

Simply Carols

Narration

Narrations may be performed by one person throughout, one person per narration, or one person per paragraph within each narration.



Sing We Now of Christmas / He Is Born **Traditional French Carols**

At Christmas time, everyone loves to hear the wonderful seasonal carols. One of the special joys of these songs is their rich history. Many are very old and teach us about holiday traditions in countries around the world.

In the French countryside in the early 16th century, many people lived and worked much as their ancestors had in the first century A.D. They identified with the shepherds and other common folk of the Christmas story, and their carols reflect this kinship.

One of the best-known French carols is the 16th-century song *He Is Born, or Il Est Né*. This song originated in the region of Provence and encourages people to celebrate the birth of the divine child with singing and the playing of flute and drum.

Sing We Now of Christmas is even older than *He Is Born*. Both of the words in its French title, *Noël Nouvelet*, refer to “news” or “newness.” In the late 15th century, this carol was sung for New Year’s celebrations. Eventually, Noël became the French word for “Christmas,” and this carol became a Christmas song that was translated into English in the 17th century.



The First Nowell / What Child Is This? **Traditional English Carols**

England has given us many musical treasures, including *The First Nowell*. Possibly dating back to the 13th century, it was first published in an English carol book in 1823. Like the French, the English referred to Christmas as “Nowell.” The lyrics tell the story of the shepherds and the wise men who, though living in different countries, saw the light of the same star, heralding the birth of Jesus.

Greensleeves was such a popular 16th-century English folk tune that Queen Elizabeth I danced to it, and Shakespeare mentioned it twice in his play *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. In 1865, William Dix wrote a Christmas poem, *What Child Is This?*, after suffering from a long illness. His text was set to the *Greensleeves* melody, and this carol has become an enduring Christmas favorite.



The Wexford Carol / The Snow Lay on the Ground **Traditional Irish Carols**

The Wexford Carol dates to the 12th century and comes from a county of the same name in Ireland. Over the years, the carol acquired many different verses of English and Irish origins, but all of them tell the story of the birth of the “princely babe” on Christmas morn. Like many Irish carols, this song contains an interesting mix of major and minor modes.

The Snow Lay on the Ground is an Irish carol of unknown origins. Its lilting refrain includes a Latin text, *Venite adoremus Dominum*, which means, “O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.” Although this Irish carol tune is the most popular melody, the text has been set to new melodies by numerous composers, including the famous 19th-century Norwegian composer, Edvard Grieg.

Sing We Now of Christmas / He Is Born

Traditional French Carols

Unison or Two-part

② Performance

⑬ Accompaniment

Arranged by
Ruth Elaine Schram

Joyfully ♩ = ca. 100

mf

4 Unison

mf

Sing we now of Christ - mas, No - el__ sing we here.

7

Hear our grate - ful prais - es to the__ Babe so dear.

6 Part I (melody)

9 *(mf)*

Sing we No - el, the King is born, No - el!

Part II (optional) *(mf)*

No - el, No - el!

This system contains two vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The first vocal staff (Part I) has a melody starting on a whole note 'S' and moving through 'i', 'n', 'g', 'w', 'e', 'N', 'o', 'e', 'l', 't', 'h', 'e', 'K', 'i', 'n', 'g', 'i', 's', 'b', 'o', 'r', 'n', 'N', 'o', 'e', 'l'. The second vocal staff (Part II) is optional and starts with a whole rest, then a half note 'N', a half note 'o', a whole note 'e', a whole note 'l', a whole rest, a half note 'N', a half note 'o', a whole note 'e', and a whole note 'l'. The piano accompaniment consists of a right-hand part with chords and a left-hand part with a simple bass line.

11

Sing we now of Christ - mas, No - el__ sing we here.

Sing we now of Christ - mas, No - el__ sing we here.

This system contains two vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The first vocal staff (Part I) has a melody starting on a whole note 'S', followed by quarter notes 'i', 'n', 'g', 'w', 'e', 'n', 'o', 'w', 'o', 'f', 'C', 'h', 'r', 'i', 's', 't', 'm', 'a', 's', a half note 'N', a half note 'o', a whole note 'e', a whole note 'l', a quarter rest, a quarter note 's', a quarter note 'i', a quarter note 'n', a quarter note 'g', a quarter note 'w', a quarter note 'e', and a whole note 'h', 'e', 'r', 'e'. The second vocal staff (Part II) has the same melody. The piano accompaniment features a right-hand part with chords and a left-hand part with a simple bass line.

13

Unison (opt. Part I) *mf*

He is born, the di -

mp *mf*

This system contains two vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The first vocal staff (Unison) has a whole rest, followed by a half note 'H', a half note 'e', a quarter note 'i', a quarter note 's', a quarter note 'b', a quarter note 'o', a quarter note 'r', a quarter note 'n', a quarter note 't', a quarter note 'h', a quarter note 'e', a quarter note 'd', and a quarter note 'i'. The piano accompaniment features a right-hand part with chords and a left-hand part with a simple bass line.

16

vine Christ Child, play the__ o - boe and bag - pipes mer - ri - ly.

This system contains two vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The first vocal staff (Part I) has a whole note 'v', a quarter note 'i', a quarter note 'n', a quarter note 'e', a quarter note 'C', a quarter note 'h', a quarter note 'r', a quarter note 'i', a quarter note 's', a quarter note 't', a quarter note 'C', a quarter note 'h', a quarter note 'i', a quarter note 'l', a quarter note 'd', a quarter note 'p', a quarter note 'l', a quarter note 'a', a quarter note 'y', a quarter note 't', a quarter note 'h', a quarter note 'e', a quarter note 'o', a quarter note 'b', a quarter note 'o', a quarter note 'e', a quarter note 'a', a quarter note 'n', a quarter note 'd', a quarter note 'b', a quarter note 'a', a quarter note 'g', a quarter note 'p', a quarter note 'i', a quarter note 'p', a quarter note 'e', a quarter note 's', a quarter note 'm', a quarter note 'e', a quarter note 'r', a quarter note 'r', a quarter note 'i', a quarter note 'l', and a whole note 'y'. The piano accompaniment features a right-hand part with chords and a left-hand part with a simple bass line.

19

(mf)

He is born, the di - vine Christ Child,

22

sing we all of the Sav - ior mild.

Part I (melody)

25

mp

O how love - ly, O how pure is this pre - cious

Part II (optional)

mp

O how love - ly, O how pure is this pre - cious

28

Child from heav - en. O how love - ly,

Child from heav - en. O how love - ly,

O how pure; gra - cious gift to hu - man - kind.

O how pure; gra - cious gift to hu - man - kind.

Unison (opt. Part I)

mf
He is born, the di -

mf

vine Christ Child, play the o - boe and bag - pipes mer - ri - ly.

(opt. Part II)

mf
He is born, the di - vine Christ Child,