



NORDIC CAROLS

2025

The terms Scandinavian and Nordic are often used interchangeably, but they describe different regional groupings in Northern Europe. Scandinavia traditionally refers to the kingdoms of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, which share deep historical, linguistic, and cultural ties rooted in Old Norse heritage and mutually understandable North Germanic languages. In contrast, the Nordic countries encompass a broader region that are united through cooperation in the Nordic Council. These include Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland, as well as the autonomous territories of Greenland, the Faroe Islands, and Åland. They often share some of the same Christmas traditions, carols, and hymns—with many of the countries beginning their Christmas celebrations on St. Lucia Day on December 13. The carols presented here, while popular in their home countries, have also been translated for use in neighboring regions. In some cases, as with "Dejlig er den himmel blå," different melodies are used outside of a carol's country of origin.



- 2 Child Jesus Came to Earth This Day**
Barn Jesus i en krybbe lå
- 4 Christmas with Gladness Sounds**
Julen har englelyd
- 6 When Christmas Morn Is Dawning**
När juldagsmorgon glimmar
- 7 Your Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We**
Her kommer dine arme små
- 9 Bright and Glorious Is the Sky**
Dejlig er den himmel blå
- 12 I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve**
Jeg er så glad hver julekveld
- 14 When Christmas Comes**
Kun joulu on
- 16 Angel Sent from Heaven Bright**
Angelus emittitur

Child Jesus Came to Earth This Day

Barn Jesus i en krybbe lå

The famous Danish author and poet, Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875) included this in his lyrical-dramatic work, *Aarets tolv Maaneder, Tegnede med Blæk og Pen* (The Twelve Months of the Year, Drawn with Pen and Ink), in 1832. In the December section, poor children on the street sing the piece.

While the poem had not been used as a church hymn in Denmark until 2003 (1985 in Norway), it was still widely known and published in many song books after it was put to a melody by Niels W. Gade (1817–1890). Gade included the melody in his collection, *Børnenes Jul* (Children's Christmas), in 1859. There are other melodies set to Andersen's text, but none as popular as Gade's.

Ten years before Gade, Johan Christian Gebauer (1808–1884) had published a melody as *Juleaften, Sang for Børn* (Christmas Eve: A Song for Children) in 1849. Henrik Rung (1807–1871) composed a version for mixed choir in 1866. Robert Schumann also composed a version with a German translation in his *Liederalbum für die Jugend* (Op.79, No.16) in 1849. Because of its heartfelt and child-like tone, the song has become an enduring part of Christmas celebrations in Denmark and Norway.

1 Child Je - sus came to earth this day, to save us sin-ners
2 Take cour-age, soul, so weak and worn, your sor-rows have de -

The image shows a musical score for a two-part song. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4. The bottom staff is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. The melody for both parts is simple and child-like. The lyrics are written below the staves, with the first line for the treble part and the second line for the bass part. The lyrics are: '1 Child Je - sus came to earth this day, to save us sin-ners' and '2 Take cour-age, soul, so weak and worn, your sor-rows have de -'.

dy - ing; and cra - dled in the straw and hay, the
part - ed; a child in Da - vid's town is born, to

ho - ly one is ly - ing. The star shone down the
heal the bro - ken-heart - ed. Then let us haste this

child to greet, the low - ing ox - en kiss his feet. Al -
child to find, and chil-dren be in heart and mind. Al -

le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, child Je - sus!
le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, child Je - sus!

Text: Hans Christian Andersen, 1805–1875; tr. anonymous
Music: Niels W. Gade, 1817–1890

Christmas with Gladness Sounds

Julen har englelyd

This carol was originally written in a macaronic style, i.e. with alternating Danish and Latin lines, and included in Hans Thomissøn's hymn book, *Den Danske Psalmebog*, in 1569. N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872) began reworking the text in 1830 until it was published in seven stanzas nearly seven years later. B.S. Ingemann (1789–1862) made slight alterations to stanzas 2 and 3 in 1854, which is what is commonly sung today.

The text was set to a pre-Reformation folk melody and was finally set to a more singable melody by A.P. Berggreen (1801–1880) in 1852. Grundtvig would later ask the congregation to sing the hymn at the funeral of his second wife, Marie Toft, in 1854: "For with that hymn she often sang joy into my heart." The hymn focuses on a single verse in Luke's Gospel account of Jesus' birth: the angel's message in Luke 2:14.

1 Christ-mas with glad-ness sounds, joy a-bounds
2 Then in that bless-ed year, he came here.
3 He has for ev-'ry grief brought re-lief.

when prais-ing God, our Fa-ther, we gath-er.
Through-out a world con-found-ed, re-sound-ed.
Each grate-ful heart his prais-es now rais-es.

We were in bond-age ly - ing, but he has heard our prayer.
the tid-ings filled with glad - ness for ev - 'ry tribe of man
With an-gels at the man - ger, we sing the Sav - ior's birth,

Our in-most need sup - ply - ing, he sent the Sav - ior here.
that he has borne our sad - ness and brought us joy a - gain;
who brings re - lease from dan - ger and peace to man on earth,

There-fore with prais-es ring - ing, our hearts for joy are sing-ing:
that he in death de-scend-ed, like sun when day is end - ed,
who sat - is - fies our yearn-ing, and grief to joy is turn-ing

All glo - ry be to God on this Christ - mas night!
and rose on East-er morn with our joy re - born.
till we with him a - rise there in par - a - dise.

Text: N. F. S. Grundtvig, 1783–1872; tr. J. C. Aaberg, 1877–1970, alt.
Music: A. P. Berggreen, 1801–1880

When Christmas Morn Is Dawning

När juldagsmorgon glimmar

“När juldagsmorgon glimmar” is a popular Swedish carol, cherished for its gentle melody and nostalgic depiction of childhood Christmas joy. The text had been attributed to Betty Ehrenborg-Posse (1818–1880) in 1856, a key figure in Sweden’s early Sunday school movement, but it first appeared in *Andelig Örtgård för Barn* (Spiritual Herb Garden for Children) in 1851. This publication credits German minister Abel Burckhardt (1805–1882) with the text and states that he adapted it from a German Christmas carol in 1845. However, the German text upon which it was based has not been found.

The melody most commonly associated with the carol is adapted from the German folk tune *WIR HATTEN GEBAUET*, which is attributed to August von Binzer (1793–1868). In Sweden, the pairing of the text with this melody became standard through Sunday school publications and hymn collections of the late 19th century.

1 When Christ-mas morn is dawn - ing, the man - ger
2 How kind, O lov - ing Sav - ior, to come from
3 We need you, bless - ed Je - sus, to be our

I would seek, where God, his throne for - sak -
heav'n a - bove; from sin and e - vil save
dear - est friend. Your love will guard and guide

ing, is rest - ing low and meek. Where God, his
us, and keep us in your love. From sin and
us and keep us to life's end. Your love will

throne for - sak - ing, is rest - ing low and meek.
e - vil save us, and keep us in your love.
guard and guide us and keep us to life's end.

Text: Abel Burckhardt, 1805–1882; tr. composite


Music: German folk tune, attr. August von Binzer, 1793–1868; setting: Ian M. Welch, b. 1983

Your Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We


Her kommer, Jesus, dine små

One of Denmark's most beloved Christmas hymns, "Her kommer, Jesus, dine små" was written by the influential poet and bishop Hans Adolph Brorson in 1732. First published in his *Nogle Jule-Psalmer* (Some Christmas Hymns), the hymn reflects Brorson's characteristic blend of gentle devotion, childlike simplicity, and heartfelt piety. Written in 10 stanzas, the original title was "Her kommer dine arme små," which translates to "Here come your little poor ones." In modern Norwegian and Danish, "arme" is antiquated and now would be associated with a limb, hence the change. In Norway, the original first line has been restored.


Brorson originally gave the tune recommendation of KOMM, GOTT SCHÖPFER or the plainsong version VENI CREATOR SPIRITUS. It has been set to many melodies, but it is commonly sung to a melody by Johann A. P. Schulz (1747–1800) in his *Religiöse Oden und Lieder aus den besten deutschen Dichtern* (Religious Odes and Songs from the Best German Poets) in 1786. Known for its warm, accessible language, the hymn remains a staple in church services, children's programs, and seasonal concerts across Denmark and the broader Nordic world.



1 Your lit - tle ones, dear Lord, are we, and come your
 2 With songs we has - ten you to greet, and kiss the
 6 O draw us whol - ly to you, Lord, and to us
 9 Un - til at last we, too, pro-claim, with all your



low - ly bed to see; en - light-en ev - 'ry soul and
 ground be - fore your feet. O bless-ed hour, O sweet-est
 all your grace ac - cord; true faith and love to us im -
 saints, your glo - rious name; in par - a - dise our songs re -



mind, that we the way to you may find.
 night that gave you birth, our souls' de - light.
 part that we may hold you in our heart,
 new and praise you as the an - gels do.

Text: Hans A. Brorson, 1694–1764; tr. Harriet R. K. Spaeth, 1845–1925, alt.
 Music: Johann A. P. Schulz, 1747–1800

Bright and Glorious Is the Sky

Dejlig er den himmel blå

This carol was originally written as a children's ballad in 19 stanzas by N.F.S. Grundtvig in 1810. The song centers around the appearance of the star over Bethlehem and the Magi seeking out their new king. Grundtvig would condense the song down to 7 stanzas in *Fest-Psalmer* (Festive Hymns) in 1853, which is the version that is commonly sung in Denmark and Norway. Throughout his life, Grundtvig wrote more than 1,500 hymns and championed hymn-singing in Denmark which had grown stagnant at the time—describing it as a phoenix rising from the ashes.

Several composers have written melodies for “Dejlig er den himmel blå.” These include melodies by C.E.F. Weyse in 1837, J.G. Meidell in 1840, and Thomas Laub in 1917. The best known, and the one Grundtvig referred to in his writings as “his own melody,” is Meidell’s melody. In Sweden, the song is known as “Underbar en stjärna blid” and is often set to a different melody by Erik Ekberg. There is little information about the composer, but it has been sung in Swedish churches for over 50 years. Six stanzas are presented here and divided between the two melodies, with stanzas 6 and 7 of the original combined.



1 Bright and glo-rious is the sky, with the spark-ling
 2 In the midst of Christ-mas night, while the stars were
 3 Long a - go it was fore - told by God's cho - sen

stars on high, how they glit - ter, bright - ly gleam-ing,
 shin - ing bright, sud - den - ly, so clear and ra - diant
 men of old when at mid-night such a won - der

how they twin - kle, glad - ly beam-ing, as they draw our
 one ap-peared and shone so bril-liant with the lust - er
 would ap - pear in heav - en yon - der and a Sav - ior

hearts to heav'n, as they draw our hearts to heav'n.
 of the sun, with the lust - er of the sun.
 King be born, and a Sav - ior King be born.

Text: N. F. S. Grundtvig, 1783-1872; tr. composite
 Music: J. G. Meidell, 1778-1857; setting: Ian M. Welch, b. 1983

4 Wise - men by this star were led to the
 5 Christ they found in Beth - le - hem, there with -
 6 In his word, God did pro - vide such a

Christ-child's low - ly bed, guid - ing star, O
 out a di - a - dem, on - ly Mar - y,
 star to be our guide. Ho - ly Scrip - ture,

may we heed thee fol - low where your light is
 meek and low - ly, with her ba - by pure and
 God's own sto - ry does re - veal to us the

gleam - ing, lead - ing to our heav'n - ly King.
 ho - ly, rest - ing in her lov - ing arms.
 glo - ry lead - ing us to Christ our Lord.

I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve

Jeg er så glad hver julekveld

“Jeg er så glad hver julekveld” is one of Norway’s most beloved Christmas carols, cherished for its gentle melody and childlike simplicity. The text was written in 9 stanzas in 1859 by the influential Norwegian author and hymn writer Marie Wexelsen (1832–1911), who originally included it in her children’s book *Ketil, en Julegave for de Smaa* (Ketil: A Christmas Gift for the Little Ones). Like many 19th-century Scandinavian carols, it presents the Nativity through a child’s eyes.

The melody most commonly associated with the carol was composed in the same year by Peder Knudsen (1819–1863), a Norwegian organist and music teacher. The song spread quickly throughout schools and households, eventually becoming a standard part of Norwegian Christmas celebrations. Many Norwegians remember singing it during family gatherings around the Christmas tree, accompanied by simple harmonium or guitar.

The image shows a musical score for the carol "I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve". It consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff, both in 6/8 time and G major (one sharp). The melody is simple and gentle. Below the staves, there are five lines of lyrics, each preceded by a line number (1, 2, 3, 4, 9). The lyrics are in English and Norwegian. The first line of lyrics is "1 I am so glad each Christ - mas Eve, the". The second line is "2 The lit - tle child in Beth - le - hem, he". The third line is "3 He dwells a - gain in heav - en's realm, the". The fourth line is "4 I am so glad each Christ - mas Eve! His". The fifth line is "9 And so I love each Christ - mas Eve, and".

1 I am so glad each Christ - mas Eve, the
2 The lit - tle child in Beth - le - hem, he
3 He dwells a - gain in heav - en's realm, the
4 I am so glad each Christ - mas Eve! His
9 And so I love each Christ - mas Eve, and

night of Je - sus' birth, then like the sun the
 was a king in - deed! For he came down from
 Son of God to - day; and still he loves his
 prais - es then I sing; he o - pens now for me
 I love Je - sus too; and that he loves me

star shone forth, and an - gels sang on earth.
 heav'n a - bove to help a world in need.
 lit - tle ones and hears them when they pray.
 ev - 'ry child the pal - ace of the king.
 ev - 'ry day I know so well is true.

Text: Marie Wexelsen, 1832–1911; tr, Peter Andrew Sveeggen, 1881–1959, alt.
 Music: Peder Knudsen, 1819–1863



When Christmas Comes

Kun joulu on

“Kun joulu on” is a Finnish song whose warm, introspective mood has made it a seasonal favorite for more than a century. The lyrics were written by Alpo Noponen (1862–1927), a Finnish journalist, educator, and poet known for crafting gentle, child-focused verse. His text was first published in the magazine that he edited, *Joulupukki* (Santa Claus) in 1901. It reflects the quiet anticipation and emotional stillness of Christmas in Finland—snow-covered landscapes, candlelight, and the comforting sense that the world briefly pauses in peace.

The melody was composed by Noponen's childhood friend, Otto Kotilainen (1868–1936), a prominent Finnish composer and music educator who contributed significantly to school and choral repertoire. The song pairs with *Varpunen jouluaamuna* (The Sparrow on Christmas Morning), with words by Zachris Topelius (1818–1898).

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It features a treble and bass staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/8 time signature. The melody is simple and gentle, with a mix of eighth and quarter notes. The lyrics are in English and Finnish, with the Finnish text in italics. The score is divided into two systems, each with three lines of lyrics.

1 In win - ter's si - lence the fields lie fro - zen, as
2 No cares or wor - ries when days are slow - ing, the
3 A moth - er sets out the gifts so ten - der, she

fad - ing light sets be - yond the hill, the
win - ter's cruel frosts no long - er sting, for
wel - comes glad - ly the gifts she takes. Yet

spar - rows fly o'er the paths once cho - sen, the
 chil - dren's voic - es in cheer are grow - ing, their
 man - ger, hay, and the star in splen - dor shine

wood - lands lin - ger so hushed and still. Warmth
 joy - ful songs now be - gin to ring, and
 rich - er than an - y feast she makes; and

mends the heart sor - row left so bro - ken, when
 can - dle - light on the branch - es glow - ing, when
 Chris - tian hearts with their thanks now ren - der, when

Christ - mas comes, when Christ - mas comes.
 Christ - mas comes, when Christ - mas comes.
 Christ - mas comes, when Christ - mas comes.

Text: Apo Noponen, 1868–1924, tr. Ian M. Welch, b. 1983
 Music: Otto Kotilainen, 1868–1936; setting: Ian M. Welch, b. 1983

Angel Sent from Heaven Bright

Angelus emittitur

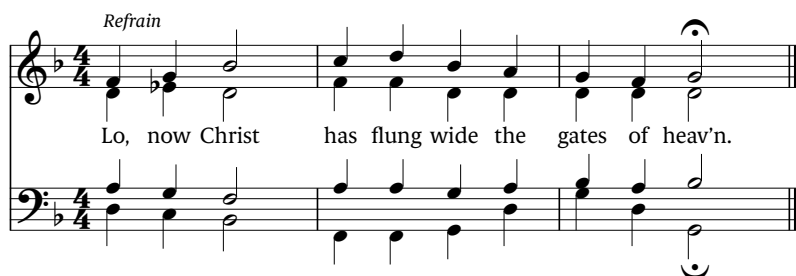
It's impossible to document music of the Nordic region without mentioning the book *Piæ Cantiones* (Pious Songs). *Piæ Cantiones* is a landmark 16th-century collection of Latin school songs, first published in Turku, Finland, in 1582 when the region was part of the Swedish kingdom. Compiled by the young cleric Theodoricus Petri (1560–1616), the anthology preserves a broad repertoire of medieval and early Renaissance sacred song used in cathedral schools across Scandinavia. The book contains 74 songs—mostly monophonic—with over 20 of them centering around Christmas.

Piæ Cantiones gained renewed international attention in the 19th century through English editions by John Mason Neale and Thomas Helmore, which introduced melodies such as “Personent hodie” and “Gaudete” into the wider Christmas repertoire. Neale would translate “Angelus emittitur” as “Gabriel’s Message Does Away.” Presented here is a new translation that more closely follows the original.

The musical score is written for a four-part setting (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in 4/4 time, with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody is primarily in the Soprano part. The lyrics are in English and are aligned with the notes. The score consists of two systems of music. The first system covers the first line of lyrics, and the second system covers the second line. The time signature changes to 2/4 at the end of the second system.

1 An - gel sent from heav - en bright soft - ly speaks the
2 Na - ture bears the ho - ly day; Son is formed in
3 Shep - herds keep their watch in cold; heav - en's mys - ter -

word of light; seed of God de - scends in might.
won - drous way; vir - gin's faith re - mains her stay.
y is told; an - gels sing with tones of gold.



Text: Anonymous; tr. Ian M. Welch, b. 1983

Music: *Piæ Cantiones*, 1582; setting: Ian M. Welch, b. 1983

4 Joy is spoken far and near;
peace is granted, calm and clear;
grace descends to hearts held dear.

Refrain

7 Life is lifted, pierced and slain;
hell is shattered of its reign;
captives rise to live again.

Refrain

5 New star rises in the skies;
death's dark shadow fades from eyes;
hope appears—the priceless prize.

Refrain

8 Adam's ancient chain is fell;
death is crushed in deepest hell;
Christ has come its fear dispel.

Refrain

6 Holy One bears trial sore;
blameless suffers all the more;
love through death shall life restore.

Refrain

9 Signs now point to Christ by name;
truth and mercy are his claim;
death is conquered—hearts proclaim.

Refrain



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