

For Patrick Allies and the Bourne Singers

I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

H W LONGFELLOW

(1807-1882)

Lively ♩ = 146

ED NEWTON-REX

(b 1987)

SOPRANO

f

I heard the bells on Christ-mas Day Their old fa-mi-liar ca-rols

ALTO

f

I heard the bells on Christ-mas Day Their old ca-rols

TENOR

f

I heard the bells on Christ-mas Day Their old fa-mi-liar ca-rols

BASS

f

I heard the bells on Christ-mas Day Their old ca-rols

PIANO
(for rehearsal only)

Lively ♩ = 146

4

sub mp *f*

play, And wild and sweet The words re - peat Of peace on earth, good-will to

sub mp *f*

play, And wild and sweet The words re - peat Of peace on earth, good-will to

sub mp *f*

play, And wild and sweet The words re - peat Of peace, of

mf *f*

play, The words re - peat Of peace, of

8

men, to men! And thought how, as the day had
 men, to men! And thought how, as the day had
 peace on earth, good-will to men! And thought how, as the day had
 peace on earth, good-will to men! And thought how, as the day had

12

sub f

S
A
come, The bel - fries of all Chri - sten - dom Had

T
B
sub f

16

(S)
(A)
rolled a - long Th'un - bro - ken song,
 song Of

20

mp legato

ah. *p* *sub f*

ah. Of peace on earth, good-will to men! Till ring-ing, sing-ing

peace on earth, good-will to men, *mp legato* to men! *p* *sub f*

24

dim *mp* A

on its way, The world re-volved from night to day,

dim

28

voice, a chime, A chant sub - lime Of

mp *p* *p*

ah ah ah

mp *p*

32

peace on earth, good-will to men!

p *mp*

good - will to men! Then from each black, ac - curs - ed

p *mp*

36

pp

mouth The can - non thun - dered in the South, And with the

pp

41

sound — The ca - rols drowned — Of peace on earth, good -

46

pp molto cresc *ff*

-will to men! It was as if an earth-quake rent The

pp molto cresc *ff*

52

sub p

hearth-stones of a con - ti - nent, and made_ for -

sub p

57 *p*

S The house - holds born Of peace on earth, good-will to

A - lorn The house - holds born Of

T - lorn The house - holds born *gradually fade to nn*

B - lorn The house - holds born

61 *gradually fade to nn* *rit*

men! (nn)

gradually fade to nn

peace on earth, good-will to men! (nn)

(nn)

Of peace on earth good-will to men, good - will to men!

rit

a tempo

65

SOPRANO SOLO *mp*

And in de - spair I bowed my head; "There

pp *mm*

pp

69

is no peace on earth," I said; "For hate is strong, And

p cresc

(mm)

p cresc

74

mocks the song Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

f *sub mf* *rit* *p*

f *sub mf* *p*

78 **GP** **a tempo**

f *ff*

S Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: "God

A Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: "God

T Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: "God

B Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: "God

GP **a tempo**

83

mp

is not dead, nor doth He sleep; The

mp

is not dead, nor doth He, doth He sleep; The

mp

is not dead, nor doth He, doth He sleep; The

mp

is not dead, nor doth He doth He sleep;

89

Wrong shall fail, The Right pre - vail, With peace, _____ with
 Wrong shall fail, The Right pre - vail, With peace on earth, good-will to
 Wrong shall fail, The Right pre - vail, With peace _____ on _____
 The Right pre - vail, With peace on

f
f
f
mf *f*

94

senza rit

peace on earth, good-will, with peace on earth, good - will to men."
 men, _____ with peace on earth, good - will to men."
 earth, _____ with peace on earth, good - will to men."
 earth, good - will, good - will to men."

senza rit

Composer's note

There are already well-known settings of this text, most notably Bing Crosby's 1956 recording of Johnny Marks' interpretation; however, people (including Crosby) have tended to omit the central, more overtly historical verses. I wanted to write a setting that included these, as they are critical to the effect of Longfellow's poem, written as it was during the American Civil War and at a time of great personal difficulty for the poet, not long after the death of his second wife and the injury of his son in battle.

The bells of the carol's title feature in the melodic spans of an octave and in the directional, often scalar movement between these extremities, taking inspiration from the art of change ringing; and not too much should be made of the irregular, alternating time signatures, which are merely intended to reflect the natural rhythm of the text.

Duration: 3 minutes

Text

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old familiar carols play,
 And wild and sweet
 The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
 Had rolled along
 The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
 A voice, a chime,
 A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
 And with the sound
 The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
 And made forlorn
 The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
 "For hate is strong,
 And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
 The Wrong shall fail,
 The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
(1807–82)



Ed Newton-Rex

Ed was both a chorister and a choral scholar in the Choir of King's College, Cambridge, and has written for a number of groups, including The King's Singers, VOCES8 and the Choir of King's College, Cambridge. He has also composed music for theatre in London's West End. The technology company he founded, Jukedeck, is working on artificial intelligence in music and has won several awards including a Cannes Innovation Lion. He lectures and writes about the intersection of artificial intelligence and creativity.