

Happy new year!

Christmas has come and gone and it's been a year like no other. It's been a strange, difficult time for us all and like so many others I found joy and comfort in music. I've loved reading about your music memories and related to so many of them! Who doesn't love to blast a good 80's Christmas hit on the speakers and have a dance (Barry doesn't mention any dancing in his story but let's all assume there was at least a little head bob) and I definitely miss the bliss of singing along with a big choir, everyone's voices melting into one. While we're all packing up decorations let's have one last look back on the festive season and share some memories:

*My favourite Christmas songs of all time are the Snowman and Do They Know it's Christmas Time. They always take me back to my childhood. I remember growing up as a kid in the early 90s and watching the Snowman. The song fills me full of joy and excitement at this time of year. Every time I hear that song, I feel like a big kid again. Do They Know it's Christmas Time takes me back to when I was born in the 80s, all my favourite music artists of all time. It's one of my favourite things to do every December is play that special song out loud over my Amazon Alexa, to think when the song first came out, we were all using record players. They were simpler times in my mind, people didn't have much but were so grateful for all that they had. That's my favourite Christmas songs stories.*

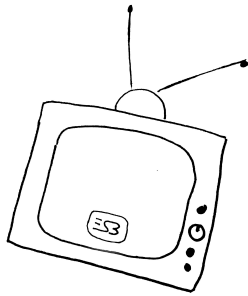
*"at Christmas time  
we let in light  
and we banish shade"*

*Wishing you all a safe, joyful and peaceful Christmas and New Year in 2021. Here's to better times ahead for us all. I really miss the song parties\*.*

- Barry

\*at the moment the library is closed to the public but when it's open we hold lots of events! In 2019 we held regular listening parties where we people would bring a copy of their favourite songs and we'd all listen to them together and talk about what we love about them. I discovered so much great music at the listening parties, we miss them too!

Even though like a lot of people who remember this song I wasn't old enough at the time to see the 1980's ESB advertisement that popularised it in Ireland when it first aired on television, "Goin' Back" by Dusty Springfield is a song that always makes me sit back and take a minute to think about Christmas and what it has meant to me over the years, and even more so now. Although I do hazily recall seeing the advertisement at some point when I was a kid I didn't really pay much attention to it until much later, when I left home and moved to Dublin in my early twenties. It



wasn't the first time I had lived away from my family, but it was the start of what I knew would more than likely be a permanent move. Although I always made it home for Christmas, at times I wasn't the most considerate of sons and the times between visits could stretch for long periods. Again, being young I guess I didn't appreciate how my parents might have felt about me being in a different part of the country, and of course it's nothing comparable to stories of emigration or separation that others might have, but I think the bonds and the ties that bind us are universally strong no matter how great or small the distance.

Travelling to Cork on the bus or the train I would always play it over my headphones and enjoy the feelings of nostalgia and warmth that would wash over me as I looked forward to spending some time with my parents, but if I am truthful it was only when I got a little older and had taken a few knocks in life that it really became "the" Christmas song for me. If I'd had a bad week, or month, or year, or whatever, whenever I heard that song I always knew my dad would be there at the station to collect me no matter what, and my mother would be there at the front door to greet me as she always would with complaints about my hair being too short, or not calling enough or something like that before ushering me in and trying to feed me something regardless of the time of day.

This year, which has been so horrible for so many, I cannot express how fortunate I feel to have been able to make that trip home again, this time driving myself and bringing my own daughter with me to see grandparents who have not had the chance to get to know her like they could have done in normal times. The song might always be intertwined with those hazy images from the TV ad which can so easily pull at the heartstrings but it is the lyrics and the story they tell of growing up that speak so much to me now. Starting this year all I hope for is as many years as possible in which I can make that same trip home, and that when I am that man waiting in the car at the station that my daughter feels the same way about 'Goin Back'.

*"I think I'm goin' back  
to the things I learned so  
well in my youth"*

- David O'Brien

*With frost and snow in plenty, Mullingar in the early Seventies generally had plenty of Christmas atmosphere. As children we would be brought to Midnight Mass in the Cathedral of Christ the King where we would be regaled with the glorious music of Palestrina and Scarlatti performed by the Cathedral Choir and accompanied on the organ by the redoubtable Mrs Evelyn Dore who was the organist there for forty years until her death on Christmas Day in 1982. My aunt always maintained you could tell if Mrs Dore was displeased with the choir as more stops would come out and the volume would be pretty amazing.*



*Home then for some Ovaltine and a few hours sleep. Then the girls from my primary school would slip and slide back to the Cathedral with our chilblains tingling to sing at the first Mass on Christmas morning. I seem to remember this took place at 6.30am or very early anyway. I remember the sheer excitement of climbing the wooden stairs to the choir gallery where we would sing "Away in a manger", "O little town of Bethlehem", "Silent night", "Come all ye faithful" and other evergreen Christmas carols. I remember a good crowd even at that early hour to hear the innocent childish voices. We would stagger home suitably exhausted and be mostly fairly quiet for the rest of the day.*

*I think Mrs Dore was related in some way to Philip Dore who used to play the organ to accompany the silent movies in the Savoy Cinema in Dublin. I'd love some more information about her so if anyone knows anything it would be great\*. Joyeux Noel everyone.*

- Anne Buckley

*\*If Anne's story rings any bells please get in touch by email at [musiclibrary@dublincity.ie](mailto:musiclibrary@dublincity.ie).*

*Cé nach amhrán Nollag atá ann, an chéad cheann a ritheann liom ná Let's Do it le Ella Fitzgerald mar gur chuala mé mar ghasúr é agus cé go raibh mé fós breá soineanta thuig mé a dhóthain chun a bheith ag gáire ar nós buachaill beag dána. Le linn na Nollag a chuala mé an t-amhrán don chéad uair mar thug mo dheirfiúr an dlúthdhiosca abhaile léi - d'éist mé leis an gceirnín sin go leor, toisc go raibh sé chomh éagsúil sin ó AC/DC, Garth Brooks agus na ceirníní eile a bhí ag mo dheartharacha.*

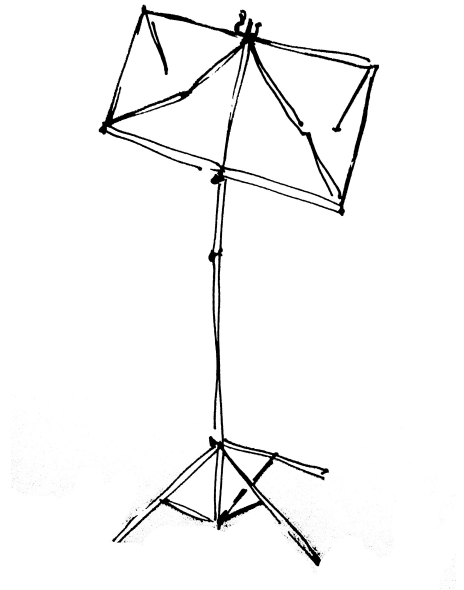
Amhrán eile a d'imigh i gcionn go mór orm ná *The Christmas Song* le Nat King Cole. Leis an stíl amhránaíochta a bhí ag Nat King Cole agus an tionlacann séimh, seo ceann de na hamhráin a chur ar mo shuaimhneas mé agus go dtí an lá seo inniu cuireann sé an draíocht a bhain le bheith i do ghasúr i gcuimhne dom.

- Pádraig D. Ó Conghaile

*My grandparents gave me a music stand for Christmas in the first year that I started playing. It turns out it was also the last gift that they would give me together as my Grandfather died suddenly the following year. My Nana passed in 2017 and I had the privilege of playing at her funeral. It was both heartbreaking and comforting, hard to describe adequately.*

*The stand doesn't leave the house anymore as I don't want to lose it. I still feel their presence when I use it, and lots of lovely memories particularly of Christmas are triggered by looking at it.*

- Ken



*The Christmas song that I remember from my earliest years is *The Little Boy that Santa Claus Forgot*. I had two older sisters that sang it to me to make me cry. It always did as first of all the little boy didn't get any toys for Christmas but also he didn't have a Daddy. He sent a note to Santa for toy soldiers and a gun and when he didn't receive them it broke his heart. He went out to the street and all the other children were playing with their new toys and he had to go back home and play with his broken ones; Goodness knows he didn't want a lot, he sent a note to Santa for soldiers and a gun. Poor little laddie, he didn't have a Daddy. He is the boy that Santa Claus forgot. This would have been in the 1940's when I heard it first. It is my earliest Christmas song memory and brings a tear to my eye even now thinking of it.*

*There is another song that I remember learning from school which is *Good King Wenceslas* which impressed me. Some people say the story of Santa Claus could have been based on Good King Wenceslas and the good deeds that he did.*

- Moira Mac Sweeney

*This time of year again and what a year it turned out to be. Mind you no matter what has occurred or been cancelled Christmas is a perennial and hopefully there will be an extra effort made by all to light up the darkness of 2020. We will miss our traditional christmas outings to listen to the choirs uplift our spirits and captivate us time and time again. Music has lifted us out of the gloom during the pandemic, singing from the balconies, impromptu recitals of piano playing, cheering, clapping. All we needed was our universal voice to goad on the workers, to shout out "you are not alone!"*

*"you are  
not alone!"*

*Over the years the Music library has held their annual christmas carol service. We will be missing it this year. I always meet up with a couple of pals in Arnotts and then head over for the hour of song. It has an appeal for me and has been part of my christmas routine. This year we have been asked to share memories & stories of our favourite xmas songs. So difficult a task is set before me. Impossible to pick my all time favourite. I love so many of the traditional xmas carols. Perhaps predictable but who doesn't expect and love to hear "O Holy Night" to round off the concert. We simply can never tire of it. Last year a child sang it in the concert, yet another nice surprise. A couple of years ago one of the choirs hailed from my county of Kildare. It was the Kilcock/ Newtown Parish choir. I happen to know a few members. They sang a carol called "Candlelight Carol" by a John Rutter, an english composer. I would say this could count as definitely one of my favourite carols. Also I don't hear it played too often which adds to the appeal. Every xmas eve I play "The John Rutter Christmas Album", step outside and listen to the sounds from the town dying out towards midnight. There's something about outdoors on xmas eve night, a poignancy, a stillness. Maybe we are just finished with the year and it is time to rest. Our work is done so to speak...*

*Also "The Angel's Carol" is yet another beauty by Rutter. Enjoy your christmas everyone.*

**- Trish Kennedy**

*I was asked recently about my favourite Christmas songs and carols, of which there are many. At the outset I would like to say that I like most of them but would have to list "Silent Night", "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" and "Away in a Manger" as my top three, especially if they are performed in parts, which is usually the case with a choir. "Away in a Manger" is especially poignant for me as I associate it with my school days and later when I sang in a choir.*

*I bought a CD in a local newsagents two years ago. The CD, which featured many groups in the area, was in aid of a charity. The CD has 17 tracks performed by local groups.*

*One track in particular features a song called "Wintersong" (Sara Bareilles, Ingrid Michaelson). It is performed by a teenage choir. The theme of the song is hope, echoing the name of the CD, "Songs of Hope". It is a beautiful song, not exactly a Christmas song but suitable for this time of year. The song looks forward to a new beginning when things will improve. "The seasons always change and life will find a way". I sent a copy of the CD to a relation in Canada. She loved the CD as well and she felt very connected to the area as her mother had emigrated to Canada over hundred year ago. She was only eight years old at the time.*

*"The seasons  
always change  
and life will  
find a way"*

- Pauline O'Brien

Thank you all for sharing your stories! We look forward to seeing you, and to sharing the love of music in person, as soon as the library doors are open again. Soon there'll be a grand stretch in the evening, we'll start seeing snowdrops pop up through the cold ground and we won't know ourselves!

If you'd like to join us on Zoom for a get together online tomorrow (Wednesday the 6th, Nollaig na mBan, everyone is welcome) please get in touch with the library at [musiclibrary@dublincity.ie](mailto:musiclibrary@dublincity.ie).

Ní neart go cur le chéile!

Ríona Sally Hartman and everyone at the Music Library.