

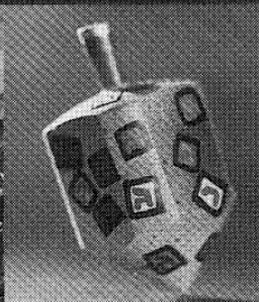
The United States Air Force Band

Washington, D.C.

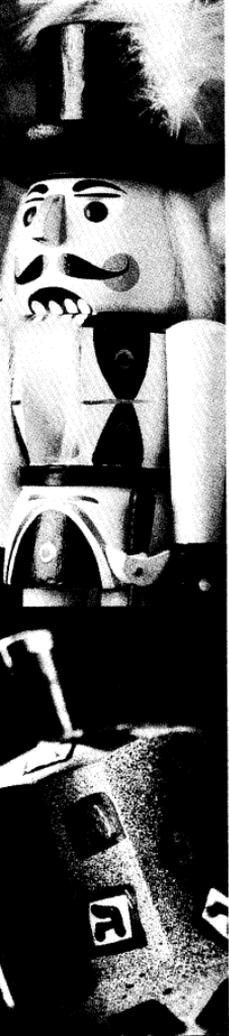
Colonel Lowell E. Graham, Commander/Conductor



Wintertime



*Seasonal Samplings—
Old & New*



No time of year is more magical than the holiday season. Though the air grows frosty, our hearts stay warm, and an unmistakable feeling of rejoicing and reflection envelops the world. This special atmosphere permeates many aspects of our lives, but none more keenly than our seasonal music. As this festive mood is set by Master Sergeant Larry MacTaggart's **A Winter Prelude**, the men and women of **The United States Air Force Band** would like to invite you on a musical journey. Please join us as we travel through the ages, sampling both traditional holiday fare and more than 20 centuries of music and imagery that all are bound by a common season, **Wintertime**.

We embark on our journey through wintertime by returning to the foundations of Western music. Early Christian monks laid groundwork by intoning their liturgical texts in a unison chant. They later devised a method of musical notation to preserve their melodies for others to learn and build upon. **Puer Natus Est Nobis**, which dates back to the fourth century, was used as an introit for Christmas Mass, and has remained a staple of the mass to this day.

We then take a quantum leap forward from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, and encounter two more examples of early Christmas music. **The Lute Carol**¹ is a beautiful English lullaby that can be traced back to the 1600s. While no one is quite certain about the exact origins of the jubilant **Gaudete**, we do know that it recently has become a holiday favorite, thanks in large part to the popular British vocal group, The King's Singers.

Though he wrote more than 400 concertos, the set of solo violin works titled *The Four Seasons* clearly is Italian composer Antonio Vivaldi's most enduring masterpiece. Each movement takes inspiration from a sonnet that was written by the composer himself. When *The Four Seasons* was first published in 1725, passages in the score were marked to correlate with each poetic verse. Vivaldi's sonnets describe each season in human terms, illustrating one's feelings and actions throughout the year; **Winter**, with its icy imagery, is no exception:

Winter

To shiver frozen mid the frosty snow
in unrelenting winds that bite and sting,
to stamp one's icy feet, run to and fro,
one's teeth for bitter chill a-chattering;
To muse contentedly beside the hearth
while those outside are drenched by pouring rain;
with cautious step to tread the icy path
and try to keep one's feet with might and main;
To turn abruptly, slip, crash on the ground
and, rising, hasten on across the ice
until it cracks and splinters all around;
To hear the winds burst with ferocious might
their prison gates and clash with marital sound—
this is the winter, such are its delights.

While Vivaldi was writing in Venice, his German contemporary, Johann Sebastian Bach, was turning out one masterpiece after another. Solos, concertos, fugues, dance suites, organ preludes, cantatas... all poured out of Bach effortlessly, including several works that are now part of our Christmas tradition. With simple elegance, the next piece recalls a serene, pastoral setting - perhaps the fields surrounding Bethlehem on that first Christmas night.

Ironically, **Sheep May Safely Graze**² is part of a secular cantata, which Bach composed for the 1713 birthday celebration of Duke Christian of Saxe-Weissenfels. An avid sportsman, the Duke commissioned Bach to write a cantata that illustrated the joys of hunting, with music set to everyday texts written by Bach's colleagues. Over the centuries, however, the significance of this tranquil aria has evolved, first into popular wedding music, and ultimately into a staple of our Christmas repertoire. Clearly there is something about this work that is perfect for any celebration.

Father Jean De Brébeuf was a French missionary who lived among the Huron Indians near the Great Lakes. In 1640, he wrote some verses telling the story of the Nativity in the Huron language, and set them to an old French melody. This hymn soon became part of the tribe's oral tradition, and was sung until 1649, when the Iroquois Indians invaded, killing Father De Brébeuf, destroying his Jesuit mission, and driving the Huron Indians from their homeland. Many fled to Quebec, where *The Huron Carol* – **'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime** re-emerged and was translated into English and French; the result was the first-ever recorded North American Christmas carol – a national treasure that is still sung throughout Canada each Christmas season.

The tale of the miracle of Hanukkah predates the Christmas story by more than 160 years. Also known as the Festival of Lights, Hanukkah begins on the 25th day of Kislev on the Jewish calendar, usually in December, and lasts for eight days. Like most wintertime celebrations, the Feast of Hanukkah is best seen through the eyes of children, as they light each of the eight candles on the menorah, exchange gifts, spin their multi-colored dreidels, and listen in wonder to the ancient story. A sextet of Air Force musicians performing in the traditional klezmer style tells us about **The Eight Days of Hanukkah**, which blends Eastern-European folk tunes with more contemporary elements to form its own genre.

In 1853, when English cleric John Mason Neale wanted to write a children's song to exemplify generosity, he selected a real life subject: Wenceslas, a benevolent, strongly principled Bohemian ruler who lived in the late tenth century and became his homeland's most famous martyr and patron saint. Neale set his five verses to an ancient Latin hymn, and his song quickly became a Christmas favorite. Technical Sergeant Robert Thurston's arrangement of Neale's song, "*Good King Wenceslas*", is presented here in a stunning new instrumental setting called **Fantasia for a King**.

The Old English custom of using *wassail* to celebrate the Yuletide season has taken many different forms. The drink itself was a hearty concoction of hot ale, spices and mead that was strong enough to warm the extremities, yet savory enough to entice many to offer gifts for a cupful. Some people would even sing or dance their way through town, in hope of earning a taste or two of good cheer in return. Eventually, *wassailing* became synonymous with *caroling*, and while we may not be able to offer you the liquid part of this custom, we have prepared a tasty sampling of some of its key musical ingredients.

The Singing Sergeants take us back to the streets of old London with **Here We Come A'Wassailing...**, a collection of the traditional carols: *In Dulci Jubilo*; *Bring a Torch, Jeanette, Isabella*; *In the Bleak Midwinter*; *While By My Sheep*; and *Ding Dong, Merrily on High*. The Air Force String Quartet then completes the set with **...Among the Leaves so Green**, a medley of three more evergreens: *The Holly and the Ivy*; *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*; and *O Christmas Tree*.

No holiday season would be complete without a performance of *The Nutcracker*. Whether in the school auditorium, at the ballet, or in your own living room, Tchaikowsky's masterpiece truly has become a worldwide wintertime ritual. Although the full ballet was composed in 1891 for the Russian Imperial Opera in St. Petersburg, Tchaikowsky arranged eight scenes from the work into a concert suite. Interestingly, **The Nutcracker Suite** was premiered in March 1892, nearly ten months before the debut of the full-choreographed production, thus giving the audience a preview of his coming attraction. The Concert Band performs four of the more famous movements from this illustrious suite – *Overture, March, Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy and Trepak*.

Like many of mankind's accomplishments, champagne was discovered quite by accident. It seems that, once again, the credit is owed to some monks, who tried to sweeten their wine with sugar before putting the cork back on the bottle...both eternally and explosively altering history. For more than 300 years, **King Champagne** has been the libation of choice, particularly during the winter holidays. To illustrate this point, we present the bubbly finale to the second act of Johann Strauss Jr.'s *Die Fledermaus*, in which revelers blame their merriment and misdemeanors on this beverage. As immortal and effervescent as champagne itself, *Die Fledermaus* traditionally is performed on New Year's Eve at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City, followed by a champagne supper at midnight to ring in the new year.

In addition to *The Nutcracker*, *Die Fledermaus* and countless works of art, the late 19th century gave us the first modern Olympic games, which took place in Athens, Greece, during the summer of 1896. Although ice skating was the only winter sport included in the first few Olympiads, skiing, sledding and others gradually were added to the competition, and in 1924, the first separate Winter Olympics was held in France. Today, the popularity of these winter sports are at an all-time high, even in parts of the world that rarely, if ever, see snow on the ground. So, for all you cold weather athletes out there, both active and passive, here's the exciting theme that David Foster wrote and performed for the 1988 **Winter Games**.³

As you've noticed, composers and poets love snow. After all, it can be some pretty romantic stuff, particularly with a big, round, frosty moon; a warm, cozy fire; some pleasant conversation....you get the picture. This medley, **Snowbound**, sets the mood with the popular wintertime classics: *Snow*¹; *Snowfall*²; *Baby, it's Cold Outside*³; *Let it Snow! Let it Snow! Let it Snow!*⁴; and *I've got my Love to Keep me Warm*⁵.

No wintertime celebration would be complete without the following standards. This particular setting of **Winter Wonderland**⁷ and **The Christmas Song**⁸ was masterfully accomplished by CMSgt Michael Davis, The United States Air Force Band's chief arranger.

Traditionally, The United States Air Force Band has concluded its holiday concerts with an audience sing-along. Here on this recording, we invite you to enjoy a few holiday classics: *Jingle Bells*, *Deck the Halls*, *White Christmas*³ and *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*.

One request, as you celebrate this season, please remember the thousands of Americans in uniform, faithfully serving at home and overseas to protect the precious freedom and fragile peace that we all treasure.

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SELECTIONS

- 1| **A Winter Prelude** (5:09) *arr. MSgt Larry MacTaggart**

The Concert Band

- 2| **Puer Natus Est Nobis** (1:25) Traditional Chant

MSgt Kevin Sapp and TSgt Robert Harrelson, soloists

- 3| **The Lute Carol** (2:16) text and music by William Ballet
*adapted by William Tortolano Sr. and MSgt Larry MacTaggart**

TSgt Eric Sabatino, harp soloist

- 4| **Gaudete** (1:59) *arr. Brian Kay/Brass by David Overton*

CMSgt Julianne Turrentine, TSgt Linda Waring, soprano;

SMSgt Patricia Wolfe, TSgt Janice Carl, alto

MSgt Russell Colleran, TSgt David Farwig, tenor;

SMSgt David Nokes, TSgt Ryan Dolan, bass

The United States Air Force Brass Quintet

MSgt Andrew Wilson, MSgt James Bittner, trumpet; SMSgt Lindsey Smith, trombone;

MSgt Deborah Stephenson, horn; TSgt Christopher Quade, tuba

- 5| **Winter from "The Four Seasons"** (3:12) Antonio Vivaldi

TSgt Jessica Dan, violin soloist

The Air Force Strings

- 6| **Sheep May Safely Graze** (5:14) J.S. Bach
arr. Alfred Reed

The Concert Band

- 7| **'Twas in the Moon of Wintertime** (*The Huron Carol*) (3:02) Traditional
*arr. CMSgt Michael Davis**

The Concert Band and Men's Chorus

- 8| **The Eight Days of Hanukkah** (3:54) *arr. CMSgt Michael Davis**

CMSgt Donna Abraira, soprano
CMSgt William Popp, accordion
SMSgt Karl Heikkinen, bass
MSgt Jane Bockenek, violin
MSgt Jan Brooks Siegfried, clarinet
MSgt Aubrey Adams, tambourine

- 9| **Fantasia for a King** (4:19) *arr. TSgt Robert Thurston**
Variations on "Good King Wenceslas"

The Concert Band

- 10| **Here We Come A'Wassailing...** (4:31) *arr. CMSgt Michael Davis**

The Singing Sergeants

- 11| **...Among the Leaves so Green** (2:25) *arr. CMSgt Michael Davis**

The Air Force String Quartet

MSgt Dustin Saam - TSgt William Tortolano, violin
MSgt Paul Swantek, viola; TSgt Vivian Podgainy, cello

Selections from "The Nutcracker Suite"

P. Tchaikowsky
arr. Mayhew Lake

- 12| Overture (3:09)
13| March (2:40)
14| Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy (1:25)
15| Trepak (1:11)

The Concert Band

16| **King Champagne** (2:38)

Excerpt from "Die Fledermaus"

Johann Strauss Jr.
*arr. TSgt Robert Thurston**

MSgt Jennifer Henley, SMSgt Richard Pearson
and CMSgt Julianne Turrentine, soloists

The Concert Band and Singing Sergeants

17| **Winter Games** (3:13)

David Foster
*arr. TSgt Robert Thurston**

The Concert Band

18| **Snowbound** (4:50)

*arr. CMSgt Michael Davis**

SMSgt Patricia Wolfe and MSgt Russell Colleran, soloists

19| **Winter Wonderland / The Christmas Song** (3:52)

*arr. CMSgt Michael Davis**

The Concert Band and Singing Sergeants

20| **Holiday Favorites** (3:50)

*arr. CMSgt Michael Davis**

1. Jingle Bells
2. Deck the Halls
3. White Christmas
4. We Wish You a Merry Christmas

*Member, The United States Air Force Band

PERSONNEL

Colonel Lowell E. Graham – *Commander/Conductor – Greeley, CO*

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Piccolo

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MSgt Lucille Johnston Snell
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TSgt Sharon Weinberg
Philadelphia, PA

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MSgt Ronald Erler*
Falls Church, VA
CMSgt Robin Forrester-Meadows
Evansville, IN

English Horn

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Beaumont, TX

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MSgt Jan Brooks Siegfried
Valparaiso, IN

B-Flat Clarinet

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MSgt Jan Brooks Siegfried
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Wintertime

THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE BAND

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Colonel Lowell E. Graham—Commander/Conductor

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