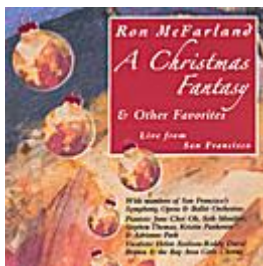


Mp3 Ron McFarland - Christmas Fantasy & Other Favorites



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Composer Ron McFarland's music reveals much of the man, romantic and passionate, with top San Francisco musicians creating a style that is dreamy, emotional, ever direct and accessible 22 MP3 Songs

CLASSICAL: Contemporary, CLASSICAL: Orchestral Details: A Christmas Fantasy and Other Favorites begins and ends with musical versions of "The Night Before Christmas." The opening movement of the Fantasy Concerto "On Christmas Themes" for Piano and Orchestra is a musical setting of Clement Clark Moore's poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas," better known as "The Night Before Christmas." The music begins with the quiet house where "not a creature is stirring, not even a mouse." The piano enters with the first variation of the Christmas carols "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" and "Silent Night," and builds to the arrival of St. Nicholas "Up On the Housetop." The second movement is "Silent Night" in the Christmas wrappings of a chorale prelude, followed by humorous variations on Leroy Anderson's "Sleigh Ride." Commissioned by Seth Montfort for the San Francisco Concerto Orchestra, Montfort asked McFarland to compose a Christmas piece with an American sound-the listener will hear echoes of American composers: Gottschalk, Gershwin and Anderson. Ron McFarland, a California native, has known the glare of the limelight since his teens. He has been praised by major critics both as composer and pianist with comments like, "The music reveals much of the man...romantic and passionate," "compelling lyricism," "fresh and original," and "dreamy obstinate and emotional, ever direct and accessible." Renowned Bay Area music critic Stephanie von Buchau wrote, "McFarland's music has a fresh musical viewpoint. One is not assaulted by bizarre concepts or noises that pass for 'originality'... [using] traditional forms and melodic material, he aims for individual expression of emotion, and that alone is enough to make him a rare duck in contemporary music." At the age of sixteen he became a protégé of the legendary Ethel Leginska, and after three years of study he made a successful Los Angeles piano

debut with symphony conducted by Leginska. The L.A. Examiner wrote, "his tone quality, his emotional directness and his amazing fluent fingers added to a musical grasp of light and shade, earned this teen-ager repeated calls from his listeners." He was then invited to live in an apartment adjacent to Leginska's Hollywood studio. It was during the next three years while living at her studio that he met and performed for numerous internationally known artists, composers and conductors, who included: Artur Schnabel, Benjamin Britten and Bruno Walter. While still in his teens, he studied composition with Arnold Schoenberg, one of the greatest masters of 20th Century composition and later continued his studies in orchestration with David Sheinfeld in San Francisco. After playing several solo piano pieces including two from his own unfinished "Piano Suite," it was Bruno Walter who said, "Young man, you are a fine pianist, and I certainly don't mean you should give it up, but this is the real you - a composer. Perhaps a composer-pianist, but a composer first!" Leginska and Schoenberg were the two most important teachers in his young life. He remembers Leginska as a very demanding taskmaster who stipulated that her students enter as many competitions as possible, because she believed the experience was tantamount to launching concert careers - as finalist in the Hollywood Bowl competition he performed with the KFI-Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra conducted by James Sample. After six years of study with Leginska, he left the Hollywood world of recitals and competitions and traveled to New Orleans, where he began a career as an artist. While in New Orleans, he met the Hungarian pianist Istvan Nadas, a teacher at Loyola University, and decided to renew his piano studies. Later, when Nadas accepted a teaching position at the San Francisco Conservatory, McFarland decided to return to California as well. During the long drive from New Orleans to San Francisco, he was haunted by the strains of the unfinished "Suite for Piano" that he had begun with Schoenberg. He could hardly wait to reach the Bay Area and put his musical thoughts down on paper - his Op 1. It was then that writing music became the major commitment in his life. When Nadas heard the completed "Suite" he was so taken with it that he included it in his Festival of 20th Century Piano Music at San Francisco State University. The work then won first prize and a "Special Achievement Award" from the Composers Today Competition of the Music Teachers' Association of California. McFarland began writing for many different combinations of instruments, including compositions for violin, string quartet, two-pianos, including a suite for orchestra with narrator, and a children's opera for San Domenico's School Festivals. He next embarked on writing "The Donner Party," an opera based on the prize-winning book by George Keithley, with libretto by Maria Woodward

on a commission from Chico State University. The Opera News review read, "The pioneers reach the top of the Wasatch Mountains to a glorious up-welling in the orchestra worthy of Bartok. The Passacaglia theme imprints itself vividly on the ear and the final duet is beautifully lyrical." The Berkeley Symphony conducted by Kent Nagano performed a concert version of this opera called "Tamsen Donner." Nagano called the work, "a score to be treated with respect and one worthy of a great production." McFarland's second opera, "Song of Pegasus," was a finalist in New York University's American Opera Competition. It has since received many performances, including the summer "In Performance" series, conducted by noted San Francisco Ballet and Opera conductor Denis de Coteau. He joined the Bay Area Playwrights Festival Opera Studio, funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, where he composed his often performed comic opera "The Audition Of Molly Bloom." The S.F. Examiner called McFarland's "amusingly schizophrenic 'Molly Bloom,' a hypothetical audition piece that toys with Mozart and comes awfully close to being a hip saloon piece." Besides the operas mentioned above, he has written symphonies, concertos, chamber works, songs and music for the piano, theater and for children. The second of his commissions from the San Francisco Girls Chorus was "The Night Before Christmas" that became the centerpiece of their Sing-Along Christmas Concert and premiered at Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco. A notable collaboration occurred when he received a call from Edward Hastings, Artistic Director of the American Conservatory Theatre, to write the incidental music for Hastings' production of "King Lear." Its success led him to write a version for two spoken voices with instruments, premiered with "Lear" actors Peter Donat and Fredi Olster. A third version for singers resulted from the request of Metropolitan Opera tenor William Lewis, who gave its premiere performance. McFarland's music has been commissioned, performed, and broadcast by such organizations as the Alexander String Quartet, Marin Arts Quartet, Marin Symphony, Old First Concerts, Composers, Inc. California Shakespeare Festival, New Eureka Theatre, San Francisco Concerto Orchestra, Voices/SF, Kensington Symphony Orchestra, Squaw Valley Creative Arts Society, College of Marin, American Concert Association, San Francisco Musical Club, Marin Chamber Orchestra, Guest Concert Series, Dominican University, Chamber Music Sundaes, Navarro Trio, Cinnabar Opera Theater, Angelo Piano Duo, KKHI Sunday Morning and KKHI Friday Night Concerts. He has received grants and awards from such organizations as the ASCAP, University of Cincinnati Piano Concerto Competition, Opera America, and five 1st prizes from Composers Today Competition. He has lectured for California Colleges and Universities, including S.F.

City College Concert Lecture Series, USC Composers Forum, UC Berkeley, MTAC Artists Series, Chico State University, and Star Classics Composer and Performer.

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