



NORDIC CAROLS

2024

It is common to see small Christmas carol booklets distributed in stores and markets throughout Scandinavia. These books often contain 10–15 songs to be sung by families and friends during the Advent and Christmas seasons. Due to the lack of Christmas songs in hymnals in the early 1900s and the immense popularity of Christmas music—both sacred and secular—carol booklets became widely accepted in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland. It was not uncommon for homes to read Luke 2:1–20 and sing songs before or after Christmas dinner. While most modern booklets tend to include more secular carols and traditions, their ubiquity still extends into the 21st century.

Presented here are a selection of carols from the Nordic Region that are likely unfamiliar to you. They are part of a project to catalogue over 200 Christmas carols from this area of the world. My hope is to bring awareness of and cultivate an appreciation for some of these hauntingly beautiful carols—most of which are composed by Lutheran ministers and writers.



2 Peace, Peace, Heavenly Peace

Jul, Jul, Strålande Jul

4 My Heart Is Filled with Wonder

Mit hjerte altid vanker

7 Ring Out, O Church Bells

Kimer, I klokker

9 O Bride of Christ, Rejoice

Fryd dig, du Kristi Brud

12 Now Found Is the Fairest of Roses

Den yndigste rose er funden

13 Cast Away All Your Gloom and Sadness

Arkihuolesi kaikki heitä

16 Joyous Noel

Hjemlige Jul, straal'er Du nu

Peace, Peace, Heavenly Peace

Jul, Jul, Strålande Jul

This is one of the most beloved Christmas carols in Sweden. Many have described it as the Swedish “Silent Night” with its graceful melody, gentle timbre, and beautiful text that captures the aura of Christmas Eve.

The Swedish text was written by Edward Evers (1853-1919), a Lutheran pastor and hymnwriter, and describes a white, snow-filled Christmas with a wish that Christmas bring light and peace. The English translation captures the spirit of the original text while focusing on the peace that Christ brings.

The music was composed by Swedish church organist and composer Gustaf Nordqvist (1886–1949). It was first published in 1921 as a solo with accompaniment and later for four-part choir, which is how it is arranged here. It was recorded in 1924 and quickly became one of the most sung and played Christmas carols in Sweden since its composition.

1 Peace, peace, heav - en - ly peace, shin - ing up - on white
2 Come, come, glo - ri - ous peace! En - fold your wings a -

The first system of musical notation consists of a treble and bass staff in 6/8 time. The treble staff contains two vocal lines with lyrics. The bass staff provides a piano accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (Bb).

for - ests: an - gel - ic voic - es with glis - ten - ing light,
round us: ov - er the bat - tle - fields' blood and cries,

The second system of musical notation continues the treble and bass staves from the first system. It includes the same two vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The lyrics continue across the two lines.

all of God's saints in ce - les - tial night, hymns to our
ov - er all suff - ring and man - kind's sighs, ov - er youth's

Sav - ior that nev - er cease, e - ter - nal long - ing for
dawn - ing from seed to flow'r, ov - er life's twi - light and

Christ and peace! Peace, peace, heav - en - ly peace,
fad - ing hour. Come, come, glo - ri - ous peace!

shin - ing up - on white for - ests.
En - fold your wings a - round us.

Text: Edward Evers, 1853–1919; tr. Ian M. Welch, b. 1983
Music: Gustaf Nordqvist, 1886–1949

My Heart Is Always Dwelling

Mit hjerte altid vanker

Second only to the hymn “Beautiful Savior,” “Mit hjerte altid vanker” is a regular favorite in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Like “Away in a Manger,” the hymn focuses on the manger scene and expresses wonderment over the poverty of Jesus.

Hans Adolph Brorson (1694-1764) wrote the hymn and included it in his *Nogle Jule-Psalmer* (Some Christmas Songs) in 1731. Brorson was a Danish pastor who is often known as the “Poet of Christmas” because of his many popular Christmas hymns. Originally composed of 11 stanzas, the hymn has been slightly reworked since its inception, most notably by N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872) in 1837.

The hymn has been sung to several tunes. The most popular melody is adapted from a Swedish folk tune from the Västergötland region and is used almost exclusively in Sweden and Norway. Carl Nielsen (1865-1931) composed a melody specifically for Grundtvig’s adaptation of the hymn that was published in 1919 in *Salmer og åndelige sange* (Hymns and Spiritual Songs). His melody is widely accepted in Denmark and has been included in nearly every Danish hymnal since its creation.

SWEDISH FOLK TUNE



1 My heart is al - ways dwell - ing on Je - sus'
2 The spar - row finds a ga - ble where it may
3 O come and I will o - pen my heart, my

man-ger bed. His low - ly birth com - pel - ling;
 build its nest. The ox - en know a sta - ble
 soul and mind. A thou-sand prayers have spok - en,

to him my thoughts are led. And yet it is my
 for shel-ter, food and rest. Must then my Lord and
 "Come, Je - sus, come in - side!" For here you are no

treas - ure, my soul, its pure de - light, O joy be-
 Sav - ior, a home-less stran-ger be, de - nied the
 stran - ger; this home you dear - ly bought. Rest here with

yond all mea - sure, the Lord of Christ-mas night.
 sim - plest fa - vor his low - ly crea - tures see?
 in this man - ger now swad-dled in my heart.

Text: Hans Adolph Brorson, 1694-1764; tr. composite
 Music: Swedish folk tune

DANISH TUNE

1 My heart is al - ways dwell - ing on Je - sus'
 2 The spar - row finds a ga - ble where it may
 3 O come and I will o - pen my heart, my

man - ger bed. His low - ly birth com - pel - ling;
 build its nest. The ox - en know a sta - ble
 soul and mind. A thou - sand prayers have spok - en,

to him my thoughts are led. And yet it is my
 for shel - ter, food, and rest. Must then my Lord and
 "Come, Je - sus, come in - side!" For here you are no

treas - ure, my soul, its pure de - light, O joy be -
 Sav - ior, a home - less stran - ger be, de - nied the
 stran - ger; this home you dear - ly bought. Rest here with

yond all mea - sure, the Lord of Christ-mas night.
 sim-plest fa - vor his low - ly crea - tures see?
 in this man - ger now swad-dled in my heart.

Text: Hans Adolph Brorson, 1694-1764; tr. composite
 Music: Carl Nielsen, 1865-1931

Ring Out, O Church Bells

Kimer, I klokker

“Kimer, I klokker” is a popular carol in Denmark, and to a degree, Sweden. This carol echoes the words of the angel to the shepherds on Christmas Eve and the praise of the heavenly host.

The text was first published in *Dansk Kirketidende* (Danish Church Newsletter) in 1856 by N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783-1872). Grundtvig had previously written that “it is good to be a child at Christmas,” and he described his own childhood memories of church bells on Christmas morning.

The composer, Henrik Rung (1807-1871), contributed many melodies for Grundtvig’s texts, and the collaboration on this carol has become deeply rooted in Denmark. The repetition of the bells is heard in the first two bars, while the song picks up at bar 4 until all voices sing together the words of the heavenly choir, “Glory to God in the highest!”

1 Ring out, O church bells, and her - ald the dawn
 2 Now comes the sol - stice for souls that are fear -
 3 Sing, dance, be joy - ful all peo - ple in great

that has ris - en! Glim - mer, O stars, as the
 ful and shak - en; Christ - mas is hope which the
 ju - bi - la - tion, chil - dren of God from all

an - gels in glo - ry so glis - ten. Peace
 song of the an - gels a - wak - en. Hope
 tribes, in each coun - try and na - tion. Born

up - on earth her - alds the won - der - ful
 from a - bove, bring - ing glad tid - ings of
 on this night, Je - sus, the Fa - ther's de -

birth. Glo - ry to God in the high - est!
 love. Glo - ry to God in the high - est!
 light. Glo - ry to God in the high - est!

Text: N.F.S. Grundtvig, 1783–1872; tr. Ian M. Welch, b. 1983
 Music: Henrik Rung, 1807–1871

O Bride of Christ, Rejoice

Fryd dig, du Kristi Brud

Rooted in the last decades of the 16th century, “Fryd dig, du Kristi Brud” has a rich history in Scandinavia, especially Sweden (known as “Gläd dig, du Kristi Brud”). This hymn is to be sung at a relatively brisk pace ($\text{♩} = 70$) on the first Sunday in Advent as we herald the coming Christ.

The oldest preserved print of this hymn with seven verses is the 1632 edition of Anders Gryderup's hymnbook *Nogle Merkelige oc aandelige Psalmer*. But already in 1611 it is mentioned by Anders Arrebo as “old” and therefore could have been written at the end of the 16th century. In 1832, N.F.S. Grundtvig included it in his *Historiske Psalmer og Riim til Børne-Lærdom* and the hymn soon became a common addition in hymnals.

The tune is based on a secular melody by Jacob Regnart in *Kurtzweilige teutsche Lieder* (1576) set to the text “Venus du und dein Kind.” Melchior Vulpinus adapted the tune for sacred use in *Ein schon geistlich Gesangbuch* (1609). Later hymn settings altered the tune even further into what is commonly used outside of Scandinavia. Included here is the melody closer to Regnart's original that churches in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden use today. More common in Sweden is the folktune from the Dalarna region that is based on a melody by Anders Suther (1821–1907).

REGNART TUNE

1 O bride of Christ, re-joice! Ex-ult-ant
 3 A hum-ble beast he rides, yet as a
 6 Then go thy Lord to meet, strew palm leaves

raise thy voice to hail the day of glo-ry
 king pre-sides; though not ar-rayed in splen-dor,
 at his feet, thy gar-ments spread be-fore him,

fore-told in sa-cred sto-ry.
 he makes the grave sur-ren-der. Ho-san-na,
 and hon-or and a-dore him.

praise, and glo-ry! Our King, we bow be-fore thee.

Text: Danish, c. 1600; tr. Victor O. Petersen, 1864–1929, alt.
 Music: Jacob Regnart, c.1540–1599, alt.; setting: Ian M. Welch, b. 1983

SWEDISH FOLK TUNE

Gläd dig, du Kris - ti brud, och möt din
O *Bride of Christ* re - joice; ex - ul - tant

Her - re Gud. Den sto - ra dag du
raise thy voice to hail the day of

skå - dat som de pro - fe - ter bå - dat.
glo - ry fore - told in sa - cred sto - ry.

Ho - si - an - na, pris och ä - ra,
Ho - san - na, praise, and glo - ry!

vår ko - nung vi hem - bä - ra.
Our King, we bow be - fore thee.

Text: Danish, c. 1600; tr. Victor O. Petersen, 1864–1929, alt.

Music: Swedish folktune, after Anders Suther, 1821–1907; setting: Ian M. Welch, b. 1983

Now Found Is the Fairest of Roses

Den yndigste rose er funden

The hymn was written by Hans Adolph Brorson (1694-1764) and included it in his *Nogle Jule-Psalmer* in 11 stanzas. Brorson uses the imagery of the “rose of Sharon” (Song of Songs 2:1) as an image of Christ.

The melody uses an old Lutheran chorale for funerals in *Christliche Gesang Lateinisch und Deutsch, zum Begräbnis* (Wittenburg, 1542). The original melody was set to the text, “Jam moesta quiesce querela,” by Marcus Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (348–c.413). The tune found in Scandinavia is slightly altered from the tune commonly known as JAM MOESTA. In Norway, it is often sung to a folk tune from the Østerdalen district. Like many folk tunes in the Nordic countries, it improvises off the original tune.

1 Now found is the fair - est of ros - es,
 8 O come seek the pla - ces most low - ly
 9 My Je - sus will al - ways be for me;
 11 The world may take all my pos - ses - sions,

in bri - ars and thorns, it re - pos - es,
 and weep be - fore Je - sus most ho - ly.
 this rose is my jewel and my glo - ry.
 its thorns teach me ter - ri - ble les - sons.

my Je - sus, a branch new - ly show - ing,
 Re - ceive all the gifts that he of - fers,
 For - ev - er my keep - sake and trea - sure,
 My heart may be bro - ken and ten - der,

a rose a - mong sin - ners is grow - ing.
 this Rose plant - ed here a - mong bri - ars.
 it fills me with joy and with plea - sure.
 this Rose I will nev - er sur - ren - der!

Text: Hans Adolph Brorson, 1694-1764; tr. composite

Music: *Christliche Gesang Lateinisch und Deutsch, zum Begräbnis*, Wittenburg, 1542, alt;
 setting: Ian M. Welch, b. 1983

Cast Away All Your Gloom and Sadness

Arkihuolesi kaikki heitä

One of the most popular carols in Finland, “Arkihuolesi kaikki heitä” speaks of the warmth one finds in Christ’s incarnation in the midst of a cold winter. Alpo Noponen (1862–1927) wrote the lyrics to this song at his summer residence in Mäntylä, Inkoo, in 1916. Noponen studied at Sortavala Seminary and worked as a teacher in Mäntyharju and Helsinki. The song was published in the Christmas magazine *Joulupukki* on Christmas Eve that year.

Leevi Madetoja (1887–1947), one of Finland’s most important composers, wrote the melody that same year. He studied with Jean Sibelius (1865–1957) and Armas Järnefelt (1869–1958) in the early 1900s. His work largely utilizes Nordic melancholy and Finnish folk melodies from his native region of Ostrobothnia that is epitomized in this opera “Pohjalaisia,” published in 1923.

1 Cast a-way all your gloom and sad-ness, free your
 2 Oh, re-joice those who dwell in dark-ness peace shines

mind from all dai - ly care. Christ the Lord calls to
 forth in his won-drous light. Grace a-bounds on our

you with glad - ness, let our hearts on his
 ev - 'ry weak - ness, calm - ing sor - row—our

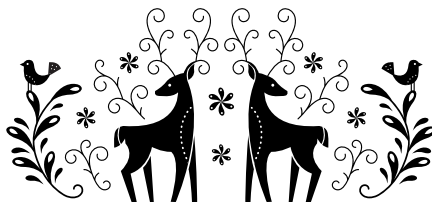
birth pre-pare. Who can stay in a cold se - clu - sion
 souls' de - light. Hear the voic - es of chil-dren sing - ing

hear - ing news that the an - gels bring?
 songs of joy for this gift of love.

Know - ing joy of his ho - ly mis - sion
 See the Christ - child sal - va - tion bring - ing—

warms our hearts to the new - born King.
 peace on earth comes from heav'n a - bove!

Text: Alpo Noponen, 1862–1927, tr. Ian M. Welch, b. 1983
 Music: Leevi Madetoja, 1887–1947



Joyous Noel


Hjemlige Jul, straalers Du nu

Towards the end of 1923, Carl Nielsen (1865–1931) composed three Christmas songs for solo voice and piano. The text for this song was written by the Danish poet, Emil Bønnelycke (1893–1953) in six stanzas.

Like many Christmas songs of this era, it focused on the nostalgia surrounding the holiday—in this case, Christmas celebrations at home. The translation uses some elements of the original text while omitting secular sentiments of the season.



1 Joy - ous No - el— long - ing-ly here. Peace now de-
2 Gen - tle No - el— humbl - est of births. Swathe him with
3 Ra - diant No - el— star in the east, her - ald the
4 Glo - rious No - el— let us re - joice! Join with the



scends on all sad - ness and fear. Je - sus is born, all our
flow - ers and voic - es of mirth. Low in a man-ger our
dawn of re - demp-tion and peace. Guide us to Christ as the
an - gels in rev - er - ent voice: "Glo - ry to God" all his

sins to for - give. Come now, O Sav - ior, to
 hom - age we bring, let us a - dorn Christ the
 proph - ets fore - told. In - car - nate Word, by grace,
 peo - ple ac - claim; with all the saints praise his

die and live! Out of the dark - ness comes glo - ri - ous
 new - born King! Dwell in our hearts dear - est trea - sure so
 we be - hold! Jour - ney to Beth - le - hem, chil - dren of
 ho - ly name! Hymns to our Sav - ior un - end - ing - ly

light: Joy - ous No - el to us this blessed night.
 mild: Gen - tle No - el, all hail won - drous child.
 light: Ra - dian No - el, O Star beam - ing bright.
 ring: Glo - rious No - el, our prais - es we sing.

Text: Emil Bønnelycke, 1893–1953, tr. Ian M. Welch, b. 1983
 Music: Carl Nielsen, 1865–1931; setting: Ian M. Welch, b. 1983

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