

THE TUNE 'LASST UNS ERFREUEN' AS WE KNOW IT

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One of the great successes of *The English Hymnal* in 1906 was its inclusion of the old German Catholic tune 'Lasst uns erfreuen', linked originally with Easter rejoicing, but now set to 'Ye watchers and ye holy ones', a new text by Athelstan Riley (*EH* 519). It is of some interest to trace the musical ancestry of this now-famous *EH* version, which has spread far and wide since its further association with the St Francis paraphrase 'All creatures of our God and King' and Watts's 'From all that dwell below the skies'. (See *SP* 157; *MHB* 4, 28; *CP* 31, 746; *BBC* 2, 108, 288; and many later books.)

We must recall that by the end of the 19th century the great riches of German hymnody had been laid open in two monumental and scholarly collections of hymn-melodies. For tunes of Catholic origin there was W. Bäumker's *Das Katholische Deutsche Kirchenlied* (3 volumes, 1883-91, and a posthumous volume in 1911), and for Protestant tunes there was J. Zahn's *Die Melodien der Deutschen Evangelischen Kirchenlieder* (6 volumes, 1889-93); both works were reprinted in facsimile in the 1960s. As well as including an immense amount of bibliographical matter, these authors had sought to print the earliest form of each melody, and to list some of the later books in which it appeared; but, for obvious reasons of space, not every variant of a tune could be shown. Bäumker arranged the Catholic melodies according to their century of origin and their seasonal or doctrinal relevance. Zahn printed his huge collection of 8,806 tunes in a meticulous classification by metre — an arrangement, incidentally, that was of particular help to a hymnbook editor. If, for example, you needed a new tune in a less-common metre such as 88.84, you could quickly turn up Zahn and find an admirable one from a little-known book of 1692 for the hymn 'Es ist kein Tag ...'. Then, adding your own harmonies, you would have something like *EH* 521.

In the case of 'Lasst uns erfreuen' the *EH* attribution of the melody was to the book '*Geistliche Kirchengesäng* (Cöln, 1623)', a statement based directly or indirectly on Bäumker; and Bäumker in his preface sketches the background to such a book. Speaking of German Catholic hymnody in the 17th century, he says that apart from the bishops, who encouraged the production of diocesan hymnals, it was particularly the members of the religious Orders who fostered the popular singing and took trouble to propagate it. Very unfortunately, the last surviving copy of this 1623 book is now lost; but Bäumker had studied it in detail, and his verdict was that 'it seems to be a Jesuit book', although it did not carry the Jesuit 'IHS' emblem. It had 119 hymns and 93 melodies, and its proper title, in the old spelling, was:

Ausserlesene, Catholische, Geistliche Kirchengesäng, von Pfingsten, biss zum Advent, &c. Weinacht Jubel &c. Fastengesäng, &c. Oster Jubel, &c. Wallieder, &c. Und Allerley durch das gantze Jahr zu singen. Gedruckt zu Cölln, Bey Peter von Brachel ... 1623.

[Selected, Catholic, Sacred Church Hymns, from Pentecost to Advent, &c. Christmas Joy, &c. Lenten Hymns, &c. i . . . &c. Pilgrim songs, &c. and all kinds to be sung throughout the whole year. Printed at Cologne, at the press of Peter von Brachel ... 1623.]

From this book Bäumker transcribed our tune as follows:

Nist ons erfrewen hertzlich sehr.

Edln (Brachel) 1623, 1634. Würzburg 1628, 1630 ff. Mainz 1628. Corner 1631. Seraph. Lustgart 1635. Edlner Pfalter 1638. Corners Nachtigall 1649. Molsheim (1629) 1659. Mainz 1661, 1665. Erfurt 1666. Bamberg 1670, 1691. Münster 1677. Straßburg 1697.

Nist ons erfrewen hertzlich sehr, Alleluia.
Ma-ri-a seuffzt vnd weint nit mehr, Alleluia.

Der schwunden alle Nebel seyn, Alleluia.
Jetzt scheint der liebe Sonnen-schein, Alleluia.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Note that the 'repeat' sign, as used at this time, meant only that you were to repeat the section which preceded it, and not necessarily that which followed. The seventh note was sharpened in some of the books listed, and a minim rest is apparently missing at the start of the second music line. The book's foreword, quoted by Bäumker, tells us that the selected melodies are 'short, bright, and clear' [*kurtz, hell, und klar*].

We see at once that in this 1623 source the 'Alleluia' phrases are not distributed as they are in *EH*. Representing the long lines of words by the figures 1, 2, 3, 4, and each 'Alleluia' by an A, the pattern here is:

1 A 2 A 3 A 4 A A A A

and what we know in *EH* and in almost all our present books is:

1 2 A A 3 4 A A A A A

The earlier pattern, however, was widely used and has had a long life; it remains the normal form among German-speaking Catholics in Europe today, as seen in their collection *Gotteslob* of 1975. In this country we find it in Woodward's *Songs of Syon*, and in both editions of *The Westminster Hymnal*, where the Vaughan Williams harmonies from *EH* were (by special permission) adapted to it. It is also in the multi-lingual *Cantate Domino* of 1951 and, with Erik Routley's harmonies, in the *University Carol Book* of 1961.

But we are bound to wonder in what sense, if any, this 1623 version can have been the working source for *EH*, and whether an editor as responsible as the 32-year-old Vaughan Williams, when he

came upon such a venerable German tune, would have said 'Yes, it looks promising, but we shall have to reshuffle those short phrases, and do quite a bit to the rhythm'. It was different when he had to tidy up an unpublished folksong, which would have had its variants anyway. There must surely be some links missing between 1623 and 1906.

The answer begins to emerge when we find that the small Cologne book of 1623, even if Jesuit-inspired, stood somewhat apart from the main series of Jesuit hymnals for that archdiocese, all of whose titles began with the words *Catholische Kirchen Gesäng, auff die Fürnembste Fest des gantzen Jahrs*. The series had started in 1607 with a modest words-only book, and this, with melodies added, developed through editions in 1619, 1625 and 1634, all printed by Peter von Brachel. Our present interest centres on the 1625 book, a collection of 248 hymns on 684 small pages, with the fuller title:

Catholische Kirchen Gesäng, auff die Fürnembste Fest des gantzen Jahrs, wie man dieselbe zu Cölln, und anderstwo, bey allen Christlichen Catholischen Lehren pflegt zu singen ... Gedruckt zu Cölln, Bey Peter von Brachel ... IHS ... 1625.

[*Catholic Church Hymns for the chief Festivals of the whole year, as usually sung in Cologne, and elsewhere, to accompany all Christian Catholic teachings ...*]

The 1625 title-page also carries a new clause saying that the hymns and tunes are 'now put into a more permanent [*bestendige*] form'. In this edition 'Lasst uns erfreuen' was one of the hymns newly added, and at (a) on p. 197 we show its melody as there given (reproduced by permission of The British Library).

Even without repeat signs the lay-out here is simple and eye-catching, and shows that the 'Alleluias' are now grouped into the pattern we know from *EH*. (The minim at the end of the second music line may be a misprint for a semibreve, or it may indicate that the third line starts with a weak beat.) Clearly, then, two different versions of the 'Lasst uns erfreuen' melody were already in circulation by the mid-1620s, a fact not evident from Bäumker's transcription and booklist.

The second version was soon adopted elsewhere, notably by the Benedictine editor D.G. Corner, who took it into the 1631 edition of his large and influential collection *Gross Catolisch Gesangbüch*, and later into his *Geistliche Nachtigal* of 1649. It appears identically in both, without ambiguity of repeats or rests, and at (b) we show it from the 1649 book, where the heading may be rendered as 'Another cheerful hymn, known as Our Lady's Easter-joy'. In the text of later verses the pattern of the 'Alleluias' is shown by repeat signs, as in the following:

3 Sag O Maria Jungfraw schon / kombt das nicht her
von deinem Sohn? Alleluya :/:
Ach ja dein Sohn erstanden ist / kein Wunder dass
du frölich bist / Alleluya. :/: :/: :/: :/:

Before the introduction of regular barring, the flow of such a tune would be related to the old 'tactus' – the regular down-and-up move-

ment of the hand in minims. The tempo would depend partly on the nature of the hymn, but would not have departed very widely from a norm of about 80 minims to the minute.

There is good authority, then, for the 'Alleluia' pattern in *EH*; but what of other *EH* features, including the triple time and the long penultimate note? For some of these there seems to have been a likely precedent in a German collection edited by the organist and critic Heinrich Reimann and published in 1895 as *Das Deutsche Geistliche Lied*. This contained 150 sacred melodies, Catholic and Protestant, from all periods, arranged for solo voice with free accompaniments for organ or piano, and any editor who saw it would have his attention drawn to some very attractive items in the German heritage. It included, for example, the tunes 'Quem pastores', 'Resonet in laudibus' and 'Gelobt sei Gott', as well as the carols 'Ein Kindlein in der Wiegen' (*OBC* 64) and 'Schlaf wohl, du Himmelsknabe, du', known here later as 'The Shepherds' Cradle Song'. Reimann's arrangements were characteristic of his time and by no means 'authentic' in the present-day sense, but with Bäumker and Zahn available he was able to list in an appendix the sources he had worked from. In this book 'Lasst uns erfreuen' appears as we reproduce it on p. 199, and Reimann makes clear that he has used the second version. His source-note says 'Here following D. G. Corner, 1631 and 1649. At first in the *Cölnner Gesangbuch* 1623. Setting by H. Reimann'. The date '1623' under his heading refers to the words.

We know that Reimann's collection was consulted by the *EH* editors, because in their first edition they acknowledged the melody 'Mit Freuden zart' (*EH* 604) directly to it, no doubt preferring Reimann's version to the original given in Zahn. In Reimann, too, they would have seen the almost unknown melody 'Soll's sein' (*EH* 288), which had somehow escaped the nets of both Zahn and Bäumker.

In arranging 'Lasst uns erfreuen' from the Corner version Reimann halved the note-values and decided that it should be sung *Allegro* with the (new) minim as motor unit, the effect being not far from a doubling of the 17th century tempo. But when you travel through the tune in high gear like this you find that the first line occupies 5 new minim beats before being repeated, and your instinct is to prolong its last note so as to turn this odd 5 into an even 6 or 8. Reimann saw the chance of imitation in the accompaniment and chose 8 (i.e. 7 plus a rest), and similar reasons led to his rests at the end of the third long line. At the ends of the second and fourth lines the 'Alleluias' take charge; but to accommodate them at this speed you have to make excursions into triple time, and towards the end you have gathered so much triple-time momentum that you have to apply the brakes and stretch out the penultimate note to three times its original length.

A later editor, unless he had the original source in front of him, would not be aware of the extent of Reimann's alterations. *EH*, like Reimann, gave the 1623 book as ultimate source, but was (I suggest) in reality working from the Corner version as transmitted by Reimann. Vaughan Williams, in supplying his own sturdy harmonies for a slower tempo, could dispense with Reimann's fourth bar; and he introduced a

„Ein fröhlich's Gesang, unser lieben Frauen Osterfreud genannt.“

(1623)

Das deutsche geistliche Lied, Band III.

Nach D. Corner. 1631 u. 1649.

Allegro.

Mit innig freudigem Ausdruck.

Singstimme.

1. Lasst uns er - freu-en herz-lich sehr, Ma - ri - a
 (4.) 2. Aus sei-nen Wun-den flie-ssen hier fünf Freu-den -
 (5.) 3. Dein Herz jetz - und in Freu-den schwimmt, je mehr und

Orgel. *mf*

seufzt und weint nicht mehr, Al - le - lu - ja, Al - le - lu - ja. Ver -
 See, fünf Freu-den - Meer, Al - le - lu - ja, Al - le - lu - ja. Und
 mehr die Freud' zu - nimmt, Al - le - lu - ja, Al - le - lu - ja. Ach

ff *mf* *mf*

schwunden al - le Ne - bel sein, jetzt scheint der lie - be Son - nenschein,
 ü - ber dich die Freudengieß, dir in dein Herz der Freu - den Fluss, Al - le -
 Frau, vergiss nur un - ser nicht, und teil' uns auch die Freu - den mit,

p

lu - ja. Al - le - lu - ja, Al - le - lu - ja, Al - le - lu - ja, Al - le - lu - - - ja!

ff *molto sostenuto*

new symmetry by starting the third and fourth lines with long notes, to match the rhythm of the first and second. Less convincingly, he imposed a 3/2 time-signature throughout, retaining Reimann's long penultimate note, which, at the *EH* metronome rate of 100, had now to last for a record 3.6 seconds. Congregations tend to falter at this point, and in *The English Hymnal Service Book* of 1962 the closing harmonies were somewhat revised.

The *EH* version, if not 'authentic', was an imaginative gesture, and has now become a classic in its own right. It gave non-Catholics a fine new tune to sing, and has lately been finding favour with Catholic editors too. It is usually sung faster than its arranger intended, often approaching the high-g geared *Allegro* style of Reimann, and this, with varied treatment of the verses, can be exhilarating. But I wonder whether, even now, there could be reconsideration of the tune's barring. The words are, of course, technically iambic; but do we really think of the opening as 'Lasst/UNS erfreuen'? Think of other tunes such as the 'Old 124th' and 'Farley Castle', also for iambic texts. It was common practice for an old tune in duple metre to start 'on the beat' with a pattern of long-short-short, and this works well when authors allow for it, as Athelstan Riley evidently did.

If you wonder what it feels like to sing the melody in its original (second) form, try the version at no. 172 in *A & M Revised*, but with two changes: your note in bar 3 must have only a minim's duration, and so also must your penultimate note. You must think of crotchet beats, not minims, but they can be on the fast side at about 96 to the minute, and a verse will then take only a couple of seconds longer than a brisk verse from *EH* at a minim a second. For an accompaniment you may wish to revise the *AMR* harmonies; but you may well enjoy the tune afresh in its older and more closely-knit form.

'Lasst uns erfreuen' shares its opening line, and one or two other features, with one of the finest Protestant melodies of the early 16th century – the lengthy tune, very probably by Matthäus Greiter, that Calvin adopted for Psalms 36 and 68 in the French metrical psalter, whence it came to this country with Kethe's version of Psalm 113. (See *EH* 544; *SP* 246; *MHB* 584; *CP* 713; etc.) It was in wide use in Germany, too, and must have been known to the Catholic musicians of Cologne, who no doubt chose to borrow its very good first line; but they showed their preference for the 'short' and the 'clear' by building their own tune with rare musical economy. Greiter's melody, noble as it is, involves the memorizing of eight different phrases, each of eight or seven notes. 'Lasst uns erfreuen' makes its full and satisfying effect with just two different eight-note phrases and two different four-note 'Alleluias'.