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Foreword

Here are four joyful songs exploring the 'lighter' side of the Christmas season. The simple but touching *Have yourself a merry little Christmas* was made famous in the film 'Meet me in St. Louis' (1944) where it was sung by Judy Garland. The song has become a perennial favourite and something of a jazz standard to boot. Enjoy the close-harmony styling and the light-hearted quote from another Christmas song in the piano in the last few bars!

Jingle bells dates from the mid-nineteenth century and is thought to be one of the first secular Christmas songs to 'top the charts'. Whilst there is no doubting its enduring seasonal popularity, it is in fact not about Christmas at all but instead about the 'Cutter' drag races in Boston, USA, where young men would race sleighs and attempt to impress the girls with their speed ...

The Germans' love of the Christmas tree was immortalized in the song *O Tannenbaum* which in turn has become popular around the world – particularly in America, where the melody has even been adopted as the state song in four states! Many popular singers, including the great Nat 'King' Cole, have recorded their own versions either in German or, as in this arrangement, in English. The fir tree's evergreen qualities, and hence its loyalty, inspired many 'Tannenbaum' songs to be written over the last four centuries or so in German; however, it is the version by a Leipzig organist named Ernst Anschütz, set to an old folk tune, that ultimately stood the test of time.

The first sketches for *Another Christmas* were dreamt up in the back of a coach when fellow-composer Peter Gritton and I were doing some Christmas concerts on a trip to Switzerland; the song was inspired by the breathtaking winter scenery and the carols we had just been singing. Although written in a 'light' style, it has a message for all of us, particularly those that have grown weary of, or disillusioned with, Christmas. I hope you enjoy it as much as we enjoyed writing it together!

Alexander L'Estrange, December 2004

Editorial notes

Choral Basics has been devised to provide arrangements and original pieces specifically for beginner choirs.

Vocal ranges: the arrangements don't explore the extremes of the voice, but aim to stretch the vocal range from time to time in the context of a well-placed musical phrase. Small notes indicate optional doubling within a part.

Breathing: the singers should aim to follow the punctuation of the poem, and breathe accordingly. However, commas above the music suggest places to breathe where not provided for within the poem.

Piano accompaniments: the simple yet imaginative piano parts have been written to support the vocal lines. Small notes in the piano part are intended to help support singers while learning the piece; however, once more confident you may choose to omit them, or just to play them very gently.

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O Christmas tree

August Zarnack & Ernst Anschütz
Transl. Alexander L'Estrange

German traditional
arr. Alexander L'Estrange

Gentle and warm ♩ = 66

SOPRANO

ALTO

PIANO

p *legato* *mp*

con Ped.

mp

1. O

5

p *mm* *mm*

Christ-mas tree, O Christ-mas tree, your ver-dant bran-ches charm me. O

9

mm *mm* *mf* *mf*

Christ-mas tree, O Christ-mas tree, your ver-dant bran-ches charm me. They're

Jingle bells

JAMES PIERPONT
arr. Alexander L'Estrange

Joyful! ♩ = 116

SOPRANO/
ALTO

PIANO

f

con Ped.

4

ALL *mf*

Dash-ing through the snow in a

mf

6

one - horse o - pen sleigh, o'er the fields we go,

8

S.
laugh-ing all the way. Bells on bob - tail ring,

A.
laugh-ing all the way. Bells on bob - tail ring,