



Joseph, Lieber Joseph Mein: A Carol Arrangement for Guitar

by David Hahn

"Joseph, Lieber Joseph Mein" has been an immensely popular carol throughout its history. It is a beautiful song with a strikingly sweet melodic contour. The first known version of the tune, with a Latin text beginning *Resonet in laudibus* ("Let the voice of praise resound") dates from the 14th century. It is interesting to note that while the original Latin text sings the praises of Mary and the baby Jesus, the later German version-probably more familiar to modern audiences-focuses on the archetypal *New Testament* father figure.

Carol melodies make good choices for solo guitar arrangements. The melodies are often familiar tunes, they fall easily under the fingers, and finished arrangements make useful pieces to play either in church services or at gigs around Christmas time. Before undertaking to set a particular tune, however, it is important to use a reliable source. Having the best and most authoritative version of the melody is an essential starting point. You may later decide to alter the melody while making the arrangement, but it is important to start with the truest possible version of the original melody. It is also a good idea to sing through the carol to get an idea of what the words are saying. In fact, try to discover all possible information about the carol and how it may have been used either in a religious service or otherwise.

In selecting "Joseph, Lieber Joseph Mein" for a solo guitar setting, I began with a source for the tune which is very reliable: *The New Oxford Book of Carols* which includes various settings of the tune dating back to the first known one. Hugh Keyte and Andrew Parrott, the editors of this anthology do an excellent job of tracing the history of each carol and provide extensive notes on when and where these carols may have been sung.

The gently-rocking triple rhythm of this particular carol gives the general impression of a lullaby and in fact, that is how this carol was used in medieval dramas: rocking the baby Christ-child to sleep. Joseph, Lieber Joseph Mein is a cradle song (more commonly referred to by the German term *Wiegenlied*). During the late Middle Ages the tune was incorporated into various church dramas and associated with the medieval custom of cradle rocking which was being enthusiastically done at Christmas services throughout Germany and the Low Countries.

According to Hugh Keyte and Andrew Parrott:

"Typically, the cradle would stand before the altar, with a brightly-colored Christ-child visible within, and the priest would rock it in time to the triple-time music of the appropriate *Wiegenlied* (cradle-song) carols."

The version of the melody I chose to set comes from the *Mainz Cantual* (1605). This early source printed only the tune; the 4-part version in *The New Oxford Book of Carols* was made by the editors. It is important to know this fact because it allows me as arranger to see that only the melody is original and the harmony parts are a newly made arrangement for 4-part choir. Consequently, for my guitar arrangement I kept the melody and disregarded the other 3 choir parts.

The carol melody as given is in the key of F major. This provides a comfortable tessitura for the voice but is not a very convenient key for the guitar. I decided to transpose it to D major. Starting on the note A on the first string, the tune lies very well on the guitar with the left hand staying mostly in second position. Once the new key was established, an accompaniment could be composed. I got an idea for this task from another piece of music.

Recently I had been playing the Saltarello ascribed to Vincenzo Galilei-usually transcribed with the 6th string tuned down to D. This piece uses a D-A-d ostinato in the open bass strings which propels its rhythm. This player-friendly triple-time bass ostinato creates a fine sonority, and is effective and enjoyable to play. I decided to use it as a framework for a cradle song.

In "Joseph, Lieber Joseph Mein" I intended to retain an easy-going flow and the overall sense of repose in the tune-essential for a Wiegenlied. The only change in the form of the piece was that I repeated the first nine bars of the tune, probably the most familiar part, with a slight melodic variation. I also wanted to be aware of the text and the suggested texture of the original melody.

Breaks in the ostinato come at measures 24-25 when the text translates as "Now behold what was foretold by Gabriel Eia! Eia!" For these two exclamations I use four chords together with shifts in dynamics and register. The lilting feel then returns and reaches a crescendo at measures 29-32 where the text is "And today he comes to dwell, he comes to dwell in Israel." I included harmonics which effectively echo the return of the main melodic theme in measures 39 and following.

In rendering the piece try to play as legato as possible, bring out the melody and let the wonderful sonorous D-chords ring out at cadences.

I hope you enjoy this arrangement of "Joseph, Lieber Joseph Mein" and can use it in performances (perhaps in a church drama), for your own enjoyment, or even to rock your own little one to sleep!

6=D

Joseph, Lieber Joseph Mein
(Resonet in laudibus)

arr. David Hahn
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Gently rocking
♩ = 55

Guitar

mf

The sheet music is written for guitar in 6=D tuning, 3/4 time, and D major. It consists of five staves of music. The first staff begins with a tempo marking of ♩ = 55 and a dynamic of *mf*. The music features a steady, rocking accompaniment of quarter notes in the bass and a melody of quarter notes in the treble. The second staff continues the piece. The third staff includes a measure with a long, sustained chord in the bass. The fourth and fifth staves continue the melodic and harmonic progression.

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Joseph, Lieber Joseph Mein" on page 2. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It consists of seven staves of music, numbered 19 through 43. The notation includes various chords, melodic lines, and dynamic markings such as *f*, *p*, *mf*, and *mp*. There are also performance instructions like *mf* and *mp* with hairpins. Fingering numbers 4 and 2 are circled above the notes on the sixth staff. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots at the end of the seventh staff.

Merry Christmas!
David Hahn

For updated information and new pieces by David Hahn please visit his website at:

(<http://www.davidhahnonline.com>).

Hahn welcomes readers' questions, comments and suggestions.

About the Author

David Hahn was educated as a performing musician and music scholar at Brown University, The New England Conservatory of Music, The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and Stanford University. A former faculty member of the Early Music Department at The New England Conservatory, he received his doctorate in historical musicology from Stanford University in 1993.

As a professional guitarist, mandolinist and lutenist, David Hahn has performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony and Opera Orchestras, Boston Musica Viva, the Seattle Symphony, Musica Nel Chiostrro in Florence, and the City of London Festival Orchestra. He is a co-founder of the Boston Renaissance Ensemble which performed widely in the United States and Europe and received the Noah Greenberg Award for "Excellence in the performance of Early Music" from the American Musicological Society.

Mr. Hahn's music has been commissioned and performed by a number of established professional ensembles and soloists. He won grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Soros Foundation, Seattle's Artist Trust and the Jack Straw Foundation. Aside from the U.S. his music has recently been performed in Canada, Chile, Turkey, Croatia, France, Germany, Cyprus, and Bolivia.

Hahn has written numerous works for the guitar in solo, ensemble, and orchestral settings. His recent works for guitar are: 1) Concerto Anatolia (2006), for solo guitar and orchestra featuring themes from Turkish music commissioned by guitarist Cem Duruöz, 1) Concerto alla Barocco (2003) for 4 guitars and strings, commissioned by the Minneapolis Guitar Quartet, 2) Passionate Isolation (2004), a 3-movement suite for guitar and mandolin, won the 2004 Composition Contest sponsored by the Classical Mandolin Society of America. 3) Ostraka (2004) for voice & guitar which consists of 18 miniature settings of archaic Greek poetic fragments by Sappho and others.

David Hahn has taught music at literally all levels from pre-school to university. He very much enjoys the enthusiasm and points of view which students bring to the study and performance of music.

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