

Strike Right Note With Musical Instrument Gift

A gift of a musical instrument can be a key to "solo" or group enjoyment whether for a child, teenager or adult and is a present that is treasured long past the holidays!

Here are some pointers from the American Music Conference to start you on your way to select your gift of music!

A family gift? The instrument best suited for multi-purpose use by all members of the family is the piano or organ.

'Official' Date Of Christmas Set In 4th Century

The history of the Christmas observance is one that has intrigued clerical and lay scholars for countless years.

Researchers have found that as far back as the fourth century, the Christmas festival was already an established custom dating back to earlier eras.

The word Christmas began as "Christ's Mass" or as in old English "Christes Masse" or the Mass of Christ, following the custom of the church in observing the anniversaries of deaths, rather than births.

It was not until St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, set out to affirm one day for a universal observance that Christ's Mass was changed from its previous celebration in the spring (as we now observe Easter).

The good Bishop was granted permission by Pope Julius I to appoint a group of theologians to determine as accurately as possible, the exact date of Christ's nativity.

Too many years had elapsed for absolute accuracy, and after discovering various contradictions of calendars, astrological and astronomical calculations, the date for the celebration of Christ's Mass was set by the Church for December 25th.

So it is that since the year 354 A.D., this date has been observed as the date of the Saviour's birth.

Members of the Greek, Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches celebrate this on January 6th.

To this day, the festival of Christmas still occurs on many different dates throughout the world.

Spinet pianos with good tone and action, range from \$500 to \$2,000. Table model electric organs suitable for home use run to \$4,000.

Instrument for a child? Easy-to-play instruments are popular with even the youngest children and are an excellent way to introduce them to the fun of music.

For the young fry the most popular are melody bells, xylophones, triangles, colorful drums and rhythm sticks. Give five, to seven-year-olds plastic flutes, harmonicas or ukuleles. These instruments are available for from \$1 to \$10.

A teenager's fun? Instruments that go where the fun goes — such as guitar, ukulele, accordion, concertina or banjo — are most popular with teens. All of these fit in well with group song fests.

A new semi-accordion with limited range is being sold for about \$40; the full 130-bass starts at about \$250. Guitars may be purchased from \$20 to \$500; concertinas, \$35-\$400; banjos, \$45-\$300; ukuleles, \$4-\$75.

Gift for school? If you know a youngster who is interested in school bands or orchestras, a talk with the school instrumental instructor and a dealer will help you select a particular instrument. But the youngster's preference is most important.

School-quality instruments, most often recommended are woodwinds in the \$125 range and brasses in the \$150 range. Violins begin at \$50; cellos at \$90; and bass viol at \$250.

An adult hobby? The serious-minded, quiet person is usually a natural for the piano, violin, flute and classical guitar.

The gregarious, "life of the party" type may prefer a recreational instrument — guitar, ukulele, accordion!

For the fellow who's active in civic groups, a band instrument will put him in the swing of things whenever there's a hometown parade or community concert.

Traditional Foods Help Spark Modern Day Christmas Feasts

Good food and Christmas are traditional "go-togethers" . . . but, have you ever wondered where the eggnog, plum pudding, turkey and fruit cake came from?

Eggnog is an American concoction. Too rich for daily consumption (twelve egg yolks, two quarts of cream and a pound of sugar to each fifth of rum), eggnog soon became the main refreshment of the southern holiday open house.

Rum, in the early days of eggnog, was an essential ingredient of this drink. Today, eggnog is enjoyed by many without it.

"Frumenty," the early name of plum pudding was eaten in pre-Roman England. It was made of stewed wheat boiled in milk, raisins, sugar and spice. Later called plum porridge, it became plum pudding in 1670.

Turkey is native to the New World. It was introduced to Europe by returning Spanish settlers and first appeared on the menu of an English Christmas banquet in 1524.

The early Romans originated

the fruit cake. Almonds, added to the rich spices, symbolized the pains and pleasures of life.

Wassail is often served in place of eggnog. In England, where the drink originated, wassail was usually prepared in a large wooden bowl. The base of the drink, cider, along with seasonings was placed in the bowl and it was set on the hearth.

Apples were tied above and as they roasted, the drippings fell into the bowl. The name "wassail" comes from the middle English "waes hall," meaning, "be thou well!"

'Easy-To-Make' Confection For Holiday Tastes

Here's a holiday confection you will find delicious, Christmasy-looking and very easy to make.

CANDIED FRUIT BARS

2 halves candied orange peel

1 lb. dates

1/2 cup citron

1 cup candied cherries

4 slices candied pineapple

1 cup figs

1 cup walnuts

Rind from 1 orange

1 1/2 cups sugar

1/2 cup water

Cut fruit in large pieces with

scissors that are dipped in hot

water frequently. Chop nuts. Mix

together. Cut orange rind into

thin slivers.

Cook orange rind, sugar and

water until syrup forms a 2"

thread when tested from tip of

fork (230° F on thermometer).

Pour over fruit mixture.

Pack the well-mixed fruit-syrup

combination into a 9" square bak-

ing pan very firmly with your

hand or back of spoon. Let cool

until firm.

When firm, cut off little bars

with a sharp knife and wrap in-

dividually in waxed paper. Keeps

well and makes grand little gifts.



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