



Ken Elkinson Generations of Yuletide (2008)

You probably already have a large collection of Christmas music. But most Christmas albums tend to sound almost the same. You seem to have heard it a thousand times before, even though you just bought the album. So when you are doing your last minute shopping for holiday music this year, why not try something a little bit different? Ken Elkinson's new album *Generations of Yuletide* is, as the title implies, a voyage in Christmas music through several generations: It is an exciting mix of both traditions and variation, spanning almost 600 years. I ask you: Can this be said about any other Christmas album in your collection?

Ken Elkinson is an incredible piano artist. I enjoy both his original material, like *Midnight Conversation* (1997) and *Cue* (2006), and his recently released *Borrowed Tracks*. He plays with identity and integrity. There are no effects or studio tricks: only good honest piano music, recorded in high quality. This is also the case with *Generations of Yuletide*. The album starts boldly with the almost unknown British song *The Star of Christmas Morning* from the 13th Century. It is beautiful, with a more than a little hint of melancholy. At this point I must stress that this is not a collection of forgotten Christmas songs, not at all. You'll get your *Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas* fix too, don't worry...

Next track out is a true classic, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, which is as old as *The Star of Christmas Morning*. Elkinson's version is so well played that you almost forget that it is instrumental music. *Greensleeves* is also beautifully played, with an original twist here and there.

Before *Silent Night*, track seven, is an original selection of songs, like *The Huron Carol* and the Swedish *Prepare The Way, O Zion*. This is tasteful background music, also when Christmas is over.

Track 9 to 16 is the modern part of the album, from the 1850s till 1966. Here there are many favorites, like *The Little Drummer Boy*, *Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas* and, as promised above, *I'll Be Home For Christmas*. Ken Elkinson gives playful interpretations of the songs, adding color and life.

Generations of Yuletide is an unforgettable journey in Christmas music. It is not easy listening, like so many other Christmas albums. But who said Christmas music had to be easy? The combination of (almost) unknown songs and a handful of true classics is a nice mix indeed. After all, Christmas is about traditions: generations upon generations of yuletide traditions.