

PEACE ON EARTH

Gesu Bambino, Pietro Yon arr. Gordon Schuster (1917)

Amazing Peace: A Christmas Poem

By Dr. Maya Angelou

Thunder rumbles in the mountain passes
And lightning rattles the eaves of our houses.
Flood waters await us in our avenues.

Snow falls upon snow, falls upon snow to avalanche
Over unprotected villages.
The sky slips low and grey and threatening.

We question ourselves.
What have we done to so affront nature?
We worry God.
Are you there? Are you there really?
Does the covenant you made with us still hold?

In the Bleak Midwinter, Gustav Holst (1906)

Vocalise, Sergei Rachmaninoff (1912)

I Wonder as I Wander, Appalachian Carol John Jacob Niles, arr. Carlos Salzedo (1933)

Into this climate of fear and apprehension, Christmas enters,
Streaming lights of joy, ringing bells of hope
And singing carols of forgiveness high up in the bright air.
The world is encouraged to come away from rancor,
Come the way of friendship.

It is the Glad Season.
Thunder ebbs to silence and lightning sleeps quietly in the corner.
Flood waters recede into memory.
Snow becomes a yielding cushion to aid us
As we make our way to higher ground.

Hope is born again in the faces of children
It rides on the shoulders of our aged as they walk into their sunsets.
Hope spreads around the earth. Brightening all things,
Even hate which crouches breeding in dark corridors.

Salut d'Amour, op. 12, Edward Elgar (1888)

Tu scendi dalle stelle, Saint Alphonsus Ligouri (1732)

In our joy, we think we hear a whisper.
At first it is too soft. Then only half heard.
We listen carefully as it gathers strength.
We hear a sweetness.
The word is Peace.
It is loud now. It is louder.
Louder than the explosion of bombs.

“Allegro” from Harp and Violin Sonata in B flat Major, Giovanni Battista Viotti (1798)

Rise Up, Shepherd and Follow, American Spiritual arr. Alyssa Reit

Joy to the World, Lowell Mason (1848)

We tremble at the sound. We are thrilled by its presence.
It is what we have hungered for.
Not just the absence of war. But, true Peace.
A harmony of spirit, a comfort of courtesies.
Security for our beloveds and their beloveds.

It is Christmas time, a halting of hate time.

On this platform of peace, we can create a language
To translate ourselves to ourselves and to each other.

At this Holy Instant, we celebrate the Birth of Jesus Christ
Into the great religions of the world.
We jubilate the precious advent of trust.

We shout with glorious tongues at the coming of hope.
All the earth's tribes loosen their voices
To celebrate the promise of Peace.

It Came Upon a Midnight Clear, Richard Storrs Willis (1850)

O Little Town of Bethlehem, Lewis Redner (1868)

As Lately We Watched, Austrian Carol

Noël Provençal, French Carol arr. Alyssa Reit

We, Angels and Mortal's, Believers and Non-Believers,
Look heavenward and speak the word aloud.
Peace. We look at our world and speak the word aloud.
Peace. We look at each other, then into ourselves
And we say without shyness or apology or hesitation.

Peace, My Brother.

Peace, My Sister.

Peace, My Soul.

Still Still Still, German Carol arr. Alyssa Reit (1865)

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By Dr. Maya Angelou

A Concert by
Brierwood Ensemble
Christina Brier - Harp
Linda Estep - Violin

Recorded December 6, 2020
In St. Paul's Episcopal Church
Beaufort, NC

This concert is dedicated to the Glory of God and in thanksgiving for the life of Samuel Jones Smitherman, V. We are grateful to Marianna Hollinshed for her generosity in providing this wonderful gift.

Glenn Dunn - Videographer and Sound Recordist