

# Christmas Tunes

Collected and Written by John Walsh

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Here are a few tunes for the season, gleaned from some dusty books and an even dustier memory.

Jigs:

Christmas Day in the Morning: I first learned this jig from Paddy Haverty, of Killimor, Co. Galway, who called it The Munster Buttermilk. Since I already played another jig of the name, I just called it "Paddy Haverty's". But some sleuthing in Breathnach's Ceol Rince na hEireann uncovered the fact that someone else called it Siamsa Mhuilte Farannain—and also—which is the reason for including it here—Christmas Day in the Morning. It has a lot of lift—great tune for dancing. It also sounds good when transposed down to D.

Oiche Nollag: a single jig version of the reel Boys of Ballinahinch/Strawberry Blossom. It is in vol. 1 of Ceol Rince na hEireann.

A Merry Christmas: I haven't seen this except in O'Neill's. It's a nice open jig.

Reels:

Christmas Eve: This fine reel is often called Tommy Coen's, because (why else?) it was written by Tommy Coen of Co. Galway. It has been recorded several times—e.g. Chieftains 10, Delores Keane and John Falkner—and is often heard in sessions—a tune for all seasons, not just Christmas.

How We Spent the Christmas: this reel is in O'Neill's collection "Waifs and Strays of Gaelic Melodies".

New Year's Night: This reel is also in Waifs and Strays. O'Neill got it from the piper Barney Delaney, and apologized for not having included it in his earlier collections. It's worth checking out—it is the kind of simple-but-interesting tune which goes so well on whistle, flute or pipes.

Hornpipe:

The Christmas Hornpipe: This is in Coles 1000 Fiddle Tunes. More of an English than Irish tune, by the sound of it.

Airs:

A New Years' Song, Christmas Eve, both from O'Neill's 1850. Dom Oiche Ud I mBeithil: a Christmas Carol, from the Chieftains.

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1. Christmas Day in the Morning (*Paddy Haverty*)

(Paddy Haverty's)

Musical notation for the first piece, consisting of two staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8. The melody is written on the top staff, and the accompaniment is on the bottom staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

2. Oiche Nollag

Musical notation for the second piece, consisting of two staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8. The melody is written on the top staff, and the accompaniment is on the bottom staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

3. A Merry Christmas (*O'Neill's*)

Musical notation for the third piece, consisting of four staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8. The melody is written on the top staff, and the accompaniment is on the bottom three staves. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots. A small number '4' is written below the first staff of the accompaniment.

4. Christmas Eve  
(Tommy Coen's)

Tommy Coen

The musical score for "Christmas Eve" by Tommy Coen is written in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. It consists of six staves of music. The first two staves form the first phrase, and the last two staves form the second phrase. The third and fourth staves contain a triplet of eighth notes, indicated by a '3' below the notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

5. How We Spent the Christmas (*O'Neill's Waifs and Strays of Gaelic Melody; from Francis O'Neill.*)

The musical score for "How We Spent the Christmas" by Francis O'Neill is written in G major (one sharp) and 6/8 time. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff contains the first phrase, and the second and third staves contain the second phrase. A triplet of eighth notes is indicated by a '3' above the notes in the first staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

6. New Year's Night (*O'Neill's Waifs and Strays of Gaelic Melody. From piping of Barney Delaney.*)

Musical score for 'New Year's Night' in G major, 6/8 time. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. There are three triplet markings (indicated by a '3' below the notes) in the first, second, and fourth staves. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

7. The Christmas Hornpipe (*Coles 1000 Fiddle Tunes*)

Musical score for 'The Christmas Hornpipe' in B-flat major, 2/4 time. The score consists of four staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb), and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. There is one triplet marking (indicated by a '3' below the notes) in the fourth staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

8. New Year's Song (*O'Neill's*)

Musical score for 'New Year's Song' in G major, 6/8 time. The score consists of two staves of music. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a single line. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

9. Christmas Eve (*O'Neill's*)

Musical score for 'Christmas Eve (O'Neill's)'. The score consists of four staves of music in treble clef, key of D major (one sharp), and common time (C). The melody is written on a single line across the four staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature (C). The music features a mix of eighth and quarter notes, with some beamed eighth notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

10. Dom Oiche Ud I mBeithil

Musical score for 'Dom Oiche Ud I mBeithil'. The score consists of two staves of music in treble clef, key of D major (one sharp), and 3/4 time. The melody is written on a single line across the two staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. The music features a mix of quarter and eighth notes, with some beamed eighth notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.