

Liner notes to Holiday Music for the Classical Guitar,  
by Jason Espada

Winter has always been one of my three or four favorite seasons. For someone who likes to step back and think about things, it's got a lot going for it. For one, it's cold. Then there's the frenetic mode of shopping people usually go into this time of year. For me, these are two very good reasons to stay inside. And then there's the music. Aah, yes, the music.

If Jingle Bells, and Rudolph were once charming, they've become victims of their own success – same can be said for pretty much the rest of the top 20 or so of the tunes we hear too much of from Thanksgiving on. Fortunately for us all though, we are also heirs to a great wealth of musical traditions that are pretty much immune to commercialization. Here, it seems the more a person looks, the more there is to find.

What have come down to us as carols are a case in point. They are in that interesting position of being both worship service – friendly, and also being popular tunes. You don't have to subscribe to any belief to sing along, and I'm sure this has been a comfort to many people over the centuries who have stopped into a Church over the holidays mostly to get out of the cold. Anyway, what I mean to say is that it feels like the carols transcend religious organizations. They belong to us all. Now that's my kind of holiday music.

Another kind of music with universal appeal comes from J.S. Bach. You'd be surprised how often I've heard people have ask, after hearing one of Bach's more well known melodies, What is that? Who is that by? That sounds so *familiar!*

One piece on the cd that I'd like to say something about is track 32, What is This Fragrance?, described as 'An old French carol'.

I found this a couple of months ago on a cd by Duck Baker, called 'The Salutation'. I had heard the cd before, but this time around I was listening and looking for something to express more of what I feel the holiday season is, at its best.

I was keen to hear something celebratory, because that is also a part of this time of year, and because I had just finished reading what turned out to be my favorite book of 2009. It was a title by Barbara Ehrenreich, called 'Dancing in the Streets – A History of Collective Joy'. On the front cover of this marvelous book there is a painting of some people from the middle ages, in simple dress, doing what looks like a round dance. That image, and what I got from that book – the confirmation that joy is necessary for human beings – has stayed with me. This is what I think of when I hear What is this Fragrance?

It's been a delight for me also to bring together these pieces. It's a little like making a mix tape – only I get to play the music! (note that the cd can be played straight through, or using the 'shuffle' function on your music player. It works well either way.) These pieces, for me, bring to mind some of the best things that this season is about: peace, introspection; love and wonder; gratitude and giving what we can; family and friendship. Enduring values.

If you're reading this, then clearly we've made it through another year, and that in itself is cause for celebration. I'd like here to express my thanks first to my parents and sister for their love and support; and to Dennis Gould for his kind encouragement.

May we all be blessed with good health, peace and joy.

Jason Espada, San Francisco, Winter, 2009

This album can be heard on [jespada.bandcamp.com](http://jespada.bandcamp.com)

# *Holiday Music for the Classical Guitar*

*Recorded in the Winter of 2009, and 2011, Jason Espada, guitar*

## Traditional Carols

1. The Carol of the Bells;
2. What Child is This?
3. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen;
4. Hark, Ye Herald Angels Sing;
5. Gustav Holt: In the Bleak Midwinter
6. Noel;
7. The Holly and the Ivy;
8. The Sussex Carol;
9. Lo, A Rose;

## J.S. Bach

10. Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring;
11. Sleepers, Awake!

12. In Dulci Jubilo;
13. I Saw Three Ships;
14. Turlough O'Carolan: Shebeg and Shemore;
15. The Wexford Carol;
16. The Ashgrove;
17. J.S. Bach: Sheep May Safely Graze

Three Renaissance Pieces:

18. Michael Praetorius: Courante;
19. Bartolemi Pekiell: Danse Polonaise;
20. John Dowland: The Shoemaker's Wife;
21. Deck the Halls;
22. We Three Kings;
23. Come, All Ye Faithful;
24. Good King Wenceslas;
25. J.S. Bach: Minuet in G;
26. J. G. Weichenberger: Gigue;
27. El Noi de la Mare;

28. Come, Emmnauel!;
29. Augustin Barrios: Villancico de Navidad
30. Archangelo Corelli: From the Christmas Concerto;
31. G.F. Handel: Air;
32. What is This Fragrance?;
33. Away in a Manger;
34. Silent Night