

Welcome to the second annual Garritan Personal Orchestra Christmas Album.

A GPO Christmas 2005 is a unique musical project that would have been impossible a few short years ago. A community of professional and amateur composers and arrangers from all over the world met on the Internet and agreed to submit their own recordings of holiday pieces, to be freely distributed in MP3 format via download from a central Web site:

<http://garritan.com/Xmas.html>

The result is the second volume of a holiday musical tradition like no other. Each of these orchestral recordings were made not with large, live orchestras in vast recording studios at huge expense, but rather were created by a single person working on a computer. What they have in common is the Garritan Personal Orchestra, a commercial computer software “composer’s toolbox” of digital samples of real acoustic orchestral instruments. Most of what you’ll hear was created by someone playing at a keyboard and meticulously programming and editing musical phrases in a digital sequencing program.

Composers and arrangers use products from Garritan to realize their compositions and to simulate what a real orchestra and a real conductor would sound like. While the state-of-the-art of digital music continues to advance, the gap between the sound of a synthesized model of an orchestral piece and the real thing continues to narrow. But all composers continue to aspire to have their works brought fully to life in a recording session with a room full of live expert musicians. What products like the Garritan Personal Orchestra have done is to bring the possibility of realizing orchestral compositions to everybody from the most renowned composers to Hollywood film scorers to TV jingle men down to amateurs and music students in their dormitory rooms.

The frequently stunning realism of the recordings on this album are a testament not only to the sophistication of personal computer technology, but also to the skill of the composers, arrangers and programmers who have used these tools so remarkably well. Finally, let’s not forget the powerful force of the sentiments of the season and the inspiration behind the music. Each year we come back to these melodies and forms because they inspire us like no other. Happy Holidays.

You can learn more about Garritan software products at <http://garritan.com>.

About the Title

This album is a holiday gift, respectful of the spirit of the holidays as observed by many types of people. But the word “holiday” means “holy day” and always denotes the observation of a particular event of significance. While the interpretation and meaning of instrumental music is always left to the impression it makes on each

listener, we need to remember what the original source music (and the lyrics that came with it) meant to the original composer, whether the music has passed into the public domain or not. While each contemporary composer-arranger on this album also has his or her own thoughts about the meaning and significance of what he or she has written, it is the consensus of those involved that this be named a “Christmas” album.

The Music

1. “The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire)” Writers: Mel Torme, Robert Wells. Used with permission. Arranger: *Dan Kury*. Vocals: *Eric Dalbey*.

Dan Kury arranged this recording using not only the Garritan Personal Orchestra but also the brand-new Garritan Jazz and Big Band sound library, working on a Mac G5 in the Digital Performer recording program, and on a Dell computer using Windows. I’m looking forward to next year when many of the submissions to the GPO Christmas album will also make use of jazz band sounds and arrangements.

2. “Away In a Manger”. *Jack Cannon*.

“Away in a Manger” is a traditional carol from the German Lutheran community of Pennsylvania in the United States. It was first written out and harmonized by J. R. Murray in 1877, while the lyrics are anonymous. It is also commonly sung in two completely different melodies.

Jack Cannon created this unique arrangement by making use of each of the two melodies in turn, bridged by an original section in the middle. The first melody begins with strings, harp and pizzicato bass backing a melody from the bells, and the second melody is delivered by a small woodwind ensemble over the strings.

3. “I Saw Three Ships”. *Pat Azzarello*.

“I Saw Three Ships” is an English carol whose text comes down from traditional stories in the Medieval centuries.

Pat Azzarello, a formally-trained musician and “computer guy” from Seattle, Washington, starts us out with a slow, stately oceanic theme with a lovely legato oboe solo, then completely changes the feel and takes us into a large military brass chorale, with a flowery modulation up to its broad conclusion. Using the GPO and Sonar on Windows, Pat gets “to hear my orchestral visions without sacrificing my children’s college funding to do so.”

4. “O Come All Ye Faithful”. *Stefan Kristinsson.* Additional programming and mixing: *Dan Kury.*

Also known by the Latin title “Adeste Fideles”, this song was written in Latin, in France, by an Englishman named J. F. Wade around 1740. It subsequently became a standard of British Christmas carols due to its translation into English by Francis Oakeley.

Music teacher and organist Stefan Kristinsson, from Faskrudsfjordur, Iceland, spins this melody into an elaborate and powerful fantasia, using the full resources of the GPO and practically every sound and effect to be found therein. Announced with a roaring cathedral pipe organ, moving through a full symphony orchestra with extensive but subtle percussion, it nonetheless contains some delicate wind ensemble work in the middle section. In its closing moments the themes are carried by beautiful high brass. Who knows how many musicians it would take to play this piece live, and where would you put them all?

5. “In Dulci Jubilo”. *Dan Powers.*

This German carol from the 1300s, also known as “Nun singet und seid froh” (“Now sing and be joyful”), includes Latin text. English and American carolers know the tune, set to lyrics by John Mason Neale in the 1800s, as “Good Christian Men, Rejoice.”

Dan Powers has been a professional composer for 20 years and is the composer in residence with the Terre Haute (Indiana) Symphony Orchestra. His CD of songs and chamber works will be available by the first of 2006.

The handbell choir is one of the most distinctive elements of church music in Great Britain and the United States. It requires a large ensemble of musicians. In an unheard-of combination, Dan takes his virtual handbell choir and places them with a full orchestra, giving the melody to woodwinds. Then a brass section creates deft interplay with strings, while the handbells never leave the stage. Almost impossible in a live concert setting, this arrangement shows what a “virtual orchestra” is all about. Dan sequenced the entire piece in the Finale notation program and mixed in Sonar.

6. “What Sweeter Music”. *David Lovrien.*

“What Sweeter Music” is a contemporary carol from 1988 by the British composer John Rutter, with lyrics by Robert Herrick. David Lovrien’s tranquil and reverent arrangement starts with the full string orchestra. The melody is first presented by a lone English horn, then by a French horn ensemble, finally spreading out into a full brass choir before a bassoon leads the final phrases.

7. “December Song”. Music: *Jerry Wickham.* Lyrics: *Carly Campbell* (in 2000, at the age of 11). Vocals: *Highland Community College Chamber Choir, Allen Redford, Director.* Live piano: *Jerry Wickham.* Additional programming and mixing: *Dan Kury.*

Jerry Wickham of Illinois is a college student who has already written and seen performances of several ballet and chamber music pieces. At the commission of Carly’s grandma, Jerry set Carly’s poem in an SATB with piano arrangement, and enlisted his college choir in a live performance and recording. A couple of years later Jerry collaborated with Dan Kury in overdubbing orchestral elements using the GPO, and sweetening. Carly got a Christmas present that’s better than a doll house stuffed with Barbies.

8. “Carol Of The Bells”. *Jonny Lost.*

“Carol of the Bells” is a traditional melody from the Ukraine. It’s challenging for arrangers because its themes are so brief and repetitive.

Jonny Lost tackles the problem by starting with the obvious: sleigh bells, tubular bells, and glockenspiel. Then he piles up some impressive tone colors through deft orchestration using the whole orchestra, concentrating on the lowest and highest notes and timbres, and building up to a dissonance that evokes, but doesn’t actually use, clanging church bells. The effect is that of a whirlwind film cue, rather than a Christmas carol.

9. “It Came Upon The Midnight Clear”. *Robert Myers.*

“It Came Upon the Midnight Clear” was written by Richard S. Willis, with lyrics by Edmund H. Sears, around 1850.

Robert Myers gives us the simplest and most straightforward arrangement of the album, using nothing but a woodwind quintet augmented by a little extra brass, and showing the delicate and lyrical colors and surprising realism that a good player and programmer can achieve with solo instrument sounds.

10. “Now A Savior Is Born Unto Us”. *Matej Hrovat.*

“Zveličar nam je rojen zdaj” was written by Slovenian sacred choral composer Gregor Rihar (1796-1863).

Matej Hrovat, a pianist and composer working as a software developer in Kranj, Slovenia, brings us a melody outside of the Western European and American axis that our more familiar Christmas carols revolve around. In this charming study, he starts with some of the softer, clearer sounds of the pipe organ, until a lilting orchestra spins us through a majestic but light-footed Slavic waltz. It was done entirely with GPO using Cubase VST32 5.1. Matt’s output includes epic synth-based symphonic poems and soundtracks for several short films. <http://www.aziraphal.com>.

11. “The Wexford Carol”. *Jim Williams.*

This carol comes to us from County Wexford, Ireland, and a Medieval tune that may date from the 1100s. As such, this pure melody predates the whole concept of harmony and chord progressions by centuries.

Jim Williams, a college professor of finance from Franklin, Indiana, originally wrote this piece for two euphoniums and a tuba, a stark setting with sparse counterpoint. It has seen widespread live performance. He recasts it here in expanded form, with a broader palette of virtual solo instruments stating the theme before a string and wind orchestra take it up and give it a dance-like quality. The piece was sequenced in the Overture 4 notation program.

12. “Those Jingly Bells”. *Jon Raybould.*

“Jingle Bells,” possibly the most American example of holiday pop music, was written by James Pierpont in 1857.

Jon Raybould, who is in fact British, takes us back well over one hundred years and sets this little ditty as an American orchestral piece from the ragtime era, with hilariously excessive use of percussion. Somehow starting at Steven Foster and ending at William Grant Still, this piece veers within a banjo’s width of crashing into a minstrel show.

13. “Un Flambeau Jeannette, Isabelle/Stille Nacht”. *Mark Leneker.*

“Bring a Torch, Jeannette, Isabelle” is a traditional carol from the Provence region of France from the 1600’s. “Silent Night” is a much-loved German composition by Franz Gruber and Joseph Mohr written in 1818. These two carols have very different characters, the first being up-tempo and dancelike, the second being tranquil and reverent.

Mark Leneker of Columbia University in New York is an amateur composer and musicologist. He takes liberties with the tone of both pieces and manages to mate these two unlikely partners in an arrangement reminiscent of Debussy and held together with a harp accompaniment woven throughout. This piece was created in the Sibelius music notation program and then “shaped a bit” in Adobe Audition.

14. “Pat-a-Pan”. *Paula Douglas.*

“Pat-a-Pan” is a French carol by Bernard de la Monnoye, circa 1700. The lyrics speak of two children, Guillô and Robin, playing their drum and flute to celebrate the holiday.

Paula, of Orinda, California, is an amateur composer with professional aspirations who has just started working with the GPO; some percussion sounds come from the Roland SC880 and Yamaha Motif hardware synthesizers. The arrangement was created on a Mac G5 with Digital Performer and the UAD Realverb. In “Pat-a-Pan”, Paula pairs playful, childlike flute and oboe themes against a dark string ostinato, evoking palpable French provincial textures, even a hint of hunting music when a trumpet appears. Très français.

15. “Snow Travel”. *Eric Watkins.*

Eric describes himself as a “full time heating and air-conditioning repairman/installer” who is working on becoming a film composer. He plays in a rock band in central Illinois, and has scored three television and two radio ads, in addition to a safety film for the Illinois state government.

His original composition “Snow Travel” is a programmatic sketch which takes us on as nice a snow-bound rural sleigh ride as we’ve never experienced, with a decidedly 20th-century twist due to the odd-metered string ostinato propelling us through sparkling orchestral colors.

16. “Here We Come A Wassailing”. *Sean Hannifin.*

The “Wassail Song” is a traditional carol from Yorkshire, England in the 1800s. It describes a choir going door to door singing Christmas carols, and doing lots of drinking and carousing in celebration.

Sean Hannifin, a college student from Fredericksburg, Virginia, takes the whole orchestra wassailing on a whimsical tilt that starts with tremolando strings and expands into some fine work in the woodwinds and brass. A contrasting section broadens the tempo with a timid melody over a Bach-like string ostinato. A short section surprises with its unconventional use of stereo hocketing and contrasting reverb processing between glockenspiel notes, illustrating again that the virtual orchestra can play tricks that wouldn’t work in a live orchestra concert. The piece was constructed and recorded in the Overture 4 notation program.

17. “Good King Wenceslas”. *Dan Estes.*

“Good King Wenceslas” was written in England in 1853 by John M. Neale. However, it tells a story from the *Piae Cantiones* of 1582 which takes place in what’s now the Czech Republic, about King Wenceslas IV of Bohemia (1378-1419) and his charity to the poor.

Dan Estes of Grand Rapids, Michigan starts out with a starched-shirt British arrangement, kind of Handel and heavy on the horns. Suddenly you are jolted into the present day, when you realize that’s not a snow plow coming down your street, it’s a *Mannheim Steamroller*—complete with a virtual Chip Davis on drums that definitely did not come with the GPO sound set. OK, it’s “Prague rock”, and Dan

wants to score films. Plenty of room for that in the GPO virtual world. You can learn about his new CD, *Christmas Dreams 2005* at <http://www.cdbaby.com/estesdan>.

18. “Tu scendi dalle Stelle”. *Fabio Vicentini.*

“You Came Down From The Stars” was written by Alfonsus Maria de’ Liguori of Italy in the 1700s. Fabio Vicentini, from the far northern town of Venegono, tells us that it’s the most popular Italian Christmas carol.

Fabio is another passionate musician with a day job; in addition to being a choir conductor and expert on ancient music, he’s been working with MIDI and computers since the early days, twenty years ago. This composition uses the whole orchestra as the instrument, without relying on solo voices or small ensembles like most of the other composers on this compilation. Still, he covers a lot of textural territory in this short piece while preserving the continuity of the melody. Overture and Cubase on Mac G5 is his arranging and recording platform.

19. “We Three Kings”. *Stephanie Pray-Urech.*

“We Three Kings” is an American carol written by John H. Hopkins in 1857 in Pennsylvania.

Stephanie Pray-Urech is an amateur composer from Morrison, Colorado. Her arrangement gives us a straightforward reading of the melody in the horns with an unusual flute descant, and some unconventional chordal choices. Eschewing the usual contrasting sections of minor and major tonality in this piece, hers stays minor throughout. It was recorded in Sonar on Windows.

20. “O Holy Night”. *Leif Chappelle.*

The great romantic French anthem “Cantique de Noël” was written by Adolph Adam, composer of the ballet *Giselle*, in 1847, to lyrics by Placide Cappeau de Roquemaure.

Leif Chappelle is a college music composition major in Seattle, Washington. His “O Holy Night” is dreamy, resonant, shimmering and surreal, with a huge Romantic orchestral sound, and the melody in *largo* floating somewhere beneath the surface. Leif’s compositions start in Sibelius on PC and get finished in Sonar. The piece is dedicated to fantasy artist Keith Parkinson, who passed away recently.

21. “What Child Is This?” *Toby Bresnahan.*

Based on the British air “Greensleeves” from the 1600s, “What Child is This” received its lyrics from William Dix in 1865.

Toby Bresnahan lives in the small farming community of Trufant, Michigan. He says, “We live on a beautiful lake. My wife and the quiet country life are my inspiration for composition.” A professional composer, he produces and records library music. Toby plays live classical guitar on this recording, embellished with GPO bass flute, cello, tubular bells, cymbals and harp.

22. “Angels We Have Heard On High”. *Jim Hammer.*

“Les Anges dans nos Campagnes” is a traditional French carol.

Jim Hammer is a semi-professional producer, recording engineer, and church musician from Uxbridge, Massachusetts. Possibly the least conventional arrangement on the album, “Angels We Have Heard on High” starts out in a contemporary American church worship style. Jim leads a worship band each week, and was tempted to use a live flute player, but decided to construct the whole recording using GPO sampled instruments. Listen for the authentic phrasing and breath effects he achieved.

An informal note about Copyrights

According to international law, songs that are in the “public domain” or “traditional” do not have a copyright assigned to them. However, when a contemporary composer writes or records a new arrangement based on material that is in the public domain, that composer can claim a new copyright for his or her new, derivative work.

All the *recordings* on this disc have been released by their respective composers and arrangers, to be duplicated and distributed free of charge. However, the *compositions* behind these recordings are not to be considered in the public domain. Each composer or arranger holds a copyright for his or her work, and reserves the rights over those works now and in the future.

Each musical piece in this compilation carries its own copyright by its contemporary composer, completely separate from any claims made on any of the other pieces or any claims made for the compilation as a whole.

Many thanks to everyone who submitted a song for the Christmas CD. A big thanks as well to Dan Kury who mastered the songs for the album. Computer-generated artwork by Michael Sandberg.

A Garritan Personal Orchestra Christmas 2005 is a collaborative effort of the Garritan Personal Orchestra community and was put together in the spirit of giving for the holiday as a way for forum members to give back to the community.

Wishing you all a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year!

Liner notes written by Wheat Williams.