

GOOD KING WENCESLAS

Traditional

Brad Hansen
arranger

PROGRAM NOTES

About the Music

The lyrics to *Good King Wenceslas* were written by John Mason Neale in 1853, and set to the melody of a 13th century Latin tune. Wenceslas lived from 907 to 935 AD, and in the story told by this carol he and his page braved a snowstorm to deliver food to a peasant. He was a charitable ruler, and today Wenceslas is the patron saint of the Czech state. The king's role in this arrangement is sung by a bass soloist, and the role of the page by a soprano soloist. The full choir acts as a narrator, and the parts alternate. Microphones will be needed for the soloists. The music swings in the style of a Blues Boogie Shuffle, with deep bass lines throughout in the piano part. It would be easy to give those lines to a Double Bass, include a drummer, and form a piano trio. The message in the last verse captures the spirit of Christmas in a tangible way. This is a joyous kind of Blues!

It is drawn from Hansen's *Medley of Carols*. All arrangements in the medley feature the piano as an equal partner with the choir. The harmonic language is jazz oriented, cast in asymmetrical and mixed meters, with swing and Latin rhythms. Suitable for High School, College, Church, and Community choirs.

Vocal Ranges S: D4 – G5 A: B♭3 – B4 T: D3 – E4 B: G2 – D4. **Duration** approx. 4' 00".

Lyrics

Good King Wenceslas looked out, on the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about, deep and crisp and even;
Brightly shone the moon that night, tho' the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight, gath'ring winter fuel.

"Hither, page, and stand by me, if thou know'st it, telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he? Where and what his dwelling?"
"Sire, he lives a good league hence, underneath the mountain;
Right against the forest fence, by Saint Agnes' fountain."

"Bring me flesh, and bring me wine, bring me pine logs hither:
Thou and I shall see him dine, when we bear them thither."

Page and monarch, forth they went, forth they went together;
Through the rude wind's wild lament and the bitter weather.

"Sire, the night is darker now, and the wind blows stronger;
Fails my heart, I know not how; I can go no longer."
"Mark my footsteps, my good page. Tread thou in them boldly;
Thou shalt find the winter's rage freeze thy blood less coldly."

In his master's steps he trod, where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod which the saint had printed.
Therefore, Christian men, be sure, wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor, shall yourselves find blessing.

About the Composer

Brad Hansen is a pianist, composer, and Professor Emeritus at Portland State University where he teaches Theory and Composition. He previously taught at Ole Miss, Humboldt State (CA), and Ball State (IN). Hansen studied at Berklee, Grinnell, Cincinnati Conservatory, University of Northern Colorado, and the University of Oregon. His instrumental and choral works have been performed worldwide. The Oregon Regional Arts and Culture Council awarded him a grant to stage the *Medley of Carols* in 2025, sung by the PSU Chamber Choir accompanied by Darrell Grant.

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Traditional

Lyrics by John M. Neale

Good King Wenceslas

Arranged by Brad Hansen
for SATB Voices and Piano

Optional Piano Intro:
12-Bar Boogie-Shuffle
Blues in G

Good King Wenceslas

for SATB Voices and Piano

Lyrics by John M. Neale

Traditional

Arranged by Brad Hansen

Swing ♩ = 112

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Piano

Swing ♩ = 112

mp

cresc.

4

mf

mf Good King Wen-ces-

mf Good King Wen-ces-

mf Good King Wen-ces-

mf Good King Wen-ces-

Good King Wen-ces-

mf

8

las looked out, on the Feast of Ste - phen, When the snow lay

las looked out, on the Feast of Ste - phen, When the snow lay

las looked out, on the Feast of Ste - phen, When the snow lay

las looked out, out on the Feast of Ste - phen, When the snow lay

The musical score for measures 8-11 features four vocal parts (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The vocal parts enter with the lyrics 'las looked out, on the Feast of Ste - phen, When the snow lay'. The piano part provides a harmonic foundation with a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

12

round a - bout deep and crisp and ev - en; Bright - ly shone the

round a - bout deep and crisp and ev - en; Bright - ly shone the

round a - bout deep and crisp and ev - en; Bright - ly shone the

round a - bout deep, deep and crisp and ev - en; Bright - ly shone the

The musical score for measures 12-15 continues the four-part vocal setting and piano accompaniment. The lyrics are 'round a - bout deep and crisp and ev - en; Bright - ly shone the'. The piano part continues with its accompaniment, featuring a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes. The vocal parts maintain their harmonic structure, with the Soprano and Alto parts often carrying the melody and the Tenor and Bass parts providing harmonic support.