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Craig Curry

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Craig Curry : Jazzy Christmas Tunes before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jazzy Christmas Tunes:

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Craig Curry has another winning set of tunes with this book! By stringlady Great arrangements, as always. Craig really knows how to arrange the usual tunes into something quite challenging and beautiful. God has blessed him and his work and he continues to bless us all with his great piano arrangements. Thank you, Craig for another great book of piano solos. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Somewhat comparative review of nine intermediate and advanced Christmas piano solo books By GuidoFamily This is a somewhat comparative review of nine Christmas piano solo books, four of which I categorize as advanced, and four advanced-intermediate to early-advanced. I list them below with my four favorites asterisked. This review discusses them in the order listed below and includes links to each. Please skip to books you are most interested in. The first six books are all 4-5 star books in my view, and ones which I generally recommend. (four

advanced books)(1) *Christmas Themes by Jim Brickman(2) *Christmas Jazz for Solo Piano: 8 Spicy Settings by Craig Curry(3) Christmas Themes and Variations by Craig Curry(4) Jazzy Christmas Tunes: 10 Spicy Settings by Craig Curry(five advanced-intermediate or early-advanced books)(5) *Jingle Jazz by Philip Keveren(6) *AdvanceTime Piano Christmas by Faber and Faber(7) Christmas Piano Solos Fifth Grade (John Thompson) by Eric Baumgartner(8) Bach Around the Christmas Tree: Piano Solo 18 Classic Christmas Carols by Carol Klaus(9) Advanced Piano Solos Christmas Encyclopedia by Tom

Roed*****1. CHRISTMAS THEMES by Jim

Brickman(Christmas Themes (New Age) or Christmas Themes (New Age) by Jim Brickman (2007)

Paperback)Brickman's arrangements of classic carols and songs are lovely and very challenging for the most part. Overall, the book is solidly in the advanced category with Curry's books. On half the songs, the syncopations are difficult to master and many pianists would struggle just to read the syncopations. In general, I find Brickman's rhythms harder to play than Curry's since they are more unpredictable and vary a lot from right hand to left. Brickman's chord progressions and syncopations are not jazz-styled however, so you won't encounter swing triplets or stuff like that. A couple of the songs such as Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas, Silent Night, and Silver Bells are less difficult than most of the others. The book is 40 pages for ten songs. I've put an asterisk next to my favorite arrangements below. Songs included are: Do You Hear What I Hear? *Even Santa Fell in Love The Gift Greensleeves / Carol of the Bells Medley Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas *If You Believe Joy to the World *O Holy Night Silent Night Silver

Bells*****2. CHRISTMAS JAZZ FOR SOLO PIANO: 8

SPICY SETTINGS by Craig Curry(Christmas Jazz for Solo Piano: 8 Spicy Settings by Craig Curry)I own four advanced piano books by Craig Curry, and this one is my favorite far and away. My advanced piano students love playing these songs even though this was our first introduction to real jazz, being classical pianists by training. The songs in here are difficult but a load of fun, and they provide excellent training in reading and executing tough rhythms. If you don't have a decent working knowledge of piano theory, the songs may be very difficult to play and will probably be intellectually inaccessible. Of course, I don't fully understand them myself, not having a strong knowledge of jazz scales and progressions, but I can mostly follow what he's doing if I ponder it. The description says "Moderately Difficult to Advanced" but I would say, with the exception of maybe one or two songs, they're solidly in the advanced category with this book. Maybe for someone trained in jazz/blues/funk they're not as hard. Also, the arrangements are decently long, often going 6-8 pages. Most of these songs follow the same pattern: one verse, a jazz interlude, a second verse. This is by and large how Curry arranges most of his jazz songs in his books. The book is 45 pages for 8 arrangements. If I put asterisks next to my favorites below, perhaps every song would get one (maybe I'd leave off the Santa Claus Medley). Songs included are: Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus (happy, relaxed jazz waltz) I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day (contemplative jazz) Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy (relaxed swing) God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen (bright, quick swing) In the Bleak Midwinter (rubato and pensive) Silent Night (funk-rock groove) We Three Kings of Orient Are (bright jazz waltz) Santa Claus Medley (Jolly Old St. Nicholas/Up on the Housetop) (funky)*****3.

CHRISTMAS THEMES AND VARIATIONS by Craig Curry(Christmas Themes Variations)When Curry says "Themes and Variations", he means it. These songs are often interesting from a theoretical perspective, but probably lose a little bit of performance value for most audiences because of the style of themes and variations which isn't very popular today. That said, my second time playing through the book, I really started to like a lot of the songs. (I haven't actually *practiced* any of them.) Basically, almost every song in the book is actually nice sounding, if not really nice sounding; at least, so I think after my second run through the songs, though I wasn't so positive after one run through them. (I still dislike the arrangement of Joy to the World, though, and wouldn't miss losing God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen either) They are certainly challenging, solidly-advanced songs, though the difficulty can vary with the speed at which one plays. Most songs are suggested at tempos well above 100 quarter notes per minute, but Curry says the tempo markings are relative and the arrangements will work at slightly slower tempos. I sight-read through the book with difficulty at even slower tempos. Most of the songs are 5-6 pages long with about 15 measures a page; not too long. They play through pretty fast, especially at the higher speeds. This book has a lot of variety. Curry chooses various styles for songs, and he gives excellent performance notes, which I've posted a picture of since you currently can't peek inside the book on the page.

You'll see that styles range from Baroque to Romantic, some require rubato while others need strict tempos. One song is even written in 5/8 and has tricky rhythms. All of that adds to the advanced nature of this book. I can't stress enough that half the songs in this book are like learning and playing classical (broadly construed) pieces. They are not normal carol arrangements. If you are looking for a challenging book with theoretically intriguing pieces, then this is a good choice. This book is not a book most average pianists can just pick up and enjoy. Songs included are: Angels from the Realms of Glory Angels We Have Heard on High Coventry Carol God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen Good King Wenceslas Joy to the World Lo! How a Rose E'er Blooming O Come, All Ye Faithful Silent Night! Holy Night! What Child Is This?*****4. JAZZY

CHRISTMAS TUNES: 10 SPICY SETTINGS by Craig Curry (Jazzy Christmas Tunes) Curry is back with more jazz Christmas. Like his former "Christmas Jazz for Solo Piano", this book is jazz that will challenge most pianists. Unlike the other book, the settings in this book are more homogenous with less flare. Overall, I find this book slightly easier than the other solo piano jazz book, and definitely less interesting. Part of that is due to my liking the songs in this book less in general. If you like the titles and like jazz, you will probably be plenty pleased with the book. Nevertheless, even I give Curry credit for coming up with perhaps the first arrangement of Feliz Navidad that I don't dislike; he does that one very well. A Holly, Jolly Christmas is a nice New Orleans funk, which is fun. And there are few nice slower jazz arrangements, such as I Wonder as I Wander. I much prefer Brickman's version of Do You Hear What I Hear, though. Almost every song follows the same pattern: one verse, a jazz interlude, a second verse (sometimes a direct repetition of the first). This is by and large how Curry arranges most of his jazz songs in his books. I've noted my favorite two songs with asterisks below. Songs included are: Baby, It's Cold Outside (laid-back swing) Do You Hear What I Hear (relaxed, straight rhythm) *I Wonder as I Wander (plaintive ballad) *Feliz Navidad (slightly funky cha-cha-cha) Frosty the Snow Man (medium-fast swing) A Holly Jolly Christmas (New Orleans funk) Jingle Bell Rock (moderate swing) Mary, Did You Know? (rubato jazz ballad) White Christmas (rubato jazz ballad) The Little Drummer Boy (relaxed bossa

nova) *****5. JINGLE JAZZ by Philip Keveren (Jingle Jazz Piano Solo 17 Christmas Standards With A Touch of Cool Phillip Keveren) The subtitle is mostly appropriate: "17 Christmas Standards with a Touch of Cool." Not all of the songs are standards, but the vast majority are, and there are 17 total. The "touch of cool" is a good way to put it. Many of the songs have a slight jazz feel, but they are not challenging to play so long as one can read complicated chords/clusters on sheet music. The rhythm is not at all difficult except maybe on a couple songs, but everything combines to give a nice easy-listening feel to this book. The book calls itself "late intermediate / early advanced", which seems decently accurate, though I might favor calling it intermediate over advanced. I could sight-read through the book pretty comfortably. The difficulty is slightly easier than Christmas Piano Solos Fifth Grade (John Thompson) by Eric Baumgartner. However, the two big advantages Keveren's book has over Baumgartner's are, first, that there are nearly twice as many songs—each of which is about the same length—if not Keveren's being a bit longer on average. (3-5, occasionally 6, pages with 12-20 measures to a page for Keveren, 64 pages total). Second, Keveren's songs are just more beautiful and fun on average, in my view. Almost all the songs are written in C, G, or F. One or two make it to two sharps, and one song is in three flats. Of course, there are plenty of accidentals throughout, but the key signatures are one thing that might make Baumgartner harder, since he goes to three and four sharps and flats more than once. Ultimately, if you're looking for a fun, not particularly challenging set of well-loved Christmas songs, then I highly suggest Keveren's book. I've put an asterisk after the song arrangements below which I most like. Songs Included Are: Caroling, Caroling The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire) Christmas Time is Here *The Christmas Waltz Feliz Navidad (There's No Place Like) Home for the Holidays I'll Be Home for Christmas Jingle Bells *Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! *Merry Christmas, Darling *A Merry Christmas to Me The Most Wonderful Time of the Year Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer *Silver Bells *Snowfall We Wish You a Merry Christmas *What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?

*****6. ADVANCE TIME CHRISTMAS: LEVEL 5 by Faber and Faber (Advance Time Christmas: Level 5) This is an excellent book of late intermediate / early advanced Christmas songs. My students have quite enjoyed playing from it. There is a mix of classical, popular, and sacred, all nicely arranged. The songs are a bit on the shorter side, given their relative difficulty. Most are shorter 3-page songs, a couple are 4-page, and a couple are 5-7 pages. 37 pages total for 11 songs. One of the arrangements is actually a medley of three Christian carols. Once in a while the Fabers throw some syncopation and jazz feel (mostly in Go Tell it On the Mountain, but a couple others songs have a touch), but the arrangements are generally straightforward. A few of the songs feature left-hand melodies at times, and they do so very successfully, which is a nice feature for the piano student. This book is close to Baumgartner's in the number of songs and difficulty, but I prefer the song selections and the arrangements in this book. Some of the songs are slightly easier like most of Keveren's arrangements. Songs included are: Skaters' Waltz Dance of the Reed Pipes (from The Nutcracker Suite) March (from the Nutcracker Suite) Jingle Bells We Wish You a Merry Christmas Over the River and Through the Woods Auld Lang Syne Silent Night Go Tell It on the Mountain God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen A Celebration of Carols (O Little Town of Bethlehem; We Three Kings; and Good Christian Men, Rejoice) *****7. CHRISTMAS PIANO SOLOS FIFTH

GRADE (John Thompson) by Eric Baumgartner (Christmas Piano Solos Fifth Grade (Thompson Modern Course) (John Thompson's Modern Course for the Piano)) First off, compared with the standard John Thompson course for the piano (the red books), the difficulty of this book is more like 3rd grade John Thompson—its "early advanced"; I could do a rough sight read through the book easily. I don't think the book is that great. The arrangements are all decent and fine from a technical perspective, but none of the songs really stands out. Rudolph gets going nicely in the middle, but it's not as good in total. Christmas Time is Here and The Christmas Waltz are

nice, but also not outstanding. A few of the songs use swing triplet syncopation and throw just a tiny bit of jazz in, but for the most part the arrangements are either somewhat cutesy or just pleasant Christmas arrangements. Maybe I'm less impressed because the overall level of difficulty is lower than I anticipated. I guess my final opinion is that given other options in this difficulty range, it's a decent choice. My one big disappointment is the song selections. Of the ten, only a few are good general selections in my opinion. Of course, sometimes folks are looking for more unusual or kid-like songs (yes, I know kids may be playing these). The arrangements are also on the shorter side, usually 4-5 pages, but with only about 12-16 measures to a page. In the end, then, if you're looking for rather non-standard Christmas songs that will be just a bit of a challenge for most folks to learn, then this book is a pretty good choice. There is an page to get the book with an accompanying CD of the arrangements as well: Christmas Piano Solos - Fifth Grade BK/CD (Thompson Modern Course) (John Thompson's Modern Course for the Piano Series) Songs included are: Brazilian Sleigh Bells Christmas Time Is Here The Christmas Waltz Frosty the Snow Man Here Comes Santa Claus (Right down Santa Claus Lane) It Must Have Been the Mistletoe (Our First Christmas) Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! (Everybody's Waitin' For) The Man with the Bag Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer We Need a Little Christmas *****8. BACH AROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE: PIANO SOLO 18 CLASSIC CHRISTMAS CAROLS by Carol Klaus (Bach Around the Christmas Tree Piano Solo 18 Classic Christmas Carols) Each of the 18 songs in this book is paired with a composer, sometimes with a specific piece of music by the composer such as Pachelbel's Canon in D, Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata 1st movement, or Offenbach's Barcarolle. It's a neat idea, and one which Klaus executes better than I could. The arrangements are late intermediate I would say. My big disappointment with this book is that each Christmas song is given a one-verse rendition with maybe a bit of intro and wrap-up. So, 16 songs are two pages and 2 are three pages. So these songs are not very suitable for performance. I think this book has one good use, and that is as a sight-reading book. I've used it in this way. The shortness of the songs and their classical styling makes this a great resource for a teacher to assign to students. A decently advanced student could sight-read a song a day without taking too long to do so and could stay busy for three weeks getting through all 18 songs. Seeing the connections to the classical songs is also interesting and useful for the classical piano student. I've included a picture of the back cover so you can see the Christmas songs and classical composers. *****9. ADVANCED PIANO SOLOS CHRISTMAS ENCYCLOPEDIA by Tom Roed (Advanced Piano Solos Encyclopedia: Christmas) For the life of me, I don't see why this book gets such a high rating. It offers three-page, basic arrangements of Christmas songs with hardly any flare or interest. I would say this is a decent book for use as accompaniment for a sing-along. The songs seem to be written in standard vocal keys and preserve the original rhythms. But as piano solos they are sorely lacking, and the book is marketed as a piano solo book. If you want a list of the songs, see the top review on the book's page.

(Piano Solo Songbook). Craig Curry has transformed 10 Christmas classics into unique jazz settings that will energize Christmas services, recitals, parties, and more! Titles include: Baby, It's Cold Outside * Do You Hear What I Hear * Feliz Navidad * Frosty the Snow Man * A Holly Jolly Christmas * I Wonder as I Wander * Jingle Bell Rock * The Little Drummer Boy * Mary, Did You Know? * White Christmas. Moderately Difficult to Advanced level piano solo.