

WHAT CHILD IS THIS?

Traditional

Brad Hansen
arranger

PROGRAM NOTES

About the Music

The lyrics to *What Child Is This?* were written by William Dix in 1865, and set to the old English tune *Greensleeves* in 1871. The first verse lies naturally in 7/8 meter, and the second verse moves smoothly to 4/4 with syncopation. A brief piano interlude sets up the Jazz Waltz in 6/4 for the rest of the piece, inspired by John Coltrane's version of *Greensleeves*. A piano solo is written out with choral background figures, with room for a jazz pianist to improvise. The ending resolves with hauntingly beautiful harmonies. The focus should be on energetic rhythmic execution throughout, so that the mixed meters fit together seamlessly. This arrangement has the potential to be a showstopper, and a lot of fun for your choir.

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: B3 – F5 A: A3 – C#5 T: C3 – F4 B: F2 – C#4. **Duration** approx. 4' 30".

Lyrics

What Child is this who, laid to rest
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

Why lies He in such mean estate
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here
The silent World is pleading.

Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,
The cross be borne for me, for you.
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh,
Come peasant, king to own Him;
The King of kings salvation brings,
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
Raise, raise a song on high,
The virgin sings her lullaby.
Joy, joy for Christ is born,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

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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Arranged by Brad Hansen
for SATB Voices and Piano

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Con moto ♩ = 106

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Piano

mp

mp

mf

What

What

5

Child is this who, laid to rest on Ma-ry's lap is sle - ep - ing? Whom an - gels greet with

Child is this who, laid to rest on Ma-ry's lap is sle - ep - ing? Whom an - gels greet with

p

p

Child is this who, laid to rest on Ma-ry's lap is sle - ep - ing? Whom an - gels greet with

10

an-thems sweet, while shep-herds watch are keep - ing?

p while shep-herds watch are keep - ing?

an-thems sweet, while shep-herds watch are keep - ing?

p while shep-herds watch are keep - ing?

mf

15

mf This, this is Christ the King, whom shep-herds guard and an - gels sing;

mf This, this is Christ the King, whom shep-herds guard and an - gels sing;

mf This, this is Christ the King, whom shep-herds guard and an - gels sing;

mf This, this is Christ the King, whom shep-herds guard and an - gels sing;