

Once in Royal David's City (Processional)

Welcome

Prayer

Washington Irving:

But is old, old, good old Christmas gone? Nothing but the hair of his gray old head and beard left? Well, I will have that, seeing that I cannot have more of him. Hue and Cry after Christmas!

O, Come All Ye Faithful - Choir

In the Bleak Midwinter - Men

Washington Irving:

There is something in the very season of the year that gives a charm to the festivity of Christmas. In the depth of winter, when Nature lies despoiled of every charm and wrapped in her shroud of sheeted snow, we turn for our gratification to the old festivals of Christmas, which awakens the strongest and most heartfelt association. There is a tone of solemn and sacred feeling that blends with our conviviality and lifts the spirit to a state of hallowed and elevated enjoyment.

Narrator:

In the centuries following the birth of Christ, Christmas came to be celebrated joyously, even raucously--perhaps too raucously. In the early 17th century Christmas was outlawed, and any citizen caught celebrating was fined 5 shillings. Customs, traditions, games, and joy associated with the holiday eventually dwindled and seemed to be forgotten.

Washington Irving:

Puritans made such a fierce assault upon the ceremonies of poor old Christmas that it was driven out of the land by proclamation of the Parliament."

Narrator:

Then in 1819 Washington Irving wrote *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, gent.* which included a series of stories about the celebration of Christmas in an English manor house. The images Irving painted of family, home, hearth, and the joy of ancient Christmas customs captured the imagination of the American public. In many ways, Mr. Irving invented the Christmas season as we know it. His words inspired the annual transformation of the dreary winter solstice into the celebration of light we now love so well.

Washington Irving:

I feel the influence of the season beaming into my soul from the happy looks of those around me. Surely happiness is reflective, like the light of heaven, and every countenance, bright with smiles and glowing with innocent enjoyment, is a mirror transmitting to others the rays of a supreme and ever-shining benevolence.

Welcome the Child of Light - Choir

Silent Night - Strings only

Washington Irving:

Our thoughts are more concentrated; our friendly sympathies more aroused. We feel more sensibly the charm of each other's society, and are brought more closely together by dependence on each other for enjoyment. Heart calleth unto heart, and we draw our pleasures from the deep wells of loving-kindness which lie in the quiet recesses of our bosoms, and which, when resorted to, furnish forth the pure element of domestic felicity.

Christ is Born in the Evening – Choir with strings

One Sweet Little Baby - Solo

Washington Irving:

While I lay musing on my pillow I heard the sound of little feet pattering outside the door, and a whispering consultation. Presently a choir of small voices chanted forth an old Christmas carol, the burden of which was—Rejoice, our Savior he was born On Christmas Day in the Morning.

Run to the Manger (spiritual) - Choir

Glory to God in the Highest Heaven (spiritual). Choir

(Note: wait until flute soloist is in position)

This festival which commemorates the announcement of the religion of peace and love has been made the season for the gathering together of family connections and drawing closer again those hands of kindred hearts which the cares and pleasures and sorrows of the world are continually operating to cast loose; of calling back the children of a family who have launched forth in life and wandered widely asunder, once more to assemble about the paternal hearth, that rallying place of the affections, there to grow young and loving again among the endearing mementos of childhood.

On This Still, Silent Night - Women

The First Noel/Pachelbel Canon. Choir with Strings

Washington Irving:

The services of the Church about this season are extremely tender and inspiring. They dwell on the beautiful story of the origin of our faith, and the pastoral scenes that accompanied its announcement. They gradually increase in fervor and pathos during the season of Advent, until they break forth in full jubilee on the morning that brought peace and good-will to men.

Lo, How a Rose Ere Blooming - Solo

Washington Irving:

Amidst the general call to happiness, the bustle of the spirits, and stir of the affections which prevail at this period what bosom can remain insensible? It is, indeed, the season of regenerated feelings—the season for kindling not merely the fire of hospitality in the hall, but the genial flame of charity in the heart.

Masters in this Hall - Choir

I saw three ships Choir with Strings

Washington Irving:

I heard blessings uttered by several of the poor, which convinced me that, in the midst of his enjoyments, the worthy old cavalier had not forgotten the true Christmas virtue of charity. How easy it is for one benevolent being to diffuse pleasure around him! and how truly is a kind heart a fountain of gladness, making everything in its vicinity to freshen into smiles.

Narrator:

Mr. Irving saw Christmas, not merely as an indulgence, but as a spiritual necessity. Benevolence and kindness were the hallmarks that brought light into an otherwise dreary season. Like candles that shine in the night our acts of charity can bring joy and give hope to those who are in darkness. This year begins the annual “Light Up Georgia with Kindness” initiative that will celebrate those acts of charity. At 5pm on December 24th residents are asked to display special luminaries in front of their homes, each representing a personal act of kindness or charity given or received during the season. To support that initiative, we invite each family to take one of the outside “Light Up Kindness” bags home with them tonight. You also will be given two more bags to give to both of your neighbors to encourage their support as well. As our community is lined with what is hoped to be an unbroken chain of glowing white lanterns, they will be a reminder to all that Charity is as Mr. Irving said, the true virtue of Christmas.

Washington Irving:

He who can turn churlishly away from contemplating the felicity of his fellow beings, and can sit down darkling and repining in his loneliness when all around is joyful, maybe have his moment of strong excitement and selfish gratification, but he wants the genial and social sympathies which constitute the charm of a merry Christmas.

Wishes and Candles - Choir

Washington Irving:

Now Christmas is come,
Let us beat up the drum,
And call all our neighbors together;
And when they appear,
Let us make them such cheer,
As will keep out the wind and the weather

Narrator:

Thanks to all our friends and neighbors who have come this evening to listen to us beat the drum. We certainly hope we have cheered you and kept the wind and weather at bay as we celebrate the light of this season -- Indeed to dwell on the beautiful origin of our faith and honor the birth of him who is truly the light of world. We think Mr. Irving would be well pleased

Washington Irving:

I do not know a grander effect of music on the moral feelings than to hear the full choir and the pealing organ performing a Christmas anthem in a cathedral and fill every part of the vast pile with triumphant harmony.

Hark, the Herald Angels Sing Organ

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