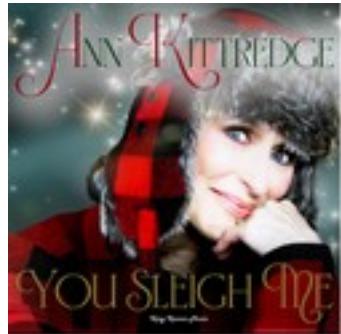




Sound Advice Reviews

The usual suspects of the season and some surprises

Review by [Rob Lester](#)



ANN KITTREDGE
YOU SLEIGH ME
King Kozmo Music
CD | Digital

Whether in serious mode or putting the merry in Christmas, soprano Ann Kittredge, her arrangers and musicians are impressive on the eight tracks that make up *You Sleigh Me*, the New York City cabaret singer's third album. It's tempting to describe it with the adjective "wonderful"—and not just because that word appears in the titles of two numbers, one of which is done in two versions. That's the cheery "Wonderful Christmastime." I prefer the longer version that has vocal and instrumental bits of familiar carols and secular holiday songs charmingly sprinkled throughout this Paul McCartney hit, starting and ending with "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." The other number with the word "wonderful" is one that is usually gushed with glee at a brisk pace, but "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" is slowed down significantly here and unrushed and the lyric is allowed to reveal its deeper potential for thoughtful appreciation of the cherished activities named. More traditionally peppy are "Snow"

(Irving Berlin) and "Sleigh Ride," requiring its Leroy Anderson melody to be at least a medium-tempo glide.

An inspired and unexpected inclusion, plucked from the score of the children's theatre production *Fancy Nancy: Splendiferous Christmas*, is "Every Ornament Tells a Story." Its scenario is about Christmas tree decorations being handled with care, and the show tune is similarly treated. Not eschewing the religious meaning of Christmas, a medley of two awe-filled songs concerning the baby Jesus and the Virgin Mary are elegantly combined (a pair of pieces posing questions: "Mary, Did You Know?" and "What Child Is This?," the latter set to the traditional "Greensleeves" melody).

Contributing arrangers are Christopher Denny, Alex Rybeck, and Randy Klein (all of whom are also pianists on *You Sleigh Me*, Mr. Klein on the keys for "Every Ornament...," which he co-wrote with Matthew Hardy), as well as Barry Kleinbort (consultant/ director Ann Kittredge's cabaret shows). Kudos to all.