

# I Heard the Bells

## SATB Choir and Piano

Daniel Watson



*Commissioned by the Northview High School (Indiana 2023)*  
*Brenda Buchanan, Director*

# I Heard the Bells

SATB Choir and Piano

arr. Daniel Watson

text | Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

cover photo | Salzburg Cathedral Bell Tower, Austria (Daniel Watson)

## Note From the Composer

I heard the bells on July 2, 2023, in the Residenzplatz, the town square of the historic center of Salzburg, Austria. Wild and sweet, the bells echoed from the bell towers of the Salzburg Cathedral. The two oldest bells – “Marie” and “Virgil” – were cast in 1628 and have been ringing out on Christmas Day ever since. Bells have historically been instruments of anticipation and celebration. I aim to capture such spirit in this arrangement. This hymn carol from 1872 is refreshed with jazz stylings, reharmonizations, and an incorporation of the upbeat traditional “I Saw Three Ships.” Significant rubato and vocal stylization will brighten this classic carol.

## Performance Notes

Directors may find multiple effective instrumentation options. The piano is intentionally written to support and double the voices throughout and may be performed as notated. Directors may also consider omitting the piano in certain sections for cappella choral moments. The piece can also be performed entirely a cappella.

Regardless of instrumentation, use rubato throughout. Vary the tempo. Phrases should always have direction. While most dynamics and rhythms highlight text stress, directors can further shape these gestures to elevate the jazz style and lyrical beauty.

**Daniel Watson** is a versatile composer, teacher, and musician from Indianapolis, Indiana. Inspired by the beauty of the natural world, Watson’s music challenges performers and audiences to heighten their senses through sound. His first choral masterwork, *Virtues and Vices*, premiered at the University of Indianapolis in 2024, commissioned by Sound Ecologies Inc. In 2023, he won the Indianapolis Symphonic Choir National Christmas Carol Commission Competition with his work “Good News!”. Watson has had the privilege of performing, directing, and premiering compositions at Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, and venues throughout Great Britain, France, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, and the United States. He continues to be commissioned for new works for professional, collegiate, high school, and middle school singers.

Watson has been recognized for his dedication to music education with the Outstanding Future Music Educator of the Year Award (2015) from the Indiana Music Education Association and the National Professional Achievement Award (2014, 2015) from the National Association for Music Education. He is the Director of Choirs at Greenwood Community High School, Associate Faculty of Music at Indiana University Indianapolis, and the owner of Daniel Watson Music LLC ([danielscottwatson.com](http://danielscottwatson.com)). He maintains an active private music studio (voice, piano, composition) and regularly collaborates in the community through conducting, piano and vocal performance, and composing.

Daniel  
Watson  
Music

[danielscottwatson.com](http://danielscottwatson.com)

# I Heard the Bells

With traditional "I Saw Three Ships"

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

John Baptiste Calkin, John Stainer  
arr. Daniel Watson

**Rubato Ballad** ♩ = 78

*mp* *ten.* *mf*

Soprano  
Alto  
Tenor  
Bass

I heard the bells. I heard the bells.

**Rubato Ballad** ♩ = 78

*mp* *cresc.* *8va* *ten.*

Piano

*ped. ad lib.*

**a)** *ten.* *slower* *cresc.* *accel.* *rit.* *a tempo* *mp*

S  
A  
T  
B

I heard the bells ring out on Christ - mas day! I  
I heard the bells ring out on Christ - mas day! I  
I heard the bells ring out on Christ - mas day! I  
I heard the bells ring out on Christ - mas day! I

I heard them out on Christ - mas day! I

*8va* *ten.* *dim.* *mf* *a tempo* *mp*

Pno.

a) pitch bend



# I Heard the Bells

A

heard the bells on Christ - mas day Their

A heard the bells on Christ - mas day Their

Pno.

old fam - i - liar car - ols play, And wild and sweet the

old fam - i - liar car - ols play, And wild and sweet the

Pno.

words re - peat Of peace on earth, good will to all. I

words re - peat Of peace on earth, good will to all. I

Pno.

# I Heard the Bells

**B**

S  
thought how as the day had come, bel - fries of

A  
thought how as the day had come, The bel - bel - fries of

T  
8 thought how as the day had come, bel - fries of

B  
thought how as the day had come, The bel - fries of

Pno.

18

S  
all Chris - ten - dom had rolled a long the un brok - en song — Of

A  
all Chris - ten - dom had rolled had rolled a - long brok - en song, —

T  
8 all Chris - ten - dom had rolled had rolled a - long brok - en song, —

B  
all Chris ten - dom had rolled a - long brok - en song, —

Pno.

I Heard the Bells

Adagio C *pessante*

21 *mf* *ten.* *p* *ten.* *mp*

S peace on earth, good will to all. And in de - spare I

A peace on earth, — good will to all. And de - spare,

T peace on earth, good will to all. De - spare,

B peace on earth, good will to all. De - spare,

Pno. *mf* *ten.* *p* *ten.* *mp*

24 *f* *mf*

S bowed my head. "There is no peace on earth," I said; "For

A bowed my head. "There is no peace on earth," I said;

T bowed my head. "There is no peace on earth," I said;

B bowed my head. "There is no peace on earth," I said;

Pno. *f*

I Heard the Bells

27

S *mp*  
hate is strong, and mocks the song Of peace on earth, good

A *mf* *mp*  
"Hate is strong, mocks the song Of peace, good

T *mf* *mp*  
8 "Hate is strong, mocks the song Of peace, good

B *mf* *mp*  
"Hate is strong, mocks the song Of peace, good

Pno. *mf* *mp*

30

S *ten.* *f*  
will, good will, good will, good will. Then

A *f*  
will, will, will. Then

T *f*  
8 will, will, will. Then

B *f*  
will, will, will. Then

Pno. *mf*

I Heard the Bells

**D** Fast and bright (♩ = 80-86)

pealed the bells more loud and deep God is not dead nor does He sleep; The  
 pealed the bells more loud and deep God is not dead nor does He sleep; The

**D** Fast and bright (♩ = 80-86)

Pno. *8<sup>va</sup>*

38

wrong shall fail, the right pre - vail; With peace on earth and good will to all.  
 wrong shall fail, the right pre - vail; With peace on earth and good will to all.

38

Pno. *(8<sup>va</sup>)*

*ten.*

*mf*

**E** Slower and tranquil, rubato (♩ = 100-120)

Till ring - ing, sing - ing on its  
 Till ring - ing, sing - ing on its

*ten.*

*mf*

**E** Slower and tranquil, rubato (♩ = 100-120)

Pno. *pp* moving line sotto voce  
 optional piano tacet  
*mp*



46

way, The world re - volved from night to

way, The world re - volved from night to

Pno.

50

day, A voice, a chime, a

day, A voice, a chime, a

Pno.

*mp*

piano tacet

54

chant, sub - lime, Of peace on

chant, sub - lime, Of peace on

Pno.

I Heard the Bells

57

will. \_\_\_\_\_

earth, \_\_\_\_\_ good will, good will. Good

earth, \_\_\_\_\_ good will, good will. Good

*allargando*  
*mp*

*mp*

Pno.

60

ten. \_\_\_\_\_

will, good will, good will, good will. I

will, will, will. I

will, will, will. I

will, will, will. I

will, will, will. I

60

Pno.

# I Heard the Bells

**F** Faster than before, rubato, somewhat hurried

S  
thought how as the day had come, bel - fries of

A  
thought how as the day had come, The bel - bel - fries of

T  
8 thought how as the day had come, bel - fries of

B  
thought how as the day had come, The bel - fries of

**F** Faster than before, rubato, somewhat hurried

Pno.

S  
all Chris - ten - dom had rolled a - long the un - brok - en song Of

A  
all Chris - ten - dom had rolled had rolled a - long brok - en song,

T  
8 all Chris - ten - dom had rolled had rolled a - long brok - en song,

B  
all Chris - ten - dom had rolled a - long brok - en song,

Pno.

# I Heard the Bells

70 *mf* *ten.* *mp* *ten.*

S  
peace on earth, good will to all.

A  
peace on earth, good will to all.

T  
8 peace on earth, good will to all.

B  
peace on earth, good will to all.

Pno. *mf* *ten.* *p* 8

72 *rall.*

S  
I heard the bells.

A  
I heard the bells.

T  
8 I heard the bells.

B  
I heard the bells.

Pno. *rall.* *p*