

Introduction

Welcome! I hope you'll enjoy this collection of 30 Christmas carols and songs arranged for tin whistle or Irish flute. (Tin whistles are also known as pennywhistles.)

These pieces originated in Europe and the United States. A number of them have roots going back to medieval times, and some are descended from early instrumental dance tunes.

This book provides whistle and flute players with easy-to-play arrangements of these holiday favorites. The songs translate beautifully to the whistle and flute because wind players breathe and phrase much the way singers do.

What Makes These Tunes Easy?

- They are played in the lower two octaves of the whistle and flute's range, ascending no higher than B in the second octave. (Notes above this can be challenging to play on the whistle, and they sound too loud and shrill to many people.)
- They are in easy whistle and flute keys or modes: D major, G major, E minor, B minor and A Dorian.
- They use only the eight **primary notes** of the D whistle and Irish flute. Using the widely accepted symbol for "sharp" (#), and progressing from the lowest note upward, step by step, these notes are:

D, E, F#, G, A, B, C and C#

There are four *non-primary* notes as well — E-flat (E \flat), F-natural (F \natural), G-sharp (G#) and B-flat (B \flat) — but they are not easily played on the D whistle or keyless Irish flute as they require techniques called "half-holing" or "cross-fingering." The tunes in this book don't use those notes.

Which Whistle or Flute Should You Use With This Book?

The tin whistle in D is widely considered to be the standard one, and I recommend using it with this book. You can also use the standard Irish flute. It's in D as well, and uses the exact same fingerings as the D whistle. You can also play these tunes on the modern, Boehm-system flute and piccolo, as well as soprano and tenor recorders.

The D whistle comes in two forms: the **small D**, which measures about 12 inches in length (or about 29 centimeters), and the **low D**, which is twice as long and plays one octave lower. You can use either one, though the low D is more challenging to play. You'll hear a small D whistle used on the online recordings for this book.

You can also use a non-D whistle. Whistles that are longer and lower than the small D have mellower voices and can be very satisfying to play. If your hands are very small, however, or compromised in some way, and you find it difficult to manage the small D whistle, you might want to use one that is shorter, such as a whistle in E-flat (E \flat), E, F, F-sharp (F#) or G.

When using a non-D whistle and reading the tunes in this book, pretend you are fingering the notes on a D whistle. You may want to refer to the fingering chart for D whistle and Irish flute on p. 5. If you use a whistle that is pitched lower than the small D, the tunes will sound lower than written. If you use one that plays higher than the small D, the tunes will sound higher than written.

To play along with the audio files using a non-D whistle, you'll want to use a device or software application to raise or lower the pitch of these files to match the pitch level of the whistle you're playing.

Audio Recordings Included

At www.melbay.com/30788MEB you can access audio recordings in which I play all 30 songs on a small D whistle and on Irish flute.

Chords are included with the notation and recording of each tune. On the recordings the chords are played on guitar, but they can be played on other instruments as well. Recordings of each tune are provided in several configurations: whistle alone, Irish flute alone, guitar alone, whistle with guitar, and Irish flute with guitar.

If You Need Help With Tin Whistle or Irish Flute Playing

If you are new to the tin whistle, have questions about it or need help with your playing, I recommend you consult my book *First Lessons Tin Whistle*. It offers valuable insights as well as thorough instruction for beginners. If you are new to the Irish flute, I recommend working with my book *The Essential Guide to Irish Flute and Tin Whistle*.

Two Forms of Notation

This book uses standard music notation. If you don't read music I encourage you to learn how, as it is a rich and useful notation system. There are many books and online resources that explain how it works.