

I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

For Solo Piano & Narrator

Narration and Arrangement by
IAN ISAAC OLIVER

Music by
JOHN BAPTISTE CALKIN

Lyrics by
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

♩ = 80

(Narration begins: "I heard the bells...")

Piano

mf

Pno.

(CUE: "The churches of Mass...")

Pno.

mp *legato*

Pno.

I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

17 *("It was not long ago...")*

Pno.

rubato

22

Pno.

27

Pno.

a tempo

32 *("The chimes heralding...")*

Pno.

8va

37

Pno.

8va

I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Pno.

42

molto rall.

("With unprecedented dexterity...")

Moderato

Pno.

46

Pno.

50

8va

sim.

Pno.

54

Repeat until cue.

(CUE: "oft' forgotten verse...")

Pno.

59

I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

64 ("Then from each black...")

Pno.

68

Pno.

72 *8va*

Pno.

Repeat until
(CUE: "He is born!")

cresc.

77 ("Then pealed the bells...")

Pno.

f

82 ("By the grace...")

Pno.

I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

87

Pno.

92

Pno.

dim.

8va

("In our minds and hearts) END.

THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

Ian Isaac Oliver

NARRATION:

CUES

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day...

(Begin right after piano starts).

Cursive words left indelibly impressed on a piece of rag paper
Courtesy of a steel-nib pen yielded by
One, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

The churches of Massachusetts sounded in the distance;
Tired hands opened the window latch as
The cold winter air crept down onto the writing table;
A small price to pay, in order to better hear the
Sounds of a hundred mighty bells singing their
Advent of hope in a time when people so desperately
Needed it. Their message: *Christ the Savior is Born!*

(Piano will come in when you begin to speak).

It was not long ago that the very town he
Looked out upon was founded;
Built on the idea of being able to
Freely worship that holy child.
A child which represented the ideals
Of eternal life, eternal liberty, and
The eternal pursuit of happiness.

(You will hear "America the Beautiful").

Lost in thought, his introspection was
Interrupted by the crackling pop of a
Fireplace log. The fire, though necessary
To warm the home, served as a haunting,
Inescapable reminder; the writer still
Grieving over a wife whose dress suddenly
Caught flame before meeting a tragic end.

The chimes heralding the Savior's birth served as a reminder
That the chains of death could be broken; a free gift for all.

(The piano will make bell noises).

One that spoke of the promise of again seeing those he loved.
He expressed his silent gratitude for that which remained:
An eldest son, who, though far from the lonely room,
Let some of his presence be felt there. This, through
The arrival of a Christmas letter, most unexpected.

With unprecedented dexterity, eager hands given new life
slipped open the letter: what felicitations of joy would lie therein?
“Father, I feel a compulsion to report that against thy wishes,
In prior months I joined myself to the Union Army, in
Pursuit of the cause of protecting our freedoms. In decency,
I write these things now, as I was gravely wounded by a
Confederate ball, and fear I shant live to see you again.”

(Key change & more jubilant music).

Smitten with a winded grief, unable to provide sufficient air
To any guttural or anguished cry, the pen *could* yet speak.
He expressed his sentiments in an oft' forgotten verse:

*Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!*

(Sad version of "I Heard the Bells").

As his head bowed in despair, a sounding bell prompted:
There is one still who has been lower than this all. A man
Of sorrows, acquainted with grief; come to bear the sins,
Pains, and sicknesses of all the world. *He is born!*

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!"*

(Normal version comes back in).

By the grace of God, Longfellow's son survived his injuries.
He transformed the feelings he recorded into a message of hope
That has endured through centuries. As we experience our
Own joys and hardships, let us remember that Jesus Christ
Came into the world to help us bear them all. He is not dead
Nor doth he sleep; God watches over us always. This Christmas,
Let us make room for Him to dwell in our minds and hearts.