

# The Snow Is Melting For Christmas A Cultural Study of the Holiday Season through Music

A STUDY GUIDE AND TEACHERS LESSONS

PART ONE - Celebrations of the Holiday Season  
For this music of Hope Holidays and Joy



© 2009 Gary S. Schofield

PART 1:- **Celebration of the Holidays, Joy and  
Appreciation**

**TEACHER LESSONS**

**A: TEACHER APPRECIATION**

**Listen to Track 10 “The Teacher Appreciation Song”**

***Introduction***

**One of the most important parts of life is being aware of, and appreciating, what we have. Without this awareness it becomes very hard to be happy at all and the pursuit of happiness is so important as to be placed in our Bill of Rights.**

**Living in the wealthiest and most powerful country in the world you think should be enough but it is not unless we are aware. Understanding and appreciation of everything comes through education. Teachers give us a gift that we can keep for life, while sharing with others. This is an important time of the year for reflection and all the Worlds’ religions place knowledge and enlightenment very highly.**

**It is not easy to manage a group of energetic children and shape them into wise people so saying thank you is the least we can do.**

**“The Teacher Appreciation Song”**

A cool school feature is an apple for the teacher  
A prudent student sometimes gives a clap  
Lots of books and spelling and math  
But we just keep our pencils sharp and sing just like an angels harp  
To gear for a tiny revelation;  
Today, boys and girls, its teacher appreciation!

So let’s Rock, Let’s Roll  
To give those kids a goal  
Let’s wave, raise, cheer a flag to salute our teachers dear

Some fun with pencils and a paper and eraser  
A prudent student sometimes gives a clap  
Its time to take a little recess, we all confess;  
“We love what you do  
you help us see the world anew”

We hope one day to be like you  
And walk a path of knowledge or prepare for college  
But most importantly you set us free to be the person we want to be  
And in many years when our children appear we will tell them what we learned right here

*Education strengthens the Nation*  
As far as I can tell we can spell SOL

Bring all those papers and those pencils and those books  
It doesn't matter stop unruly chatter  
Never too soon to mention, glue our shoes or we will all break ranks  
Hand over heart we give you thanks

## **B: CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **a) Listen to track 1 on the CD**

#### **“The Snow is Melting For Christmas”**

The snow is melting for Christmas  
And all of the white is shedding a glistening tear, clear as albedo glare  
Where are our three wise men?  
And what if we worship the Earth a little more?

But realize that it is you  
And all of the things that you do

What values can there be if there isn't a world left to see  
We love our children too  
So help to make them see that all of the: hopes, all of the dreams  
All we create, all of our fate  
The wisdom, the compassion  
The drama, sacrifice, the human verse  
Would be lost in a dispassionate universe  
And will mean nothing if we are left without a world

See if the class can answer the following questions:

- ⇒ Question: What imagery is used in the music?
- ⇒ Answer: the melting snow forming a tear representing sadness, three wise men making the reference to the nativity story, verse representing literature and the creations of humanity.
  
- ⇒ What is the connection between Christmas and snow?
- ⇒ Answer. In the northern Hemisphere there is a wonderful tradition of hoping for snow at Christmas time. Snow covers the land in a pure white, blanket and adds such a magic to the festive season and represents a renewal of life. The sparkling ornaments and lights are highlighted by such crisp white beauty. Consider; Bing Crosby's "I am dreaming of a White Christmas".
  
- ⇒ The author is making a reference to the snow being there but being lost by melting. As if the seasons, as the climate, are changing.

**b) Activities,**

Ask the class to show hands for those who think that the Earth is heating up and those that believe it is not.

Even though there is a percentage of the population that believe the Earth is not heating the scientific and measurable fact is that it is indeed warming. Many governments and scientists are concerned about the effects of climate change they are seeing and what they will be should it continue.

Most changes in climate take place very slowly over hundreds, thousands and sometimes millions of years. We would not expect such a dramatic change within a lifetime. Because scientists can not account for the change by any natural cause and the Earth has not been struck by a comet they have concluded that this change has been caused by human activity.

It is known that Carbon Dioxide traps heat energy much like a greenhouse in the sun and although the Earth is very large the atmosphere is a thin covering and we now pour billions of tons of Carbon Dioxide into the atmosphere every year with our industrial civilization.

**c) Understanding the Song**

“Clear as albedo glare”.

Albedo is a scientific term often used to describe Global Warming. Snow, Ice and Glaciers have a high albedo because they reflect the suns light and heat back into space. Water has a lower albedo and so will absorb more energy than ice.

So melting snow will mean even more energy is absorbed from the Sun.

Where are our three wise men?

This is a reference to the three wise men in the original Christmas story but also asking the question? How wise is it to risk our Earth?

And what if we worship the Earth a little more?

All of the World’s religions, including Christianity, have a respect and reverence for the Natural World, after all the religious festivals coincide with the Earth’s seasons and our planet’s calendar.

The natural world is a source of wonder and power and awe. We are obviously not showing enough reverence for the world or we would be doing more to reduce our negative impact.

“But realize that it is you and all of the things that you do.”

We are often very good at blaming everything else, our government or other countries or other people but it is all of us! We think we are too small to effect change on our planet but yet we are effecting it everyday.

Without a world all of our values would be lost. We would not only lose our future but our past as well.

**“The human verse” all the wonderful things people have created. Helping the planet is a very important project that everyone, including all the children of the world, should help.**

**d) Something to ponder.**

**Why do we call our planet Earth when it is covered by mostly water!?  
The oceans effect our climate more than anything on Earth.**

**C: PROGRAM MUSIC**  
**I am late for school!**

*Introduction*

*Program Music* is music that tells a story as opposed to *Absolute Music* which does not attempt to.

There is a wonderful tradition of Program Music in the Western World.

For example; “The Moldau” by Smetana. You can hear the river begin it life’s course in the small rivulets of the mountains and swell into a mighty river. The stream passes a country wedding, elves dancing and splashing rapids. The theme becomes stronger and powerful to represent the story of the river’s travels in becoming a mighty river.

Vivaldi wrote “The Four Seasons” (*Quattro Stagioni*) to tell the story of the seasons of the year. You can almost hear the birds sign in the springtime and feel the cold of winter.

In the same way this is a piece of music written and performed by a 10 year old boy.

We have all worried about being late for school.

**Listen to track 14**

The piece begins with the boy sleeping peacefully and soundly. Listen to the dreamy quality of the piano. Then as we drift off with him we scarcely notice the melody becoming the chimes of an alarm clock. If you are very clever you will hear it is the sound of Big Ben!

Suddenly it is time to get up and get ready for school. Where are my clothes? You can almost hear him say. “Where is my school bag?”

The music and the boy become more and more frantic as time becomes shorter. Listen to the way those remarkable notes sound as the boy plays the piano. Each triplet becomes higher and higher in pitch as the music raises the intensity.

Finally he makes it! He is at school and you can hear the relief, but his clock was fast.

## **D: SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE**

### **a) Understanding Religious Tolerance**

“All the World’s Religions”

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution allows for all religions to be treated equally in the US and supports a separation of Church and State.

That means you are free to follow any belief, or none if you choose. It also means; the Government may not tell the Church what to do and the Church may not tell the Government how to run the Country.

A little boy struggles with the difficulty of coming to a new country where everyone has different beliefs and ceremonies.

How would you feel if you came to a place where everything was different and people there worshiped a different God for example?

### **b) Listen to track 5**

#### **c) Discussion**

This is a song about religious tolerance and understanding. It is not a song about the commercialization of Christmas. Toys are attractive to children of all religions all over the world there is nothing inherently Christian about them, It is also a stereotype to believe only the West is materialistic.

"...surrounded by toys... but on Christmas day he wants more:  
That all the worlds religions would take a breath and see..."

The boy can appreciate other religions not just his own.

If anything has assisted the collision between Islam and Christianity it is military conflict. “Fighting” actually means “struggle” in the song: the struggle to fight over the minds of boys like him. It is mostly the children who suffer in war....but this is also a metaphor; hence the "Peace on Earth".

All over the world people are all doing very similar things while believing only they have the answer and that other religions are so different: They worship on a Saturday instead of a Sunday. They open their eggs at the pointed end instead of the round, as Jonathan Swift would say.

“They are all as good and equal in the world I want to be”

Would it really hurt to celebrate Chanukah with the Jews or hear a service in Catholic Latin for a change? Islam and Christianity are very similar but with extremists in each. Why not appreciate the Eastern philosophy that God can be found within all of us? This philosophy is also found in the Gnostic gospels of early Christianity.

The point is whatever you believe... how well do you value others beliefs?

## E: UNDERSTANDING THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE

### *Introduction*

**Have you ever thought, while your nose, fingers and toes are cold and you are so excited that the holiday season is here that.....it is not the same season everywhere!.**

**All around the world people are celebrating but in the Southern Hemisphere it is summer and not winter there.**

**What must it be like for them?**

**They can not be waiting for the snow to come so what a different time it must be, and are they really all upside down?**

### **Listen to Track 3 “Te Harinui”**

⇒ Think about how short the days are at Christmas and how long the nights are. Will that be the same on the other side of the world? How will that change the kind of celebration there will be?

Answer: No the days will be long and the nights short. As the days are long there will be more time outside more time to play. Here in the Northern Hemisphere many children rush to bed early when it is dark hoping to awake and find presents.

⇒ What season would it be in New Zealand or Australia at Christmas time? Would it be summer? What is life like in the summer for you? Where do you usually go in summer? To the beach?

Answer: Yes, the season will be summer in the Southern Hemisphere.

⇒ What might be lost by having a warm climate at such a time? Do they still have Santa Claus Is he dressed in shorts!?

Answer: Yes, Santa Claus is still there but he is dressed for the coldest of days even though it is the middle of a hot summer.!

⇒ Do you think the season may effect the kinds of things you do even the food you eat. In fact many people in the Southern Hemisphere enjoy a Christmas of barbecue at the beach

**The year still comes to a close at this time regardless of the season for most of the World’s many religions.**

### **TE HARINUI tidings of great joy.**

Not on a snowy night  
By star or candle light  
Nor by an angel band  
There came to our dear land  
Te Harinui glad tidings of great joy

It was “not on a snowy night” as it often is at Christmas in the Northern Hemisphere. Nor “by star or Candlelight” as the days are very long in the summer. That the “great joy” came to New Zealand; the arrival of news through missionaries.

But on a summers day  
Within a quiet bay  
The Maori people heard  
The great and glorious word  
Te Harinui, Glad tidings of great joy.

**The tradition for the Southern Hemisphere is to celebrate Christmas at the beach and this is how (in history) the word of the religion came to the native people of New Zealand.**

*A good place to start is with history because, after all, history is really the product of all the creative and destructive processes of generations of people just like us. People have always worshiped and celebrated all through history. They had the same questions and wants. The wonderful thing about the holiday season is that everyone is finding their own way of doing a similar thing:*

Note: In New Zealand, which is in the Southern Hemisphere, the year ends in the middle of summer not in winter. The Pohutukawa tree of New Zealand flowers red with summer blossoms and is called the New Zealand Christmas tree. Imagine a barbecue on the beach for Christmas surrounded by red blossoms.

## **F: MYTHS AND MYTHOLOGICAL CREATURES**

a) Listen to “The American Phoenix”, track 7

### **Introduction**

**It is remarkable how we in modern western society are so influenced by myth. We have inherited the myths of ancient civilizations because they serve a purpose in our society. The represent ideals and parables. Their heroes inspire and the drama is the source of daydreams and remarkably our own literature and even television.**

Consider. Is not Star Trek an example of today’s mythology and parable? It too is an odyssey with a small band of heroes fighting challenges and winning quests.

- ⇒ Name all the mythological ideas and creatures referred to in this song.
- ⇒ See which group in the class can find the most.

Answer:

- ⇒ **The Phoenix** is a bird creature from Greek mythology that could be reborn from its own ashes.
- ⇒ **The Chimera** a powerful and dynamic creature that was a cross between a lion, a reptile and a bird from the ancient Greek stories.
- ⇒ **The Medusa** a beautiful woman one of three sisters who became the Gorgons. The Medusa was so ugly as to be able to turn men to stone with her gaze. Hence “ I don’t look like very much, also a reference to not looking.
- ⇒ **Midas** The king who loved gold so much that he was granted the ability to turn all that he touched to gold. When he also turned those he loved to gold he realized the gold had lost its value to him. There are things far more valuable than gold. Hence “somewhere along the line I lost touch” meaning you can also lose touch of your ideals just as you can lose your magic touch.
- ⇒ **The American** In a way the American is also a myth. There is no one representative American or type. In the song the American is a mythological creature returning to his rightful place and path.
- ⇒ **The Sirens** The beautiful nymphs who would lure sailors towards them. Sometimes the ships would be drawn onto the rocks. It is the “home” of the sirens. People flock to the United States. The song uses both meanings. The US is also a great leader in the World and draws other countries to its ideals and its direction therefore it is important that it is traveling a wise course.

The mythological robot from The Terminator is also referenced with “I’ll be back”.

The song tells the story of an American who has fallen on hard times during the economic crisis. Many people have lost their jobs and this can be a time of disillusionment.

“The myths have died but I’ll never fold”

Many Americans see themselves as the job they are doing. Their work defines them and so it is not only a financial loss but it may feel like part of themselves. That is also a time when you can lose confidence and feel “slow and old” and all these things can be reflected in the country as well.

The important quality is the sprit of perseverance hope and determination. The hero fights back so that his life will rise again from the ashes just like a Phoenix. This is also a story about the Country and its myths but also about the US and its character.

## VOCABULARY

MAORI	:	a people from the islands of the South Pacific now the native people of New Zealand
TE HARINUI	:	means tidings of great joy in the Maori language. Te means the, Nui a great many or much..
TE	:	means “the” in the Maori language
NUI	:	means a great many or much in the Maori Language
HEMISPHERE	:	half the world
WORSHIP	:	to show love to your God.
SACRIFICE	:	Going without or giving up something
CHANT	:	to sing in a speaking way.
RITUALS	:	doing things and repeating things a certain way that gives them meaning
ENLIGHTENMENT	:	complete understanding
SECULAR	:	not religious
CONSUMERISM	:	buying things
PRUDENT	:	wise and careful
ALBEDO	:	Sun’s energy reflected back into space
REDEMPTION	:	to be saved, to lead a new life

### **b) ACTIVITIES, Historical Research Activity Topics:**

**Christianity** celebrates the birth of Christ and is joyful in the love for a baby.

**Judaism** celebrates Chanukah with the lighting of candles to remember an ancient miracle and the freedom of worship.

**Buddhism** celebrates Bodhi day, remembering the day Buddha achieved enlightenment.

**Islam** celebrates Ramadan, the gift of enlightenment through their holy book. (Although Ramadan has often fallen during the holiday season it is based on a lunar calendar and changes each year.)

**Kwanzaa** is a year’s end African American celebration of family, community and culture.

**Native Americans** celebrate many different rituals at this time including feasts and blessing.

People are performing their own rituals in a way that has special meaning to them. At this joyful time of year people often sing and chant. They enjoy being surrounded by people they love and sometimes they attempt to deny themselves things or sacrifice. This is sometimes as a New Year's resolution, or more seriously, by going without food or comfort. Certainly it is a time for thinking about life and its importance; also it is a time to remember other people less fortunate than you.

The other very well known ritual at this time is giving gifts. Sometimes shopping and rushing and receiving gifts become more important than the philosophy of the season.

⇒ Which one of these rituals are you thinking about right now?

STUDY GUIDE AND TEACHERS LESSONS

PART 2:- Listening to the Music



### 1. The Snow is Melting for Christmas

Enjoy the acoustic piano and classical guitar sound to the music. Part of the instrumental is based on the beautiful "Cannon in D" by Pachelbel. The awareness of how important our planet is to us is contemplated in the beauty of the music that follows it. The piano, guitar and the voice as an instrument all come together to highlight the little boy's wish for the future. It is a wish that goes far beyond the simple toys of Christmas.

In that way hope, belief and persistence and have their own power in the universe.

### 2. Away into Summer

Just when we are traveling through winter in the Northern Hemisphere the rest of the World is moving "Away into Summer".

"Was it then at evening's drop  
That you awoke to starlight's tumble  
And did you hear the early moon  
Calling from evening's plunder"

It is important for a project about holidays, hope and joy to include a song about love. Love is the greatest part of hope and joy. As the song says; when evening falls the stars in the night sky swirl and tumble like a living dance of constellations.

*Throughout all of human history people have gazed up with wonder and seen life stories played out across the heavens in pictures*

Evening awakens you to the stars and makes you aware of the Universe. In that way we are the consciousness of the Universe. We are part of the Universe contemplating itself.

In the middle of your day love will remind you as the seasons change and "spring these months away into summer".

The music has an unusual structure as it changes quickly through to the VII major chord, through the major subdominant and back to the tonic.

### 3. Te Harinui Glad Tidings of Great Joy

As with most of the music of Polynesia and the Pacific Islands rich harmony is very important together with a soaring melody. In this beautiful song you can hear layers of harmony and a quality of excitement and magic from the violins and drums when they enter. Can you tell what time the piece is written in? If you were dancing would it be a waltz  $\frac{3}{4}$  time?

### 4. Once in Royal David's City

There is nothing quite so beautiful as the human voice singing without any accompaniment.

This piece of music was originally published by an Irish lady called Cecil Alexander in 1848 in a book called "Hymns for little Children" The poem was set to music by Henry Gauntlet.

The city in the hymn is Jerusalem which is the recorded birthplace of both Jesus and King David.

## 5. All the World's Religions

This song is about Religious Tolerance

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution allows for all religions to be treated equally in the US and believes in a separation of Church and State.

That means you are free to follow any belief, or none if you choose. It also means; the Government may not tell the Church what to do and the Church may not tell the Government how to run the county.

A little boy struggles with the difficulty of coming to a new country where everyone has different beliefs and ceremonies.

How would you feel if you came to a place where everything was different and people there worshiped a different God?

The boy can appreciate other religions not just his own.

“They are all as good and equal in the world I want to be”

The point is; whatever you believe, how well do you value other's beliefs?

## 6. Air in D

“Air in D” is an arrangement of Bach's “Air on a G string”. This is the beautiful piece, played in a new way using the guitar as a voice.

In many ways we are all Bach. Bach is the foundation of most Western Music we hear even rock, pop and opera. Not only did Beethoven, Mozart, Chopin and Brahmas build upon the work of Bach and add their own style to his music but in a real sense Bach's musical genius can be found in most Western Music to this day.

Something to think about:

Recently a piece of Bach's music was discovered and of course instantly loved and appreciated. But if a composer from the 1600s from India or China was discovered with just as much brilliance and depth and beauty would we find it as wonderful as Bach? We probably would not. The music would not reach us. Music is communication and, without noticing, we have been trained to be more like Bach.

## 7. The American Phoenix

There are actually several contemporary modern styles in this one song. There is Rock and Folk and Reggae and Classical and Progressive. The ideas of myths and heroes are ancient and shape the imagination of much literature. The world is going through a difficult time and has always looked for leadership in the United States. The American has his “back up against the wall” but that is when heroes often do their best to return and rise from the ashes.

## 8. Corporate Man

A song about redemption

With the financial crisis having a negative effect on everyone the reputation of Corporate America is the lowest it has been for many years. Many blame corporations along with a softening of Government Regulations. This song is a humorous look at the fictional life of the Corporate Man.

No doubt many ambitious qualities are important in the corporate world; the need to climb over others higher on the corporate ladder. The song makes fun of the Corporate Man with his fancy “Wing tips” shoes he is a hawk, a hunter.

“He is a Dow Jones junkie” The Dow Jones is an indicator of the Stock Market. It implies his addiction is to money and the gambling nature of the stock market. The trading of commodities is part of the mercantile exchange and futures market.

It may be an interesting activity to discuss what stocks and futures are.

A stock is the small part of the company a member of the public can buy and own (Hence the term; public traded company). Often, if the company does well, you can sell the stock that has gone up in value and make a profit.

Futures are the promise to buy or sell something. This something is called a commodity. If you think a commodity, like pork bellies, will be worth more in the future you buy them now to sell in the future. If you think the price will go down you promise to buy them in the future this is called a put.

He has made his living from the profit of others but today it is the holiday season; “Christmas, Chanukah Kwanza and Yuletide”:

**Christianity** celebrates the birth of Christ and is joyful in the love for a baby.

**Judaism** celebrates **Chanukah** with the lighting of candles to remember an ancient miracle and the freedom of worship.

**Kwanzaa** is a year's end African American celebration of family, community and culture.

**Yuletide** is a mid-winter festival of the ancient Nordic and Germanic peoples. The Yule log is a log for the fir and part of a German tradition. Yule log is a symbol of an ancient reverence for trees.

Sometimes when people think they have made a big mistake in life they decide to change the path they are on. No matter how selfish “everybody is working for the man upstairs” means there is something, a God or even an ideal higher and more important than you are. The Corporate Man really becomes an “angel in wing tips” with generosity and philanthropy giving away money to charity and helping along the weak and sick.

“In his franchise of ascension” rising higher in his goals and his horizons.

## 9. Wild Thing

Stewart was only 5 when he sang Wild Thing. There is something charming about how such a little boy could ever be a wild one and so it changes the meaning of the song to one of father and son.

“You make my heart sing”

“You make everything Groovy”

Groovy came from the slang of jazz musicians in the 1930s and references the needle in the groove of the phonograph record.

Groovy became a popular expression in the popular culture of the 1960s and the song was written by Angelina Jolie's Uncle!

## 10. The Teacher Appreciation Song

This is a rap / rock song of thanks.

You can hear just how much the children appreciate all the sacrifices both parents and teachers do for them and the extra reward for the goal of education is:

“Someday we hope to be like you”

Leaning is the most fun thing you can do and school “rocks”

### 11. Joy to the World

If you listen very carefully to the introduction of the song you in the piano improvisation you will hear the theme of "Joy to the World gradually weaving it was through. As if joy will come if you persevere. The saxophone part is played by a 10 year old boy and the Trombone by David Bandman, the leader of the Air Force Band.

This is the music of the bible verse Luke Chapter 2 Verse 10.

"I give you good tidings of great joy."

Notice that this is also the inspiration for Te Harinui.

The words were written by Isaac Watts, an Englishman, in 1719 and set to music by Lowell Mason and American often referred to as the "Father of American Church music"

This track certainly glows and is bright with joy.

### 12. Away in A Manger

Away in a Manger was first published in 1885 in the Evangelical Lutheran Sunday School Collection.

Such a beautiful piece that children around the world have loved ever since. Just listening to it is enough explanation.

### 13. Danny Boy

The words were set to the music "Londonderry Air" many years ago and discuss loss and patience.

This time it is sung as a father and Son; The inevitable separation but the promise of return.

### 14. I am Late for School!

The piece begins with him sleeping peacefully and soundly. Listen to the dreamy quality of the piano. Then as we drift off with him we scarcely notice the melody becoming the chimes of an alarm clock. If you are very clever you will hear it is the sound of Big Ben!

Suddenly it is time to get up and get ready for school. Where are my clothes? You can almost hear him say. "Where is my school bag?"

The music and the boy become more and more frantic as time becomes shorter. Listen to the way those remarkable notes sound as the boy plays the piano. Each triplet becomes higher and higher in pitch as the music raises the intensity.

Finally he makes it!

He is at school and you can hear the relief, but his clock was fast.

## 15. White Snow

Have you ever wondered how we have come to associate a musical sound with something else?

Did you know that what we think as a sad chord a minor chord is not the same everywhere? Not all countries hear a minor chord as a sad chord.

In the same way a biting electrical guitar is often associated with a white hot sound; something powerful and electrical; like white hot lightning.

Tim Kirby's virtuoso electric guitar playing comes from a strong tradition of an expressive solo performance in classical music. This is called a cadenza and often gave the individual musician the chance to show off!

### Activities:

Try to imagine the sound is representing something else. Imagine white bitter cold. Can you do that? This sound can also represent intense cold just as easily as intense heart.

Listen to Debussy's "The Sunken Cathedral", "*La Cathédrale Engloutie*".

This is a wonderful example of the sound of the music itself conjuring an image. You can imagine you hear the watery muffled and echoed sounds of a cathedral bells chiming underwater.

Can you now see how important interpretation can be in music?

### IMPORTANT THOUGHT TO LEAVE WITH THE STUDENTS

Most people place restrictions on themselves in what they can do, study, or create but really...

THERE ARE NO LIMITS TO CREATIVITY, OR TO UNDERSTANDING.