

CHRISTMAS GOES BAROQUE II

**Christmas Favourites in the
styles of Bach, Händel and Vivaldi**

**White Christmas • What Child is This
Santa Claus is Coming to Town
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing**

**Nicolaus Esterházy Sinfonia
Peter Breiner**



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In Christmas Goes Baroque II the Slovak musician Peter Breiner has made again witty arrangements of popular Christmas music in the style of major Baroque composers flourishing in the first part of the eighteenth century, among whom Johann Sebastian Bach, Handel and Vivaldi are pre-eminent. Echoes of Bach dominate The Virgin Mary Had A Baby Boy, with more than a touch of a Brandenburg Concerto for Away in a Manger. The famous Air on the G String, the Air from a Bach Orchestral Suite, is blended miraculously with A White Christmas, while Carol of the Bells give scope for some busy fugal writing. Hark, the Herald Angels Sing, provides a stately chorale and Deck the Halls brings recognisable reminiscences of Vivaldi, before launching into a fugue. Come, O Come, Emmanuel opens in the manner of a Corelli slow movement, leading to a passage of thicker texture and flute variants of the theme. Cheerful percussion starts Angels We Have Heard On High, moving forward into a Brandenburg Concerto, to which the carol provides a countermelody. Breiner introduces What Child Is This with the harpsichord, the essential instrument of Baroque music, followed by a repeated note that seems about to introduce the slow movement of the first of the Four Seasons, before the intrusion of the familiar Greensleeves melody. Bach introduces the Carol of the Birds, and While Shepherds Watched, after a more literal opening, has all the features of a Baroque overture, with stately opening and subsequent fugue. A brilliant solo violin obbligato marks the arrangement of Santa Claus Is Coming To Town, and percussion again introduces How Far Is It To Bethlehem, which manages a display of fine Baroque performance from a number of soloists, including the hard-working clarino trumpet-player. The set ends as it began, with The Virgin Mary Had A Baby Boy, dignified by the style of Johann Sebastian Bach.

Nicolaus Esterházy Sinfonia

The Hungarian Nicolaus Esterházy Sinfonia was formed in 1992 from members of the Hungarian Symphony Orchestra by Ibolya Tóth, of the Hungarian Phoenix Studio. The Sinfonia has among its musicians the principal wind-players of the Symphony Orchestra, many of whom have already recorded concertos for Naxos. The conductor of the Sinfonia is the flautist Béla Drahos.

Peter Breiner

Peter Breiner started piano lessons at the age of four, and went on to study at Bratislava Conservatory and at the Prague College of Music and Drama, concentrating at the latter in composition. In 1981, having completed his studies, he began work as musical supervisor in the Czecho-Slovak Radio in Bratislava and for OPUS Records and Publishing. He has had a varied career, involving the direction of the Czecho-Slovak Radio Children's Choir, playing jazz on the piano and working as an orchestral conductor and arranger.