

# IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER

Gustav Holst  
Arranged by Brendan McBrien

## INSTRUMENTATION

Conductor Score	1
Violin I	8
Violin II	8
Viola	5
Cello	5
String Bass	5

From the composer of *The Planets* comes this beloved Christmas carol. Voted the “best carol” in a 2008 *BBC Music* magazine poll, this lesser-known tune is a touching and beautiful work by one of England’s greatest composers. This lush setting features all sections of the orchestra.

## PROGRAM NOTES

Gustav Holst composed his Advent hymn “In the Bleak Midwinter” in 1905 at the request of Ralph Vaughan Williams for inclusion in the *English Hymnal* of 1906. The words were taken from a poem of the same name by the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century English poet Christina Rossetti. Rossetti wrote this poem in 1871 for a Christmas edition of *Scribner’s Monthly*. Holst’s tune is known as “Cranham,” after a village in Gloucestershire where he lived at the time, and it was there that he wrote the music. The house is now called “Midwinter Cottage” to commemorate that work. Since its creation it has become a cherished Christmas carol, performed and recorded by some of music’s greatest artists. In 2008, the *BBC Music* magazine polled the world’s 51 leading choir directors and experts to find the top 50 Christmas carols of all time. “In the Bleak Midwinter” came in at number 1, an enormous honor for this little-known holiday gem.

Not having entered the pantheon of carols like “Joy to the World” and “Silent Night,” this subtle offering, with its simple and humble character, can be summed up in the final verse of the hymn:

What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;  
Yet what I can, I give him: give my heart.

The ending of this arrangement quotes “The First Noel” as a way to underscore Rossetti’s text and its description of the first Christmas. “The First Noel,” also an English carol, coincidentally was published the same year as Rossetti’s poem.



# In the Bleak Midwinter

CONDUCTOR SCORE  
Duration - 4:00

Gustav Holst  
Arranged by Brendan McBrien

Affettuoso (♩ = 74)

Violins I

Violins II

Viola

Cello

String Bass

This section of the score covers measures 1 through 3. It features five staves: Violins I, Violins II, Viola, Cello, and String Bass. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'Affettuoso' with a quarter note equal to 74 beats per minute. The dynamic is 'mf' (mezzo-forte). The music consists of a melodic line in the upper strings and a supporting bass line. Measure 3 includes a fermata over the first violin part.

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

This section of the score covers measures 4 through 7. It features five staves: Violins I, Violins II, Viola, Cello, and String Bass. The key signature remains two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The dynamic is 'mf'. The music continues with the melodic line in the upper strings. Measure 7 includes a 'div.' (divisi) marking for the first violin part, indicating that the players should divide into two groups.

9

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

8 9 10 11

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

12 13 14 15 16

17

Vlns. I *mp*

Vlns. II *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Cello *mp*

Str. Bass

17 18 19 20

Vlns. I *p*

Vlns. II *p*

Vla. *p*

Cello *p*

Str. Bass

21 22 23 24

25

Vlns. I *pp* *mp*

Vlns. II *pp* *mp*

Vla. *pp* *mp*

Cello *mp*

Str. Bass *mp*

25 26 27 28 29

33

Vlns. I *mf*

Vlns. II *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Cello

Str. Bass

30 31 32 33

I  
Vlns.

II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

34 35 36 37

I  
Vlns.

II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

38 39 40 41

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

42 43 44

*f*

*f*

*f*

*f*

*f*

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

45 46 47 48

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

*pizz.*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*arco*

*mf*

49 50 51 52

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

*p*

*p*

*p*

*p*

53 54 55 56 57

56



Vlns. I  
Vlns. II  
Vla.  
Cello  
Str. Bass

mf cresc. mf cresc. mf cresc. mf cresc.

58 59 60 61

This system contains measures 58 through 61. It features five staves: Violins I and II, Viola, Cello, and String Bass. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). Measures 58 and 59 are marked with *mf* and *cresc.*. Measure 60 has a *mf* marking. Measure 61 has a *cresc.* marking. A large red watermark is overlaid on the score.

Vlns. I  
Vlns. II  
Vla.  
Cello  
Str. Bass

f f f f f

63 div. cresc. cresc. cresc. cresc.

62 63 64 65

This system contains measures 62 through 65. It features five staves: Violins I and II, Viola, Cello, and String Bass. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). Measure 62 has a *f* marking. Measure 63 has a *f* marking and a *div.* marking. Measures 64 and 65 have *cresc.* markings. A large red watermark is overlaid on the score.

*poco rall.*

I Vlns. *ff* *f*

II Vlns. *ff* *f*

Vla. *ff* *f*

Cello *ff* *f*

Str. Bass *ff* *f*

66 67 68 69 70

I Vlns. *mf* *mp* *p*

II Vlns. *mf* *mp* *p*

Vla. *mf* *mp* *p*

Cello *mf* *mp* *p*

Str. Bass *mf* *mp* *p*

71 72 73 74

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