

Kommet, ihr Hirten

Come, all ye shepherds

(Christmas)

Bohemian traditional
(arr. editors)

[ANGEL:]
1. Kom - met, — ihr — Hir - ten, — ihr — Män - ner — und — Frau'n,
1. Come, all — ye — shep - herds, O — come, fol - low — me!

[ANGELS:]

5
kom - met, — das — lieb - li - che — Kind - lein — zu — schau'n.
Fa - thers — and — mo - thers — and — child - ren, — come — see!

9
Chri - stus, der Herr, ist heu - te ge - bo - ren, den Gott zum Hei - land
Born is the Christ, the Lord of Cre - a - tion, Cho - sen by God to

12
euch hat er - ko - ren. Fürch - tet — euch — nicht!
work your sal - va - tion: Be not — a - fraid!

[HIRTEN:]

- 2 Lasset uns sehen in Bethlehems Stall,
was uns verheissen der himmlische Schall.
Was wir dort finden, lasset uns künden,
lasset uns preisen in frommen Weisen:
Halleluja!

[ALLE:]

- 3 Wahrlich, die Engel verkündige heut'
Bethlehems Hirtenvolk gar grosse Freud',
nun soll es werden Friede auf Erden,
den Menschen allen ein Wohlgefallen:
Ehre sei Gott!

(rev.?) Carl Riedel (1827–88)

[SHEPHERDS:]

- 2 Let us go see now, in Bethlehem's stall,
What from the skies was revealed to us all;
What there we find, abroad we'll be telling:
Joyful our hearts, with God's praises swelling.
Hallelujah!

[ALL:]

- 3 Truly the angels glad tidings revealed
Unto the shepherds in Bethlehem's field:
Tidings of joy to all men are given;
Peace on the earth proclaimed from the
heaven.

Praise be to God!

tr. editors

Both Czech- and German-speaking Bohemians lay claim to this folk melody, though the truth of its origins will probably never be uncovered. The rise to its current popularity in German-speaking countries and the US began with the publication of the German version in a collection of *Altböhmische Gesänge* ('Ancient Bohemian Songs', 1870) arranged for mixed choir by the Leipzig chorus-master and composer Carl Riedel. Riedel's setting was for concert use, presumably made for his influential *Riedel-Whistling Verein* (the 'Riedel-Whistling Society'), but the dramatic nature of the words suggests that he adapted the text from one of the *Hirtenlieder* (shepherd songs) that abound in those parts and were sung as part of the shepherd dramas which were still popular in the more remote regions of Bohemia. These were the tail-end of a tradition extending from the semi-improvised Nativity folk dramas that had been played in the alleys and inns of medieval German towns. Gustav Jungbauer gives three in his *Bibliographie des deutschen Volks-*

liedes in Boehmen (1913): two begin 'Auf, auf, ihr Hirten!' and a third 'Kommet, kommet, ihr Hirten!', the last appearing in J. Kraus's publication of *Ein Weihnachtsspiel aus dem Erzegebirge* ('A Christmas Drama from the Erzegebirge', a mountainous region of northern Bohemia).

The Czechs sing the tune to a non-pastoral text beginning 'Nesem vám noviny'. They sing it, moreover, immensely slowly, and have been followed in this by the many American college choirs that have enthusiastically adopted the carol: but genre, German text, and tune surely suggest a quick, light style of singing.

PERFORMANCE (i) Two soloists (or two-part choir) with two-note drone *ad lib.*; (ii) choir. The scoring may be varied for performance within a Nativity play; verse 1 could be taken by two high voices, verse 2 by two men (both verses with instrumental drone), and all four soloists could join with the choir for verse 3.