



Carillon Book Club

◆
December 2024



Welcome to the third CSA Carillon Book Club: a special Christmas edition!

Christmas is almost upon us, and I'm sure we will all be playing some carols and spreading the festive cheer.

Thanks to all the participants who contributed to this Book Club and introduced these pieces.

It's great to feature some lesser-known carols, especially those with an Australian connection.

Selections from collections of carillon music:

Music for Christmas	edited by Beverly Buchanan
Christmas Carols IV	arranged by Ronald Barnes
Hymn Preludes for the Kirk	composed by Geert D'hollander
Swinging Christmas Time	arranged by Mathieu Polak and Georg Wagner
Music for Christmas Time	Royal Carillon School 'Jef Denyn'

Other carols and pieces:

Australian Xmas Carol Medley	William James and John Wheeler arranged by Julie Wright
Australian Carols and Others	William James and John Wheeler
Angel Chorus, Glory to God Prepare thyself Zion	G F Handel, J S Bach arranged by Ted Grantham
Mary's Boy Child, Jesus Christ	Jester Hairston
Nativity Triptych	Ronald Barnes

Collections



Selections from “Music for Christmas” – edited by Beverly Buchanan

Let all Mortal Flesh Keep Silent (Picardy) – arranged by Ronald Barnes

Variations on a French Noël – arranged by Todd Fair

Paraphrase on ‘O Come, O Come, Emmanuel’ (Veni Emmanuel) – arranged by
Albert C. Gerken

A picnic during a carillon recital on Christmas Eve has become, until Covid, a tradition amongst many Canberra families. This started sometime, I believe, in the 1980’s by Suzanne Magassy with myself taking over for many years from the 2000s until Covid. I play Christmas music right throughout Advent up to Epiphany (6th January -12th day of Christmas) so I do have a reasonably sized repertoire.

I especially love playing French noëls; they sound very Christmassy (as they should, seeing they are French carols) without being the recognisable carols that we are more familiar with. They can be played any time during that Advent/Christmas period to give us relief from the bombardment of non-stop Christmas carols in supermarkets. All of my chosen pieces are easy to play and Beverly Buchanan’s book is for a 3-octave carillon.

Astrid Bowler

There should be a copy of this in the Canberra tower library but I think it may still be out on loan. I have my own copy but if anybody would like me to scan and send something, that is fine by me.

[Note from Daniel: Buy from <https://www.gcna.org/music-store#!/PDF-Music-for-Christmas/p/276344099>]



Selections from “Christmas Carols IV” – arranged by Ronald Barnes

Carol of the Bells (Shtedrik) –
Mykola Dmitrovich Leontovich
Come All Ye Shepherds –
Traditional Bohemian Carol

These are two more Christmas pieces I love playing. They are both from a book of Christmas Carols arranged by Ronald Barnes. There is no copy of this in the Canberra Library but I own a rather battered copy and am happy to scan and send.

Astrid Bowler

Selections from “Hymn Preludes for the Kirk” – composed by Geert D’hollander

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
O Come, All Ye Faithful

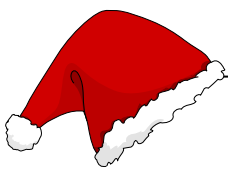
Anything by Geert D’hollander is a gem, and this set of preludes is no different. However, these are not mere Christmas carols, but serious, well-written and technically (expressively?) challenging pieces, in the vein of the Chorale Preludes by Bach, Buxtehude and Brahms. I don’t think I play them very well, but they really warrant a serious study and give me, at least, a sense of accomplishment.

Daniel Guo

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Selections from “Swinging Christmas Time” – arranged by Mathieu Polak and Georg Wagner

Wendy: Our good friend Mathieu Polak is so very generous with his arrangements, which are openly accessible on his website <https://www.mathieudanielpolak.com/library>. I have two of his arrangements in my set: O Tannenbaum and Stille Nacht. I love these because he has arranged them with a side theme from Chopin. It adds a point of difference to the well known carols, sit very nicely on the instrument and present a lovely variety in the set.

Peter: It is a collection of 25 approachable arrangements including many mainstream popular Christmas pieces (it's the most wonderful time of the year, I'm dreaming of a white Christmas), some old favourites (Felix Navidad, Carol of the drum) and some Christmas traditionals (oh Christmas tree, silent night). The pieces are arranged for a 3.5 octave instrument which means if you plan to travel overseas at Christmas time and want to play some carillon music while you are there, this is highly transferable music.

Wendy Murphy and Peter Bray

Free PDF at
<https://beiaardcentrum.com/en/kerstmis/1684--pdf-swinging-christmas-time.html>

Selections from “Music for Christmas Time” – Royal Carillon School 'Jef Denyn'

My first recommendation comes from a free pdf that was shared by the Royal Carillon School 'Jef Denyn' 'Music for Christmas Time' which was a student project 2010-2011.

There are 22 arrangements in this publication and a couple have become my Christmas staples as they are very effective on the carillon, and also time effective in brushing up for seasonal playing. I have at least 6 arrangements in my set because of the accessibility, but will just showcase one for the book club:

Les anges dans nos campagnes
(Angels from the Realms of Glory) –
arranged by Francois Roten

I always open with this piece as it has a nice fanfare opening that sets a joyous scene for a Christmas set. The variations are lovely and it is just a really nice arrangement.

Wendy Murphy

Free PDF at
<https://beiaardschool.mechelen.be/muziek-voor-kersttijd-volledige-pdf>

Other carols and pieces



Australian Xmas Carol Medley – arranged by Julie Wright

Wendy: There are arrangements of the well known William G James/John Wheeler Australian Christmas Carols by Ronald Barnes also available, but Julie's medley is very accessible and a delight to play.

Julie: I always like to do some Australian Christmas carols on the carillon. I learnt these at school and have always enjoyed them. Sadly these days they are usually missing in action from most Christmas concerts and carol services. They were written by William James and John Wheeler in the 1940s. Both men worked for the ABC. James was a pianist, composer and a pioneer of music broadcasting in Australia. He was in fact the first director of music for the ABC, a position he held from 1931 till his retirement in 1957.

The men aimed to use traditional Christmas themes in an Australian context, often with outback settings. There are 15 carols in all, published in 3 sets of 5 pieces. The first two sets are the best known. I like to make a medley of The three drovers, Christmas Day (the north wind is tossing the leaves), Silver Stars and Christmas Bush for his Adorning. I'm happy to share my arrangements for carillon if anyone is interested.

Wendy Murphy and Julie Wright

Australian Carols and Others

I love the Australian Carols (John Wheeler and William G James):

- The North Wind
- The Silver Stars are in the Sky (my favourite)
- Carol of the Birds
- The three drovers
- Christmas bush for his adorning

I also like 'O Holy Night', after hearing it sung on a Salvation Army fundraising compilation. Can't remember who, but they were in a band/rockstar and it was so unexpected.

This is a traditional Dutch one that I heard in the Netherlands many years ago and it stayed with me: De Herdertjes lagen bij nachte (The Shepherds Lay At Night) <https://www.bethsnotesplus.com/2019/12/de-herdertjes-lagen-bij-nachte.html>

Yvette Middleton



J S Bach:
Prepare thyself Zion,
in Christmas oratorio

Mary's Boy Child,
Jesus Christ –
Jester Hairston

G F Handel: Angel Chorus,
Glory to God,
in Messiah

My own arrangements.

Ted Grantham

My submission of this piece does not fit the criteria, as there isn't an arrangement as such, and I just play the piece from the piano score. However, as it is based on Calypso music, I think that the audience would appreciate this as Christmas Carillon music. Moreover, the words, though simple, conveys the heart of the Christian Gospel, & Christians would relate to that.

Lucy Koe

Nativity Triptych – composed by Ronald Barnes

I find the music of Ronald Barnes very enjoyable to play, because it always fits comfortably under the hands and suits the USYD carillon in terms of texture and sonority. Perhaps it is because all three carillonneur positions he held – Kansas, Washington, Berkeley – also have Taylor bells.

The first movement, Pastorale, is very accessible, lovely, shows off our top bells, and you only play the same two pedal notes most of the time – an excellent starting piece for a non-organist like me. II: Gloria is exuberant and has a technically difficult double pedal ostinato (anyone else have experiences with it?), and III: Cradle Song is an arrangement of the Australian carol “The Day that Christ was Born on” by William James and John Wheeler.

Daniel Guo

Buy from https://americancarillonmusiceditions.com/index.php?main_page=product_book_info&products_id=69



Thank you for reading!

We hope to hear from you for our next issue!

Let us know if you do end up learning and playing one of these pieces, and if you have any suggestions for the next Book Club!