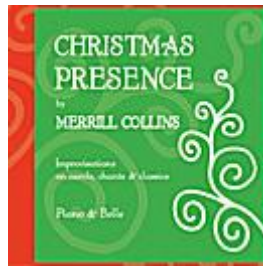


Mp3 Merrill Collins - Christmas Presence



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Piano and bells improvisations on Christmas carols, chants, and classics. soothing, perfect for listening while driving in traffic or having Christmas dinner. 12 MP3 Songs in this album (62:11) ! Related styles: NEW AGE: Relaxation, NEW AGE: Neo-Classical People who are interested in George Winston should consider this download. Details: Brief Autobiography, The Story of Christmas Presence I grew up in Nutley, New Jersey, on the outskirts of Manhattan. I was fortunate to be born in a family with natural musical genes, on both my father and mother's sides of the family tree. My grandfather had been a dance band conductor, grandmother an opera singer. My mom brought home a toy piano as a present when I had the measles at the age of 4. I began playing tunes. My parents selected a teacher, Katherine Bair, a graduate of the Julliard School of Music. Mrs. Bair asked my dad if he wanted her to train me to be a concert artist by the age of 12. He said, "No, let Merrill evolve musically at her own pace, I want her to be able to enjoy the music". And so it was. I studied the classics and also began working as an accompanist at a local dancing school at the age of 13. I would earn enough money each Saturday to go to New York and get standing line tickets to the Metropolitan Opera. There I met many singers in need of an accompanist. I went on to study for 2 years at Ithaca College School of Music, and then came to California where I finished my B.A. at Humboldt State University. During my time at Humboldt I discovered a passion for the harpsichord. I went on to complete a Master in Music degree at the S.F. Conservatory of Music on a full scholarship. After several years of touring as a Baroque player, I expanded back into playing my original instrument, the piano. The decade of the 1990s was for me a rich and full experience of musical expression on a daily basis. My composite jobs as a musician included 20 hours per week creating music for daily classes at the U.C.Berkeley modern dance department, 16 hours per week performing at the S.F. Centre on the 9 foot Steinway grand piano at Nordstroms, and 4 hours

playing on Sunday mornings at Saint Perpetua Church in Lafayette. Felicia Sandler had brought me to Saint Perpetua to be the accompanist. The congregation and musicians appreciated my improvisational skills, especially during the Preparation of the Gifts, a segment of the mass which varies in length. Felicia often had me do a solo instrumental improvisation on a hymn. When Felicia moved to Michigan to get her PHD in composition, the folks at Saint Perpetua missed her deeply. I was filling in, trying to cook up some enthusiasm for the music program and keep people involved in positive activities. Dr. Clarence Sheets had donated a grand piano in loving memory of his wife. The roof had a leak and one day I saw a drop of water near the piano. Discussions were taking place about fund raisers to fix the roof. I went to breakfast with Mike Malone and Tom Jupille and suggested that we produce an album of Christmas music improvisations. Mike and Tom both thought this was a good idea and offered to be backers for a 4 hour recording session at Bay Records in Berkeley. Mike and Tom were familiar with my improvisational style and thought it would be good to have an album that was peaceful and relaxing, providing listeners with a tool for de-stressing. Whether it be while driving in holiday traffic or having quality time with family members, the concept was to provide centering music to enhance the experience of Christmas. The day came to record. I got up early that Sunday morning and played for four masses before driving to Bay Records in Berkeley. Wanting to protein-up I stopped at the Fish Taqueria on Piedmont Avenue in Oakland to grab a burrito before the recording session. Ill never forget my disappointment that there was coleslaw in the burrito. What an imperfect world. The recording session went well regardless, and I played the hour of improvisations on the grand piano, with a few bells set in places I could reach them while still playing the music with the other hand. The bells in my collection at that time included Mark Tree, Indian brass bells, and a Tibetan bowl bell. I had begun gathering bells as part of a piece I performed for the 50th anniversary of the U.N., earlier that year. (please see spiralingmusic book/cds)My bells collection continued to grow, and as time went on I wanted to add more bell sounds to the album. This year I re-mastered Christmas Presence , working both at Deva Productions in Lafayette and at Kokopelli Studio in Winnetka. I was delighted to be able to add many more bells which I have collected since the original recording. The bells now include Kulingtang, Tingsha, Indian brass bells and Elephant bells, Tibetan bowl bell, and tuned windchimes. I love the tuned chimes made by Woodstock. While at Bodhi Tree in Beverly Hills one day I heard some very large B Flat chimes, and thought how beautiful they would be on Silent Night. Couldnt resist adding track 12 as a Ringtone specially crafted for the holiday season! And so the

story of Christmas Presence goes on. My sincere thanks goes to all who have participated. I wish all of my listeners, their families and loved ones a peaceful and merry Christmas! Merrill Collins 2008

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