

Damon Buxton  
A Winter's Night

### Celebrating the Fires Within



It seems odd that some of the most beautiful and reverential Christmas carols are from anonymous sources. Out of the twelve joyful tracks on guitarist **Damon Buxton's** new album, **A Winter's Night**, four are unknown, one is an original, and the others are from hymns or classical sources. Buxton has been playing thoughtful guitar for decades and his precision and attention to musical detail are mainstays of the instrumental music genre. So when a guitarist of that much talent decides to do a Christmas album, it is going to be remarkable. *A Winter's Night* is just that.

The album opens with Chadwick's **Angels We Have Heard on High**. I sang this in French during my youth and the refrain, *Gloria in excelsis Deo*," was always a favorite to me. Buxton's version is like a Renaissance piece, with a rich texture and a flowing melody.

**Oh Come All Ye Faithful** or known to many as *Adeste Fidelis* is a warm, cheerful carol with its roots in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and with a sketchy provenance. Some say a Portuguese king from the 17<sup>th</sup> century wrote it and some attribute it John Wade in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, I can't deny that it is a seasonal favorite. Just about everyone that sings carols knows the words, but Damon's instrumental is uplifting as the call to Bethlehem is heard.

I was surprised to hear **Ode to Joy** on the album, but it is a welcome addition. The final movement is from Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. Buxton's substitutes the lower range of his guitar for the human chorus which adds a textural feel that is palpable. There is something subliminally majestic in the music.

Buxton tenderly renders an olde English Hymn, **The First Noel**, as a slow ballad and the music is glorious. Few songs proclaim the Nativity as this one. **Oh Holy Night** is played with the same reverence and a bit more verve, and with more definition. There are several traditional carols on the album including *Good King Wenceslas*, *Deck the Halls*, and *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen*, but it is the hymn based carols that I favor.

Written 200 years ago, **Silent Night**, a favorite of many, is uplifting and melodic. Damon used a minimum of notes to add stark clarity to a night of wondrous beauty. I can see the stars sparkling, I can feel the cold night wind blowing, and I can sense the grace of a Miracle on that eventful evening.

**What Child is This?** is probably one of the most contemporary tunes on *A Winter's Night*, yet it is based on the English folk tune *Greensleeves*, written in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Buxton's melodic variation is dazzling as it invites all to worship the New King.

Finally, the last tune, **Bells**, is a Damon Buxton original. It is a bright tune, a musical cause célèbre that applies to miracles and histories. The graceful tintinnabulation had me closing my eyes and swaying to a beautiful melody and wondering, spiritually, what that holy night was like more than two thousand years ago. This particular tune on the album was my favorite of all.

You can put on Buxton's A Winter's Night and worship, congregate, visit, or just enjoy. There is music for every heart and every soul on this album.