord -- <http://defordmusic.com>

This song is a French carol that depicts a scene of local villagers quietly coming to the stable to see the Christ child. The song invites not only the villagers in the scenario, but also each of us today, to come unto the Savior humbly and let Him take our burdens. Matthew 11:28-30 records Jesus as saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (King James version). To me, this song reflects the call to let Christ, as well as the family and friends in our lives, give us help, and let people serve us to help make our burdens lighter.

### Day 3: O Holy Night

This rendition of "O Holy Night" was arranged by Jim Brickman -- <http://www.jimbrickman.com>

"O Holy Night" was also originally written in French. The song is well known for its stunning vocal line and is often used to showcase the musical talent of its performer(s). In fact, its first performance was by an opera singer! By playing a simple version on the piano, I hope this rendition reminds you less of grand vocal performances and more of the meaning of the song. This song always reminds me that on many Christmas nights, over the years and around the world, Christmas is a time of peace and goodwill.

#### Day 4: Angels We Have Heard On High

This rendition of "Angels We Have Heard On High" was arranged by Jordan Barlow in 2017.

The composer, lyricist, and even translator of the carol to the English language, are all unknown to the world. In this version that I created, I imagine the angels in the first verse and chorus singly softly and sweetly to the babe in the manger. In the second verse and chorus, the most difficult passage of the piece technically, I play it as the angels singing with all their might to the shepherds that night. The final verse is played with grand, broad notes inviting us all strongly to seek the Christ child, and the final chorus is played as the song winds down. "Come, adore on bended knee Christ, the Lord, the newborn King."

#### Day 5: Still, Still, Still

This rendition of "Still, Still, Still" was arranged by Cate Todd.

This song is both a carol and lullaby that originated in Austria. It tells the story of the quiet and peaceful night as Mary sings the baby Jesus to sleep. This particular arrangement is a duet for violin or flute with piano, but I have recorded the solo part on piano overlaying the recording of the accompaniment.

#### Day 6: What Child is This?/Carol of the Bells

This medley was created and arranged by Jim Brickman – <http://jimbrickman.com>

This blend of Christmas music brings together traditions of different countries and cultures, a symbol that Christmas is a time of coming together, and that there are people feeling the Christmas spirit all over the world. "What Child Is This?" was written by an Englishman and the poem was set to the music called "Greensleeves", a traditional English folk tune. What we know as "Carol of the Bells" is actually a Ukrainian folk carol.

#### Day 7: It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year

This rendition of "It's the Most Wonderful Time" was arranged by Tom Roed.

For many people, Christmastime can be hard. For some, the holidays bring reminders of loved ones lost or sicknesses being endured. I hope that this song brings hope to them, rather than being a stinging reminder that Christmas may not necessarily be the "happiest" time. For my family, Christmastime always brings the reminder of my dad, who passed away two days after Christmas 1992. He got sick on Christmas Day and quickly worsened. Christmas is always a time that reminds us of a big loss in our family. But, at the same time, Christmas has always been a joyful and wonderful time for our family. If this Christmas is difficult for you, know that you are not alone.

### Day 8: The First Noel

This rendition of "The First Noel" was arranged by Sally DeFord (<http://defordmusic.com>)

The word "noel" comes from a Latin word meaning "birthday". Thus, the First Noel is the birthday of the Savior. The original version of The First Noel (an English carol published in 1833) had nine stanzas, telling the Christmas story from the perspectives of the shepherds and the wise men (the verses usually sung today are the first two, about the shepherds).

### Day 9: Away in a Manger

This rendition was arranged by Cate Todd and Amy Osmond.

This popular Christmas carol was long attributed to Martin Luther, but it is now generally accepted that the piece is of American origin. The words have been set to many different melodies, and this particular arrangement uses two of those melodies.

### Day 10: Once in Royal David's City

This rendition was arranged by Sally DeFord – <http://www.defordmusic.com>

One of the lesser known Christmas carols, it is rarely heard in popular music or on the radio. It is heard sometimes in churches, with a place in some church hymnbooks. I love this Christmas carol. Its lyrics are simple and straightforward, telling the Christmas story in almost child-like form. The music fits the lyrics perfectly, and this arrangement adds beautiful harmonies to the basic melody of the hymn.

This is the simple story of a child born to Mary and Joseph in Royal David's City – Bethlehem.

### Day 11: Silent Night

This rendition of "Silent Night" was arranged by William Joseph – <http://william-joseph.com>

Silent Night is probably the most popular of Christmas carols. Of the six collections of Christmas piano solo music in my library, Silent Night is the only Christmas song featured in all six. It seems every publisher and every arranger who does Christmas music cannot resist the urge to do their own version of Silent Night – and rightly so! Its melody is captivating and memorable, and the lyrics unmatched in their simple yet powerful message.

### Day 12: I Saw Three Ships

This rendition of "I Saw Three Ships" was arranged by Jon Schmidt (of "The Piano Guys" fame).

After the peaceful rendition of Silent Night on Christmas Eve, this triumphant carol finalizes our 12 Days of Christmas. This song proclaims that on Christmas Day in the morning, three (symbolic) "ships" are bringing to us the greatest gift of all time. This joyous arrangement is the perfect finale to the mix of praise, reflection, and joy felt in the various Christmas carols we sing and hear each year at Christmastime.