

In the Bleak Midwinter

Gustav Holst

GUSTAV HOLST, ARR. HUGH LEVEY



STRING QUARTET

SCORE & PARTS

In the Bleak Midwinter

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The words for this famous carol were written by English poet Christina Rossetti in 1872, and were set to music by Gustav Holst in 1906. The Holst setting was written for the English Hymnal which is widely used in English speaking countries. Indeed, its preface grandly referred to itself as, "a collection of the best hymns in the English language".

Three years after Holst, the English composer Harold Darke wrote an anthem based on the same words. Both versions are widely performed at Christmas time - the Holst often used for communal singing during services and the Darke sung by church choirs. Both are beautiful settings of the words and have melodic similarities. The arranger chose to arrange the Holst version for the simple practical reason that it is no longer in copyright, unlike the Darke version.

Duration: 3 minutes 30 seconds

PERFORMANCE NOTES

This is a through-composed instrumental arrangement that explores the melody and harmonies of the Holst hymn in 3 differently arranged verses. After a short introduction the first verse uses Holst's original 4-part harmonisation in its beautiful simplicity. In verse 2, the viola presents the tune in a lower register while the 'cello has a Baroque style 'walking bass'. The violins weave countermelodies above them, introducing new material for a Pachelbel-like interlude of an ascending sequence - bringing the music to a climax before subsiding into verse 3. Here a slightly ornamented version of the tune returns to violin 1 with the new material continuing in the bass line. After another smaller climax we return to the original Holst as the work ends quietly and thoughtfully.

over images: (1) *L'Avenue de Neuilly on a Winter Day* by Luigi Loir, 1874, PD, via Wikimedia Commons

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In the Bleak Mid-Winter

Christina Rossetti

Gustav Holst arr. Hugh Levey

Adagietto (dolce) ♩ = 70

Melody

Violin 1 *mp*

Violin 2 *mf* *p*

Viola *mf* *p*

Violoncello *p*

6

Vln.1

Vln.2

Vla.

Vc.

12

Vln.1

Vln.2

Vla.

Vc.

18

Vln.1

Vln.2

Vla.

Vc.

Viola Lead

Viola Lead

Melody

Viola Lead

mp *mf* *mp* *mp* *mp*

mp *mf* *mp* *mf*

mp

24

Vln.1

Vln.2

Vla.

Vc.

mp

PREVIEW ONLY

29

Vln.1

Vln.2

Vla.

Vc.

34

Vln.1

Vln.2

Vla.

Vc.

p

Mel. ends

p

p

38

Vln.1

Vln.2

Vla.

Vc.

mf

mp

mf

mp

mf

mp