



## Winter Music Exercise Booklet



This is an excursion into the way winter is portrayed in art music. The majority of composers in the art music tradition have lived in the Northern hemisphere which means that for them winter would have been in the months of December, January and February.

Winter music is therefore often associated with festivities (holidays like the New Year, or Christmas), so many pieces are written to achieve a joyful ‘magic’ feeling that glittering snow and winter activities can bring with them. However, being a time of often freezing temperatures and cold winds, winter can also be a dangerous and tragic time of year. These desolate and freezing qualities of winter are also a frequent topic for composers. Finally, snowstorms and blizzards can be a source of inspiration for the composition of tempestuous and virtuosic pieces.

### How does this booklet work?

There is a link provided to a recording of the discussed piece, and then there are usually some questions referring to it. Some questions require a score (which can be downloaded for free from [imslp.org](http://imslp.org)) while others require listening, or general factual knowledge. If it doesn't say you need the score, do the question just from listening. The questions are quite random, covering a variety of skills. They are not designed to be graded, since they do not follow any syllabus, but are there for your own interest and benefit. If you do not understand some of the questions, make note of them, and discuss them with your teacher or friend, or look in your own reference material. This will be a good sign that a certain theoretical or aural topic might need some revision. It is more beneficial to go through the booklet gradually, not in one or two days. There are suggested answers provided in a separate booklet.

There are also quite a few artworks and literary examples given for your interest. In most cases they are not directly related to the music. Nevertheless, it is very exciting and beneficial to read them.

In case you have not ever seen snow before, here are a few clips:

- Schwarzwald [Black Forest] in Germany: <https://youtu.be/JH6bdgO2w7g>
- Hiking during a blizzard in Croatia: [https://youtu.be/Quk3\\_aFd7MI](https://youtu.be/Quk3_aFd7MI)
- Squeaky snow: <https://youtu.be/t-6-5mqbjB4>
- Blizzard conditions in a city on the island of Sakhalin, Russia: <https://youtu.be/N7pO3fHtel8>
- Blizzard in Helsinki: [https://youtu.be/HFdo9-\\_AICw](https://youtu.be/HFdo9-_AICw)





Here is a list of pieces that are covered in this booklet, in their order of appearance.

- Antonio Vivaldi: Violin Concerto in F minor RV 297 ‘Winter’
- Pyotr Tchaikovsky: Waltz of the Snowflakes from Nutcracker
- Sergey Prokofiev: *Troika* from the *Lieutenant Kije* Suite
- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: German Dance K. 605 No 3
- Leopold Mozart: *Die Musikalische Schlittenfahrt*
- Georgy Sviridov: *Troika* and *Winter Road* from The Snowstorm
- Pyotr Tchaikovsky: *November* and *December* from The Seasons
- Leroy Anderson: Sleigh Ride
- John Carmichael: Sleigh Ride to Thredbo
- Emile Waldteufel: The Skaters’ Waltz
- Giacomo Meyerbeer: *Les Patineurs*
- Josef Strauss: Winterlust Polka Op 121
- Vladimir Rebikov: The Christmas Tree
- Franz Schubert: *Der Leiermann* from *Winterreise* D 911
- Dmitry Shostakovich: Winter from From Jewish Folk Poetry Op 79
- Claude Debussy: *Des pas sur la neige* from Preludes Book 1
- Claude Debussy: The Snow is Dancing from Children’s Corner Suite
- Benjamin Britten: *In Freezing Winter Night* from Ceremony of Carols
- Cesar Cui: Everywhere Snow Op 77 No 2.
- Franz Liszt: Transcendental Etude No 12 ‘*Chasse-neige*’
- Frederic Chopin: Etude Op 25 No 11
- Sergey Rachmaninov: Etude in E flat minor from *Études-tableaux* Op 33.
- Johann Sebastian Bach: Opening Chorus from Christmas Oratorio BWV 248
- Pyotr Tchaikovsky: Symphony No 1, Op 13

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Before we get into some questions about pieces, it is enjoyable to watch a wonderful animation to get into the winter mood - The Snowman based on the book by Raymond Briggs with music composed by Howard Blake. As this is an animation without words, try to notice how the music reflects what is happening in the story. The animation also has the song “We’re Walking in the Air”.

<https://youtu.be/5A3THighARU>

What sounds do you expect to hear, or have you heard in a snowy winter?

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Today’s discussion will be focusing on program music – music which intends to represent specific images or events. Therefore, unlike in most other pieces, it is possible to sometimes say that a particular musical technique is used to represent something specific. It will be interesting to note some techniques that composers turn to when they want to demonstrate winter.



Picture 1. Peter Bruegel the Elder. Winter Landscape with a Bird Trap (1565). Taken from: [https://artchive.ru/artists/1395~Piter\\_Breigel\\_Starshij/works/4611~Zimnij\\_pejzazh\\_s\\_katajuschimisja\\_na\\_konkakh\\_i\\_lovus\\_hkoj\\_dlja\\_ptits](https://artchive.ru/artists/1395~Piter_Breigel_Starshij/works/4611~Zimnij_pejzazh_s_katajuschimisja_na_konkakh_i_lovus_hkoj_dlja_ptits)

Possibly the most well-known piece that depicts winter is **Violin Concerto in F minor RV 297** (c.1721), subtitled ‘Winter’ by **Antonio Vivaldi**. The score actually has accompanying poems/sonnets which describe what is being portrayed in different movements and phrases of the piece.

Here is the score for this piece (taken from [imslp.org](https://imslp.org)) that you should use to follow along and help you answer the questions:

<https://imslp.org/wiki/Special:ImagefromIndex/387080/nhafj>



Here is a recording of the work by Julia Fischer with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Chamber Orchestra. <https://youtu.be/p1qNOfdMyGA>

All the sonnets are given in this score in Italian. Below is the original and a translation, so you can write in the translation into your score. The timings refer to the Julia Fischer recording; in case you get lost in the score, this is the time at which that line is written above the score.

<p><i>Allegro non molto</i>            Aggiacciato tremar trà nevi argenti            Al Severo Spirar d' orrido Vento,            Correr battendo i piedi ogni momento;            E pel Soverchio gel batter i denti;</p> <p><i>Largo</i>            Passar al foco i di quieti e contenti            Mentre la pioggia fuor bagna ben cento</p> <p><i>Allegro</i>            Caminar Sopra il ghiaccio, e à passo lento            Per timor di cader girsene intenti;            Gir forte Sdruzziolar, cader à terra</p> <p>Di nuove ir Sopra 'l ghiaccio e correr forte            Sin ch' il ghiaccio si rompe, e si disserra;            Sentir uscir dalle ferrate porte            Sirocco, Borea, e tutti i Venti in guerra            Quest' é 'l verno, mà tal, che gioja            apporte.</p>	<p><i>Allegro non molto</i>            To tremble from cold in the icy snow,            In the harsh breath of a horrid wind; 0'39"            To run, stamping one's feet every moment, 1'12"            Our teeth chattering in the extreme cold 2'30"</p> <p><i>Largo</i>            Before the fire to pass peaceful, 3'37"            Contented days while the rain outside pours down.</p> <p><i>Allegro</i>            We tread the icy path slowly and cautiously, 5'57"            for fear of tripping and falling. 6'19"            Then turn abruptly, slip, crash on the ground and, 6'41"            (6'49" -crash on the ground repeated)            rising, hasten on across the ice lest it cracks up. 6'53"            We feel the chill north winds course through the home            7'34"            despite the locked and bolted doors... 7'49"            this is winter, which nonetheless 8'24"            brings its own delights. 8'54"</p>
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What are the numbers called underneath the cembalo bass line? These numbers show the intervals above the bass note that need to be played to create the desired chords.

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What does *cembalo* mean? \_\_\_\_\_

What is meant by basso continuo?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The score attached is an *Urtext* edition. What does that mean?

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When the violin solo enters, what technique is used to enhance the musical picture of someone trembling?

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How might the melodic shape of the solo violin phrase represent the second line of the sonnet? Hint: Imagine the sound of the howling wind and think about what happens to the pitch. It might help to draw the shape of the phrase.

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Why do you think the person is stamping their feet every moment?

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Why does using rapid repetition to show “shivering” and “teeth chattering” make sense?

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What is the name of the technique for rapid repetition of one note (or rapid alteration between two notes or chords)?

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Can you see in the score that in the “teeth chattering” the solo violin has two notes written at the same time? Playing two notes at once on bowed string instruments is called a ‘double stop’. Find two double stops in which the two notes make a dissonant interval. Name the two intervals.

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Let’s move on to the second movement. What technique is used in the Violins 1 and 2 of the orchestra to imitate the rain?

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Imagine how you might feel like sitting by the fire, “passing contented days”, listening to the rain outside. What might you be doing? Try not to mention electronics; this piece was written long before any were in use.




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In the 3rd movement the bass line is often sustained (held continuously) on one note while the parts above change. What is the name of this technique? It is also interesting that the long, sustained notes in this piece were likely to have been elaborated/improvised on in Vivaldi's time.



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Why might the sonnet refer to the chill of the 'North' winds, rather than the South?

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How might the phrase shape reflect "crashing to the ground"? How does Vivaldi use instrumentation (choice of instruments) at this moment?

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The sonnet mentions winter's delights. What might be some winter activities that this section of the music might suit?

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Picture 2. Willard Metclaf, *The Winter Festival*, 1913. Taken from commons.wikimedia.org

A winter-time favourite is **Pyotr Tchaikovsky's** ballet **Nutcracker** (1892). Here is the Waltz of the Snowflakes from this ballet, performed by the New York City Ballet. The aural questions should be done by listening without the score.

<https://youtu.be/-GnwXPtxmy4>

Who wrote the story “The Nutcracker and the Mouse King”?

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What century was this story written and the ballet composed in? What years does the century span?

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What is a bit unusual about the instrumentation used in this ballet number?

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What are some of the instruments used that might help you in achieving a ‘magical’ mood suitable for imagining snowflakes dancing in a forest?

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What percussion instrument adds to the storminess in the second half of the Waltz?

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What technique used in the harp part adds to the ‘swishiness’ of the snowstorm?

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How many notes does the main motif of this piece have? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the *corps de ballet*? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the other ballets that Tchaikovsky wrote? \_\_\_\_\_

Name any three ballet companies and the countries which they are from. Look up some videos of their productions or go and see one if you have the opportunity to!

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Picture 3. Ivan Shyshkin, *Winter* (1890). Taken from <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

Sleigh-riding is often associated with winter. You might think – why? When there were no cars, horses used to be a major form of transportation. Sleigh rides were also popular at winter festivities and carnivals.

Have a look at this video from 1908 Moscow (it is very rare to have video footage from that time!), and around 2.5 mins into the film you will see a busy street, and how many horses there were. The audio in this clip is not original as back at that time the technology was not yet developed. The music was added later.

<https://youtu.be/EPgbIK002us>

A troika is the Russian word for a type of driving combination in which a sledge/cart is drawn by three horses.

What do you think would've been a practical reason why sleighs had bells attached to them?

Sometimes actual sleigh bells are used in compositions. An example is **Sergey Prokofiev's *Troika*** from his ***Lieutenant Kije Suite*** (1934), performed here by the Czecho-Slovak Symphony Orchestra. <https://youtu.be/4HOfCbkwyem>







Picture 4. Ivan Aivazovskiy, *Winter Landscape* (1856) Taken from <https://artchive.ru>

Quite a while earlier, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and his father also composed pieces about sleigh-riding.

Here is **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's German Dance K. 605 No 3** (1791) which is in Minuet and Trio form, and the Trio is titled *Schlittenfahrt* [Sleigh Ride], performed here by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Claudio Abbado.

<https://youtu.be/vvozV2y7HMk>

When performing a piece in minuet and trio form, what is the widely-accepted performance practice regarding repeats?

At the fanfare-like start of the Coda (at 1'27" in the linked recording) identify when the harmony changes from tonic to dominant and then back to tonic.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's father **Leopold Mozart** also wrote a piece about sleigh-riding. A whole Divertimento actually – *Die Musikalische Schlittenfahrt* (1755). Here is its arrangement by Franz-Theodor Cursch Bühren as *Symphony for Children*, performed by the Liszt Ferenc Chamber Orchestra <https://youtu.be/hoL7ftqLjUk>

Below is an excerpt from the piano reduction of the second movement. Label the chords used in two methods: in isolation and in the context of the key they are in (e.g. G minor 1st inversion, ii<sub>6/3</sub>). Ignore any passing harmonies.



Allegretto.  
C (Schlittenfahrt.)  
I. Schell.

*mf*

*p* *f*

Trp. D Tr.  
Trg. Schb.

Ptschkn.

I. u. II. Schell.  
E

When listening to the third movement you will see another musical representation of shivering; Mozart uses *tremolo* to achieve this effect.

In *Troika* from **The Snowstorm** (1975) by **Georgy Sviridov** the tambourine is used to achieve the effect similar to sleigh bells. Here is a recording by the USSR TV and Radio Large Symphony Orchestra conducted by Vladimir Fedoseyev.

<https://youtu.be/j1FtL4ulQ0c>

In this piece, what would you link to the relentless sound made by the hooves?

In this set of pieces (*The Snowstorm*), *Troika* is the first piece, while *Winter Road* is the last. It shares most of its musical material with *Troika*. If the cycle is performed in a row, this helps the nine pieces have a sense of cyclic unity. <https://youtu.be/8JL4JXEv-RY>  
What is the instrument that first plays the melody? What is the next instrument to take over the melody?

Here is a poem by American poet Robert Frost – *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, read by the author: <https://youtu.be/hfOxdZfo0gs>





**Pyotr Tchaikovsky** also wrote a cycle of pieces called **The Seasons** (1876). The cycle consists of 12 pieces, one for each month. Because Tchaikovsky lived in Russia, naturally for him, winter was in December, January and February. However there is one other piece which is relevant to this discussion – November, which Tchaikovsky dedicated to the Troika. By the way, there is frequently snow in November too. Here is a recording of Sergey Rachmaninov playing *November*:

<https://youtu.be/wCvwSLv4aXw>

Here is an excerpt from the score. Describe the techniques that are used in bars 3 and 4 of this excerpt to represent sleigh bells on a horse.

This combination gets used a lot to represent sleigh bells. As is the case with most techniques it is important to remember that of course not all cases of repeated acciaccaturas on high notes imply sleigh bells (but, most sleigh-bell representations use this technique ;)).

Find the score for *November* (as part of *The Seasons* Op 37a) in your library or on [imslp.org](http://imslp.org). Imagine that you want to orchestrate this piece (rewrite for orchestra).

Suggest which instruments would be suitable for different lines and sections. There are many things to consider when thinking about orchestration, but for now think about the range of the instrument (how high and low it can play) you want to use for a certain part, and what timbre (tone colour) you want to hear in that part. Discuss your suggestions with a friend, teacher, family member and/or compare what you decided with this orchestration by Alexandr Gauk: <https://youtu.be/0izjJYHuiy4?t=41m29s>

Another example of the same technique of sleigh-bell representation, as in *November* can be heard in the popular **Sleigh Ride** (1948) by **Leroy Anderson**.

[https://youtu.be/EDRFmn\\_KqfA](https://youtu.be/EDRFmn_KqfA)

Particularly listen to the orchestra at the end of the introduction. Also listen out for the techniques that are used to imitate horses.

There is even a piece called **Sleigh Ride to Thredbo** (1980) by **John Carmichael**, for flute and orchestra, about the Australian skiing resort.

Here are James Galway and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra performing this piece:

<https://youtu.be/97qTvghBjPs>

What is happening in the music around 0'56"? What interval is characteristic here?



Sleigh bells also find their way into other winter-themed pieces. This is the case in **The Skaters' Waltz** (1882) by **Emile Waldteufel**, performed here by the Slovak State Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Alfred Walter. <https://youtu.be/zim3M3ewQc>

This piece describes ice-skaters on a frozen lake at Bois de Boulogne in Paris, France. It was inspired by the 1868 painting *Patineurs au bois de Boulogne* by Pierre-Auguste Renoir.



Picture 5. Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *Patineurs au bois de Boulogne* (1868). Taken from [commons.wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org)

What is the function/role of the section at the beginning of the piece, before the typical waltz accompaniment starts?

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How does Waldteufel make this opening section sound like it is set in sparkling/magical winter?

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95

1 2 ④

Pic

Fl

Hb

Cl

Bn

C.1-2

C.3-4

Tp

Tb-1-2

Tb.3

Tuba

Ti

Perc.

V1

V2

A.

Vc

Cb

*p*

*pp*

*p legato*

*Arco*

*Pizz.*

Grelots + Triangle

2 3 4

Using the score excerpt above, describe how sleigh bells are represented from bar 97 (rehearsal figure 4).

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In an orchestra it is typical to have two groups of violins (first violins and second violins) which play different parts to each other. At this point the first violins are further divided into two groups, playing two different parts. What word is sometimes written in a score to show that the violin group needs to divide (in this piece it is written earlier on than this excerpt)?

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Did you know that the piccolo flute sounds an octave higher than written? Using this information, which instrument in this excerpt is playing the highest part?



In the part before the example with the bells, the music sounds like it is imitating the skaters doing jumps. How might the phrase shape reflect these jumps (use your imagination and the following excerpt from this melody)?



Have you ever seen figure skating before? Here is an example of modern figure skating, which is an Olympic sport, in a performance by Mao Asada:

<https://youtu.be/TjEoBfmn1SU>

Waldteufel's is not the only piece about ice-skaters. **Giacomo Meyerbeer's** music was used by K. Lambert to arrange a ballet called *Les Patineurs* [*The Skaters*] (1937). Here is a selection of musical numbers from it (a suite) performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy:

<https://youtu.be/8CI46H9jyMw>

What time signature is the opening piece in this set probably in? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been ice-skating before? Was there any music playing?

*The Skaters' Waltz* has a very festive, light-hearted and happy feeling to it. Many dances like waltzes and polkas are written with this effect. The style of *The Skaters' Waltz* is very similar to the light style of compositions by the Strauss family (Johann Strauss I, Johann Strauss II, Josef Strauss). Many of their pieces are performed at the New Year's Day Concert every year in Vienna, Austria, and the Musikverein. This concert is usually broadcast to many countries across the world. Check if you can watch it the next New Year's Day.

Here is a winter-themed polka by **Josef Strauss – Winterlust Polka Op 121** (1862) about winter fun performed by the Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Gustavo Dudamel, at the 2017 New Year's Concert. <https://youtu.be/s0OwJLVnLf0>

Listen out for the same types of techniques you have noticed in the pieces above.

Going back to waltzes, *December* from **The Seasons** by **Tchaikovsky**, subtitled *Noël*, is also waltz. Here it is performed by Lev Oborin. <https://youtu.be/VbPsaDqj9PI>



Here is a translation of the poem Winter Morning by the Russian poet Alexandr Pushkin, written in 1829 (taken from [https://russianlegacy.com/russian\\_culture/poetry/pushkin/winter\\_morning.htm](https://russianlegacy.com/russian_culture/poetry/pushkin/winter_morning.htm) ).

Cold frost and sunshine: day of wonder!  
 But you, my friend, are still in slumber -  
 Wake up, my beauty, time belies:  
 Your dormant eyes, I beg you, broaden  
 Toward the northerly Aurora,  
 As though a northern star arise!

Recall last night, the snow was whirling,  
 Across the sky, the haze was twirling,  
 The moon, as though a pale dye,  
 Emerged with yellow through faint clouds.  
 And there you sat, immersed in doubts,  
 And now, - just take a look outside:

The snow below the bluish skies,  
 Like a majestic carpet lies,  
 And in the light of day it shimmers.  
 The woods are dusky. Through the frost  
 The greenish fir-trees are exposed;  
 And under ice, a river glitters.

The room is lit with amber light.  
 And bursting, popping in delight  
 Hot stove still rattles in a fray.  
 While it is nice to hear its clatter,  
 Perhaps, we should command to saddle  
 A fervent mare into the sleigh?

And sliding on the morning snow  
 Dear friend, we'll let our worries go,  
 And with the zealous mare we'll flee.  
 We'll visit empty ranges, thence,  
 The woods, which used to be so dense  
 And then the shore, so dear to me.

Also from Tchaikovsky's The Seasons cycle, are the winter months of January and February. *January* has the subtitle 'By the fireside', which has a namesake in Robert Schumann's piece *Am Kamin* from *Kinderszenen* Op. 15. *February* depicts a carnival.



Winter is not all about having a good time, celebrations and fun. It is also a very dangerous time, and can only be enjoyable if there is a warm, safe place to return to.

The composer **Vladimir Rebikov** wrote a children's opera called **The Christmas Tree** (1900) based on a combination of two stories – The Little Match Girl by Hans Christian Andersen, and The Heavenly Christmas Tree by Fyodor Dostoyevsky.





Picture 7. Vasily Surikov. Statue of Peter the Great on Senate Square in St Petersburg, (1870.) Taken from <http://artsurikov.ru/kartina/39.php>.

Read the translations of the two stories before listening to Rebikov's piece. If you have them in a book at home or in your library, that is great, otherwise here are two links from which you can read the stories.

Andersen:

[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Fairy\\_tales\\_and\\_stories\\_\(Andersen,\\_Tegner\)/The\\_Little\\_Match\\_Girl](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Fairy_tales_and_stories_(Andersen,_Tegner)/The_Little_Match_Girl)

Dostoyevsky: <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/d/dostoyevsky/heavenly-christmas-tree/>

After you have read both stories, listen to this Waltz from Rebikov's opera, performed by Shura Cherkassky.

<https://youtu.be/HtVtqSJdxLc>

**Franz Schubert** wrote a song cycle called *Winterreise* [Winter Journey] (1827) which is a setting of poems by Wilhelm Müller. Here is a performance of *Der Leiermann* [Hurdy-Gurdy Man] by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Alfred Brendel. Read the translation subtitles as you listen. Listen out for how important the piano is to represent the hurdy-gurdy.

<https://youtu.be/sIIS-UgixGE>

Is this piece in a major or minor key? \_\_\_\_\_

This is an example of a Lied. What are Lieder?  
\_\_\_\_\_





Picture 8. Paul Fischer, *A Street Scene in Copenhagen*, (1900). Taken from <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

Here is another poem to read: *A Winter Night* from a 1920 collection by the American poet Sara Teasdale (taken from <https://www.poemhunter.com/best-poems/sara-teasdale/a-winter-night-3/>) .



My window-pane is starred with frost,  
The world is bitter cold to-night,  
The moon is cruel, and the wind  
Is like a two-edged sword to smite.

God pity all the homeless ones,  
The beggars pacing to and fro.  
God pity all the poor to-night  
Who walk the lamp-lit streets of snow.

My room is like a bit of June,  
Warm and close-curtained fold on fold,  
But somewhere, like a homeless child,  
My heart is crying in the cold.

**Dmitry Shostakovich's From Jewish Folk Poetry Op 79** (1948) also has a song titled *Winter*.

Here is a translation of the words from Russian by an unknown translator, taken from (<https://muswrite.blogspot.com.au/2015/07/shostakovich-from-jewish-folk-poetry.html>):

My Sheyndl is lying on the bed,  
with a sick child.  
There is not a branch to warm the cottage,  
and the wind howls around the walls.  
Ah ...

The cold and the wind have returned,  
There is no strength to suffer in silence.  
Cry and weep, my children,  
winter has returned.  
Ah ...

Here is a performance by Nina Dorliak (soprano), Zara Dolukhanova (alto), Aleksei Maslennikov (tenor) and Dmitry Shostakovich himself (piano).

<https://youtu.be/T1DNWCOXsOs>

Can you hear the howling wind represented by the voices and the repetitive twirling figuration in the right hand of the piano? This howling is joined by the crying and weeping of the people, creating a single blend.

Can you hear that both the Schubert song and this one by Shostakovich sometimes use long sustained notes in the lower register?

Can you hear the tension created by the dissonances in this piece?

The less festive, more desolate side of winter is also very clearly painted by **Claude Debussy**. Here is *Des pas sur la neige* [Footprints in the Snow] (1909-1910) from Book 1 of Preludes, performed by Daniel Barenboim.

[https://youtu.be/lq0x\\_gM8tZg](https://youtu.be/lq0x_gM8tZg)

This is a good time to read the poem *Winter Solitude* by the Japanese poet Matsuo Basho, translated by Robert Hass.

<https://allpoetry.com/poem/8490079-Winter-solitude-by-Matsuo-Basho>





Picture 9. Utagawa Hiroshige. Meguro Drum Bridge and Sunset Hill. Taken from <http://www.artprojekt.ru/gallery/japan/02736.html>

Another piece by **Debussy** on a snowy topic is his **The Snow is Dancing** from Children's Corner Suite (1906-1908) performed by Boris Berman.

<https://youtu.be/5ibCFzF5djk>

Can you also hear the dissonances in both of the Debussy pieces, and the use of the interval of a 2<sup>nd</sup>? If you can't imagine the sound of a 2<sup>nd</sup>, play first a minor then a major 2<sup>nd</sup> on the piano, then listen to these pieces again.

Another two stories about winter time that are very good to read are The Gift of the Magi by O. Henry and The Snow Queen by Hans Christian Andersen.





Picture 10. Ivan Shyshkin. *On the Wild North*, (1891). Taken from commons.wikimedia.org



Picture 11. Claude Monet. *The Magpie*, (1869). Taken from commons.wikimedia.org

The idea of freezing winter is also shown in the *In Freezing Winter Night* movement from **Benjamin Britten's Ceremony of Carols** (1942) performed here by Exultate Festival Choir and Orchestra.  
<https://youtu.be/lx88diqWpXs>



You will recognise that the accompaniment of this piece is based on harp tremolos which are rhythmically very regular and repetitive. Name two intervals which are heard in the harmonies and/or the melody which help creating the bitter dissonance?



There have also been quite a few choral pieces written about snow.

Enjoy the following piece by **Cesar Cui – Everywhere Snow Op 77 No 2** (1908).

<https://youtu.be/FOhFlN6rhgM>

This piece is performed a cappella. What does that mean? \_\_\_\_\_

The tempestuous side of winter – blizzards and snowstorms have also been a popular theme amongst for composers.

It is no surprise that there have been some etudes written depicting snowstorms, requiring great finger dexterity and strength.

The last of **Franz Liszt's** 12 Transcendental Etudes (published 1852) is titled **Chasse-neige** showing whirls of snow raised by the wind. Here it is performed by Miroslav Kultyshev at the Tchaikovsky Competition in 2007. <https://youtu.be/j6FfOn-hy0>  
Find the score on imslp.org or in your library. Write down some of the expressive score markings used by Liszt and their meanings, that help build the storminess.

One of the main techniques used in this etude is tremolo which in most cases is written out as measured notes. At one point Liszt also puts in the marking *tremolando* to highlight the manner in which the notes need to be played.

An example of a place where the tremolo isn't written out, but indicated by shorthand notation, is the following excerpt. Why do you think is pedalling especially important in this this section?





In the excerpt below what is the right hand playing?

The image shows a musical score excerpt. The right-hand part (treble clef) features a complex, rapid melodic line with a 's' marking above it, indicating a specific technique or articulation. The left-hand part (bass clef) consists of a series of chords, with a '\*' marking under the first one. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 4/4.

Have a look at the excerpt below and notice how the shape of the phrase reflects the twirling [of snow].

The image shows a musical score excerpt for Chopin's Etude Op. 25 No. 11. The right-hand part (treble clef) features a series of rapid, swirling eighth-note patterns that create a sense of motion. The left-hand part (bass clef) consists of a steady, rhythmic accompaniment. A 'cresc.' marking is visible in the lower part of the score, indicating a dynamic increase.

**Frederic Chopin's Etude Op 25 No 11** (1837) is known as the *Winter Wind*, a title which while not given by Chopin, is indeed suitable for the piece. Listen to at two at least two recordings, for example one by Maurizio Pollini, and one by Evgeny Kissin.  
<https://youtu.be/YJMIxm1bGo> and <https://youtu.be/Zsks5L2QPO0>

From listening to the recordings suggest suitable dynamic markings and tempo markings for the introduction, and the opening of the main section. Compare with Chopin's score.

As a pianist, why despite all the technical difficulty of the right hand, must you give a lot of attention to the left hand?

**Sergey Rachmaninov's Etude in E flat minor** from *Études-tableaux* Op 33 (1911) is also said to perhaps depict a snowstorm, played here by Vladimir Ashkenazy.

<https://youtu.be/9Y0ORcgnByM>



Picture 12. Apollinary Vasnetsov, *Blizzard. Snowstorm. Old Moscow*, (1904). Taken from [http://www.art-catalog.ru/data\\_picture\\_2016/picture/22/4091.jpg](http://www.art-catalog.ru/data_picture_2016/picture/22/4091.jpg)

Considering that the classical music tradition originates from Europe where there has been a high Christian population, many works composed in relation to Christmas (which in the Northern Hemisphere is in winter), are also associated with winter. However if we begin to discuss other works written related to Christmas, that will be a whole new list! Nevertheless, here is a celebratory masterpiece – the opening chorus from **Johann Sebastian Bach's Christmas Oratorio BWV 248** (1734) performed by the Sächsische Staatskapelle Dresden. Regardless of whether or not one celebrates Christmas, or which tradition they follow, this is a great musical masterpiece to appreciate. This is also a good chance to check that you know what an oratorio is.

<https://youtu.be/DlwcZT1XVss>

And to finish off these examples of winter music, here is the first movement of **Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 1** (1866) nicknamed "Winter Daydreams" performed by the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra conducted by Paavo Järvi.

<https://youtu.be/ocljFkPwyU>





Here is the painting *Frost* by Igor Grabar'.



Picture 13. Igor' Grabar', *Frost*, (1905). Taken from commons.wikimedia.org

An exercise that might be interesting to do, is to try to experiment with improvising music that uses some of the ideas talked about in this booklet. You can pick a winter picture, story, or poem, and try to compose a short piece about it.

Another fun thing to do, is to research some pieces and plan a concert of music that would be suitable for a winter-themed concert. You could choose different types of pieces depending on your interest, for example winter in folk music from a certain country, happy music that is suitable for a festive mood, Christmas-themed music etc, holiday music for children, winter folklore, popular winter-themed songs from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, songs in a language other than yours. Think about who your audience would be, how long you want the program to be, what venue would suit it, how many performers would take part, whether you would need a printed program, if it would be an evening concert or a matinee. This exercise can be done with any theme, at any time of the year.

