

About the Music.

The festival of Christmas takes many different forms. It is celebrated throughout the world, and naturally a wide range of varied traditions have developed in different cultures. And that is only logical, as any traveller from the north who has ever stood beneath palm trees during Advent in December in Florida or Southern California will confirm!

During this festive season, there is generally more singing than at any other time of the year, and so there are a huge number of wonderful Christmas carols that come from all over the globe. Some pieces have their origin in the liturgical rites, beginning with the Catholic church and extending to other Christian faiths. Some have developed into annual folk traditions by the people of a particular region and then spread to become famous in other regions later. Some sing the praises of the baby Jesus or the great mystery of the birth, while others simply sing about the cold winter; some are centuries old, and others just a few decades. Some are virtuous and powerful, and some are calm and peaceful; some are geared for adults, and others particularly for children (including the children inside of all of us!). Often the sound of a particular language helps to create the atmosphere of a song.

The variety of Christmas music is indeed vast, and it's not only the melodies themselves that are so very different, but also the form in which they can be sung. There are unison Gregorian melodies, classic four-

part choral settings or polyphonic motets, and complex jazzy or trendy (or sometimes a bit kitschy) arrangements. And isn't it marvelous to take a familiar melody out of its old setting and give it a new one? Christmas carols are so versatile — there are hardly any that can't be set in several different styles!

Over the thirty years that amarcord have been singing together, we have developed a huge repertoire of Christmas music. This program contains our very favorite songs. It is a "best of" that shows the huge range of music that can be sung with just five voices. We have designed it with ancient and some new songs at the beginning, concluding with arrangements and a little Christmas twinkling eye in the end.

We hope that our program, An Amarcord Christmas, will help bring the holiday spirit into your hearts, and perhaps bring you a bit of calm and inner peace during these often hectic December days.

— *amarcord*