

Four Christmas Carols

Call the Children is two songs in counterpoint in two languages. The medieval text, *Hodie Christus Natus Est* (Today Christ is Born), is solemn and cautionary, and was beautifully set in that spirit by Heinrich Schutz in the seventeenth century. I took an opposite approach. Here both it and the English text unrelated except in the common nativity theme, are set with uptempo simplicity.

The Snow Child and *Run to the Window* continue the nativity theme in the same childlike character, but at a more reflective pace. *Candles on the Tree* closes the group with a Dickensian Christmas scene, spilling jolly nonsense rhymes at racetrack speed.

In each case I wrote the music first. The verse was written or adapted (in the case of *Hodie*) to fit. This was easy for *Hodie*, where melisma seemed appropriate, but a chore for the rest. *Prima la musica* seems to make the job harder, but worth the trouble if the tune matters most.

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