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NAXOS
AudioBooks

CLASSIC
FICTION

THE CHRISTMAS COLLECTION

SELECTED BY CHRISTINA HARDYMENT

Read by **Peter Jeffrey**
John Moffatt
Susan Engel and cast



ADVENT		
1	A Recipe for Christmas Pastry: Anon, c.1394 *	2:35
2	Britannia's Housewives Blithe: Romaine Joseph Thorn, 1795 #	2:28
3	The Bird of Dawning: William Shakespeare, <i>Hamlet</i> +	0:37
4	The Reverend Doctor Opimian Soliloquises on Christmas: T.L. Peacock, <i>Gryll Grange</i> , 1860 •	1:58
5	Yule Log: Robert Herrick #	0:45
6	Christmas Day: Nicholas Breton, <i>Fantastickes</i> , 1626 †	1:51
7	December: John Clare *	1:09
8	Sir Roger de Coverley's Christmas: Addison, <i>The Spectator</i> , No. 269 •	2:22
9	Kids Stuff: Frank Horne +	0:43
10	Christmas: John Betjeman •	2:36
11	from <i>Under the Greenwood Tree</i> : Thomas Hardy, 1872 #	5:20
12	Christmas Invitation Humbly Inscrib'd to the Honourable BEEF STEAK CLUB: William Barnes, 1848 •	1:34
CHRISTMAS EVE		
13	A Visit from St Nicholas (The Night Before Christmas): Clement Clark Moore †	3:07
14	All Quiet on the Western Front: Letter from Captain R.J. Armes +	4:16
15	The Oxen: Thomas Hardy • Carol: In The Bleak Midwinter, Christina Rossetti	1:42

CHRISTMAS DAY	
16	I Saw a Stable: Mary Elizabeth Coleridge * 0:33
17	The Innkeeper's Wife: Clive Sansom * 2:17
18	A Civil Wartime Christmas, 1657: John Evelyn, <i>Diary</i> # 2.17
19	The Boar's Head: William King, <i>The Art of Cookery, In Imitation of Horace's Art of Poetry</i> , 1708 • 1:21
20	A Restoration Christmas: Samuel Pepys, <i>Diary</i> • 2:50
21	Heap On More Wood!: Walter Scott † 1:12
22	Mr Pickwick's Christmas: Charles Dickens, <i>The Pickwick Papers</i> • 4:09
23	Snapdragon: Dulcie M Ashdown (Ed), <i>Christmas Past</i> * 2:07
24	Rectory Christmas: Francis Kilvert, <i>Diary</i> † 3:25
25	Everything and More: Charles Dickens, <i>A Christmas Tree</i> # 2:26
26	The Little Match Girl: Hans Christian Andersen * 7:25
27	The Christmas Tree: C. Day Lewis † 1:45
28	The Finest Festive Feast: Traditional c.1814 * 2:30
29	First Married Christmas: Osa Johnson, <i>I Married Adventure</i> ** 6:56
30	Dark Oak, Light Candles: Hilaire Belloc, <i>A Remaining Christmas</i> † 12:35
31	Glennie Nell's Roast Christmas Possum: Ernest Matthew Mickler (1940–1988), <i>White Trash Cooking II</i> ** 3:23
32	Christmas in Wartime: Norman Longmate (Ed), <i>How We Lived Then</i> # 7:43

CURMUDGEONLY CHRISTMASES

- | | | |
|----|--|------|
| 33 | Oh Noisy Bells, Be Dumb: John Skinner,
<i>The Journal of a Somerset Rector, 1772–1839</i> • | 1:09 |
| 34 | Gifts are like hooks: Martial, translated by James Michie † | 0:52 |
| 35 | Christmas Not What It Was: Robert Southey, <i>Letter from England, 1807</i> # | 1:25 |
| 36 | Christmas Day in the Workhouse: George R. Sims • | 8.33 |
| 37 | Horrible Heathen Rite: Edmund Gosse, <i>Father and Son, 1907</i> † | 5.29 |

PARTYING

- | | | |
|----|---|------|
| 38 | The Christmas Mummers' Play as performed in some of the villages
near Lutterworth, Leicestershire in 1863
Notices Illustrative of the Drama in Leicester: William Kelly, 1865 | 6:27 |
|----|---|------|

Dramatis Personae

CAPTAIN SLASHER, in military costume,
with sword and pistol – David Timson

KING OF ENGLAND, in robes, wearing the crown – Peter Jeffrey

PRINCE GEORGE, King's Son, in robes, and sword by his side – Simon Harris

TURKISH CHAMPION, in military attire, with sword and pistol – Simon Harris

A NOBLE DOCTOR – John Moffatt

BEELZEBUB – John Moffatt

A CLOWN – Simon Harris

INTRODUCTIONS – Benjamin Soames

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

39	The Magi – A Sermon preached by Lancelot Andrewes before the King's Majesty at Whitehall on Christmas Day, 1622 •	6:52
40	The Magi: W.B. Yeats, 1914 #	0:48
41	Little Things: Joseph Conrad, <i>Last Essays</i> •	0:43
42	Afterthought: Elizabeth Jennings ##	1:48
43	The Shop of Ghosts: G.K. Chesterton #	11:11
44	Ceremony upon Candlemas Eve: Robert Herrick, 1648 #	0:30
45	Ceremony for Candlemas Day: Robert Herrick, 1648 #	0:27
46	Ring Out, Wild Bells: Alfred, Lord Tennyson •	3:13

Total time: 2:31:08

Read by Peter Jeffrey

• Read by John Moffatt

† Read by David Timson

* Read by Susan Engel

+ Read by Simon Harris

** Read by Liza Ross,

Read by Benjamin Soames

THE CHRISTMAS COLLECTION

SELECTED BY CHRISTINA HARDYMENT

Christmas brings out the best and the worst in us. Certainly there can be no richer seam to mine for an anthology. Among what Thomas Love Peacock calls the 'many poetical charms in the heraldings of Christmas' there are eulogies by saints and diatribes from curmudgeons. This collection offers Christmas expounded by divines, sung by rustics, deplored by philosophers, made mystical in stories and summed up in a line by Elizabeth Jennings: 'The hush, the star, the baby, people being kind again'.

It includes complete versions of such old favourites as *The Little Match Girl*, *The Night Before Christmas*, *Ring Out*, *Wild Bells* and *Christmas Day in the Workhouse*, but also much that will, I hope, be unfamiliar. It moves from the simple pleasures observed by John Clare ('And children, 'tween their parents' knees, / Sing scraps of carols o'er by heart') to the miseries endured by Kilvert

('I sat down in my bath upon a sheet of thick ice which broke in the middle into large pieces whilst sharp points and jagged edges stuck all round the sides of the tub like *chevaux de frise*, not particularly comforting to the naked thighs and loins').

It tells of how the 'superstitious time of the Nativity' was made a political pawn in the time of John Evelyn and of dissenters over-indulging themselves with 'plum porridge'; of the shortages and contrivances of Christmas on the Home Front, and the wartime truce during which German and British forces exchanged carols and cigarettes.

There is, inevitably, much mention of food, as befits the day which C. Day Lewis calls 'a coral island in time where we land and eat our lotus'. There are ancient feasts and traditional delights; recipes for boar's head, 'rare mince pies', 'well-spiced hippocras' and how to pull blazing raisins

from the snapdragon – and how to cook possum.

Themes recur. The christmas tree – ‘a tree of fable, a phoenix in evergreen’. The yule log, part of which must be kept to tend the Christmas log next year in order to keep the devil away. Drink, most notably Mr Pickwick’s ‘mighty bowl of wassail, something smaller than an ordinary wash-house copper, in which the hot apples were hissing and bubbling with a rich look and a jolly sound that was perfectly irresistible’. And of course presents: explorations of the nature of giving from Martial (‘Gifts are like hooks...’), Betjemen’s ‘sweet and silly Christmas things, / Bath salts and inexpensive scent / And hideously ties so kindly meant’ and the mysterious green omnibus in G.K. Chesterton’s haunting tale of *The Shop of Ghosts*.

The Three Wise Men (‘in their stiff, painted clothes, the pale unsatisfied ones’) haunt poets (that was Yeats) and divines alike – very alike indeed in the case of Launcelot Andrewes’ 1622 sermon on their advent, the words of which, it was a shock to realise, would be

borrowed almost syllable for syllable by T.S. Elliot: ‘A cold coming they had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and specially a long journey in winter. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off, in solstitio brumali, “the very dead of winter”.’

Christmas has its horrors as well as its joys. Edmond Gosse’s father savagely rakes the plum pudding secretly made by the servants into the ashes of the fire; Southey deploras the social mobility that, he feels sure, will see the end of all the old Christmas customs within a generation.

He was of course wrong. The bulk of this anthology is a celebration of the greatest festival of the year, part pagan, part Christian, ambitiously generous, wholly human. But no one summed it up better than Nicholas Breton in his 1626 *Fantasticks*. ‘I hold a memory of Heaven’s Love, and the world’s peace, the mirth of the honest, and the meeting of the friendly.’

I’ve also included a complete Mummings’ play in memory of the primary school at East Kennet, Wiltshire where an inspired

headmistress used to lay one on annually to the great delight of the children and parents alike: Mrs Tomlin, the whole anthology is dedicated to you as a tribute to those glorious annual Christmases – and the splendid education – you gave so many children for so many years.

Notes by Christina Hardyment



Peter Jeffrey has played Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida* and Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* for the Royal Shakespeare Company as well as numerous roles for the Royal National Theatre and the West End. On television he has appeared in *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Our Friends in the North*, *Middlemarch* and *A Village Affair*.



John Moffatt has a distinguished theatre career encompassing many London and Broadway appearances. He has played Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* at the Open-Air Theatre, Regents Park, appeared in Ingmar Bergman's production of *Hedda Gabler*, and *Married Love* directed by Joan Plowright. Film credits include *Prick Up Your Ears*, and he has been seen on UK television in *Love in a Cold Climate* and *Maigret*. He also reads *Tristram Shandy* (Abridged) and *Selections from The Faerie Queene* for Naxos AudioBooks.



David Timson has performed in modern and classic plays across the country and abroad, including *Wild Honey* for Alan Ayckbourn, *Hamlet*, *The Man of Mode* and *The Seagull*. He has been seen on TV in *Nelson's Column* and *Swallows and Amazons*, and in the film *The Russia House*. He also reads the entire Sherlock Holmes canon for Naxos AudioBooks.



Susan Engel has had a varied and accomplished career in the theatre, performing on many occasions for the Royal Shakespeare Company, and Royal National Theatre. Among her West End credits are *An Inspector Calls*, *Three Sisters* and *Hamlet*. On television she has been seen in *Kavanagh QC* and *Inspector Morse* and her film credits include *Damage* and Peter Brook's *King Lear*.



Simon Harris has appeared on stage across the country in numerous plays including *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus*, *Macbeth* and *The Dresser*. He is also a playwright and his debut play *Badfinger* opened the Donmar Warehouse 'Four Corners' season in 1997.



Liza Ross has appeared on stage in the West End and in repertory across the country, including *Wings* and *The Front Page* at the Royal National Theatre. She has made many television appearances including *After the War*, *Poor Little Rich Girl*, *Two's Company* and *The Month of the Doctors*. Her film work includes *Batman* and *The Shadowchasers* and she has worked extensively as a voice artist. She also reads *The Awakening* and *Anne of Green Gables* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Benjamin Soames trained at LAMDA. Since then he has appeared in the television series *Sharpe* and *Absolutely Fabulous* as well as the films *Heavy Weather* and *England, My England*. He toured worldwide in the acclaimed Cheek By Jowl production of *Measure For Measure*. He reads *The Tale of Troy*, *The Adventures of Odysseus*, *Tales from the Greek Legends* and *Tales from the Norse Legends* for Naxos AudioBooks.

The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

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MEDIEVAL CAROLS Oxford Camerata, Jeremy Summerly	8.550751
CHRISTMAS CAROLS FROM TEWKESBURY ABBEY Andrew Sackett	8.553077
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CHRISTMAS GOES BAROQUE CSSR State Philharmonic Orchestra, Peter Breiner	8.550301
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Music programmed by Nicolas Soames

Acknowledgments

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The Oxen by Thomas Hardy
by courtesy of Curtis Brown on behalf of The Trustees of
Miss E.A. Dugdale.

The Innkeeper's Wife by Clive Sansom
courtesy of David Higham Associates.

A Remaining Christmas from *Dark Oak, Light Candles* by Hilaire Belloc
courtesy of Peters Fraser and Dunlop.

Glennie Nell's Roast Christmas Possum from *White Trash Cooking II* by Ernest
Matthew Mickler, courtesy of Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, California.

The Magi by W.B. Yeats,
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Afterthought by Elizabeth Jennings,
courtesy of David Higham Associates.

The Shop of Ghosts by G.K. Chesterton,
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The Christmas Tree from *Selected Poems by C. Day Lewis*
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Christmas by John Betjeman
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Produced by Nicolas Soames

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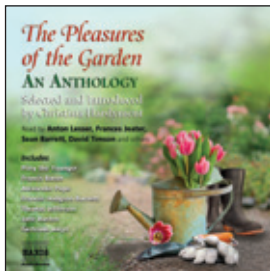
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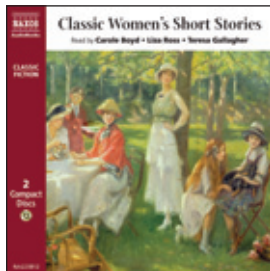
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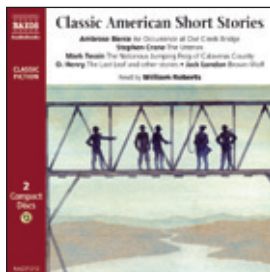
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THE CHRISTMAS COLLECTION

SELECTED BY CHRISTINA HARDYMENT

Includes **The Little Match Girl**, **The Night Before Christmas**
and **Christmas Day in the Workhouse**

Read by **Peter Jeffrey, John Moffatt, David Timson, Susan
Engel, Simon Harris, Liza Ross** and **Benjamin Soames**

'The hush, the star, the baby, people being kind again' – Elizabeth Jennings

Christmas brings out the best and the worst in us, as can be seen in this evocative anthology. Among what Thomas Love Peacock calls the 'many poetical charms in the heraldings of Christmas' there are eulogies by saints and diatribes from curmudgeons. Here, Christmas is expounded by divines, sung by rustics, deplored by philosophers and made mystical in stories.

This collection includes complete versions of old favourites and new discoveries: a sermon by Lancelot Andrewes, an account of Christmas under the Puritans, a first, poverty-stricken Christmas in turn-of-the-century New York and a Mummings' play.

Adding the final touch is the music: from traditional Christmas carols and Corelli to Benjamin Britten. On this recording, Christmas past brings alive Christmas present.

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