

The Sussex Mummers' Christmas Carol

Setting by Percy Grainger (1882-1961) of a
Traditional Carol

Arranged by Patrick Dolan

Program Notes

Mumming means 'making diversion in disguise' and can be traced back to at least medieval times. Troupes of Mummers would go from house to house, putting on a play and passing the hat for donations - particularly at Christmas. Mumming was especially prevalent in the British Isles and other English speaking areas. Sussex, in England, was an area where Mumming was exceptionally active. There, plays would end with the singing of songs, notably a Christmas Carol. The "Sussex Mummers' Christmas Carol" was written down in 1880 and eventually discovered by Percy Grainger. Grainger was a collector and arranger of folksongs and he set this Carol originally for violin or cello and piano.

The Carol typically has many verses. Here is a sample:

Each mortal man remembers well, When Christ came down from Heaven,
'Twas for our sins and wicked ways, His precious blood was given,
His precious blood was given.

God bless your house, your children too, Your cattle and your store,
The Lord increase you day by day, And give you more and more,
And give you more and more.

This last verse was typical of songs at the end of the play: a blessing for the house where the play was performed and thanks for the generosity of contributions from the audience.

Performance Suggestions

The tempo at the beginning is suggested by Grainger to be between 84 and 100 for quarter notes - although the feeling should be of two beats per measure. In his recorded performance (which can be found on YouTube - search "Percy Grainger Plays Grainger"), Grainger leans toward the slower side of this tempo and his performance is heavily rubato. Also consult the YouTube version performed by Penelope Thwaites which performs the piano version this arrangement is based on.

Consult the sample verses for phrasing.

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(1882-1961) of a Traditional Carol

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Slowish, but flowing and connected

Flute

Oboe

Bassoon

Clarinet in B \flat 1

Clarinet in B \flat 2

Bass Clarinet

Alto Sax 1

Alto Sax 2

Tenor Sax

Baritone Sax

Trumpet in B \flat 1

Trumpet in B \flat 2

Horn in F

Trombone 1

Trombone 2

Baritone (T.C.)

Euphonium

Tuba

Chimes

Timpani in G \flat -A \flat -B \flat

Timpani

Vibraphone

mp

mf

pp

mp

p

mp

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3

10

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

B♭ Cl. 1

B♭ Cl. 2

B. Cl.

A. Sx. 1

A. Sx. 2

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

B♭ Tpt. 1

B♭ Tpt. 2

Hn.

Tbn. 1

Tbn. 2

Bar.

Euph.

Tuba

Chm.

Timp.

Vib.

p

mf

mp

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

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19 20 21 *rit.* 22 *a tempo* 23 24 25 26 27

Fl. *mp* *pp*

Ob. *mp* *pp*

Bsn. *mp* *pp*

B♭ Cl. 1 *mp* *pp* *p*

B♭ Cl. 2 *mp* *pp* *p*

B. Cl. *mp* *pp*

A. Sx. 1 *mp* *pp* *p*

A. Sx. 2 *mp* *pp*

T. Sx. *mp* *pp*

B. Sx. *mp* *pp*

B♭ Tpt. 1 *mp* *pp*

B♭ Tpt. 2 *mp* *pp*

Hn. *mp* *pp* *p*

Tbn. 1 *mp* *pp* *p*

Tbn. 2 *mp* *pp* *p*

Bar. *mp* *pp* *mp*

Euph. *mp* *pp* *mp*

Tuba *mp* *pp* *p*

Chm. *p* *pp*

Timp. *pp* *mp*

Vib. *mp*

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28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36

Fl. *mf* *mf* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

Ob. *mf* *mf* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

Bsn. *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

B♭ Cl. 1 *mf* *mf* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

B♭ Cl. 2 *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

B. Cl. *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

A. Sx. 1 *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

A. Sx. 2 *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

T. Sx. *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

B. Sx. *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

B♭ Tpt. 1 *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

B♭ Tpt. 2 *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

Hn. *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

Tbn. 1 *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

Tbn. 2 *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

Bar. *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

Euph. *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

Tuba *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

Chm. *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

Timp. *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

Vib. *mp* *p* poco a poco decresc. e rit.

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6

37 rit. 38 Piu lento 39 rit. 40 resume tempo 41 Lento assai 42 43 44

Fl. subito *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

Ob. subito *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

Bsn. subito *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

B♭ Cl. 1 subito *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

B♭ Cl. 2 subito *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

B. Cl. subito *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

A. Sx. 1 subito *ppp* *p* *ppp* *ppp*

A. Sx. 2 *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

T. Sx. subito *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

B. Sx. subito *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

B♭ Tpt. 1 subito *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

B♭ Tpt. 2 subito *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

Hn. subito *ppp* *p* *ppp* *ppp*

Tbn. 1 subito *ppp* *p* *ppp* *ppp*

Tbn. 2 subito *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

Bar. subito *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

Euph. subito *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

Tuba subito *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

Chm. *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp*

Timp. *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp*

Vib. *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*