

“Bei uns ist immer was los!”

## ADVENTSSITTEN / ADVENT CUSTOMS ADVENTSLIEDER / ADVENT SONGS

song: das Lied, die Lieder  
to sing: singen, singt, sang, gesungen

Advent songs are followed by Christmas songs, which can also be categorised in several groups. Firstly, there are the songs bringing tidings of great joy, headed by Martin Luther's celebrated “Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her” — words that Luther gives to the Angel that appeared to the shepherds.

Songs devoted to Mary and baby Jesus form a very large group. One of the oldest, dating from the 14th century, starts: “There is a flower springing, from tender roots it grows” (Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen) Mary is the rose referred to in the carol. Another favourite of choirs that sing folk-music begins:

“On the mountains blows the wind wild  
and there cradles Mary her child”.

These songs were originally sung without instrumental accompaniment.

Then there are the shepherds' songs, which are full of movement since these herdsmen were impelled to the crib by curiosity. These songs are happy and invigorating, encouraging people to follow the shepherds' example and rush to the crib:

“Come, all Christians, come apace,  
Regard how the shepherds do race”.

Such songs undoubtedly found a response among a population that until the 19th century lived from land and cattle. The herdsman was an important and respected man, particularly where animals were put out to pasture in the spring and stayed out until the start of winter enforced a return to the stall.

There are comparatively fewer songs concerned with the christening of Christ, the circumcision, and the Three Holy Kings from the East. The bones of the Three Kings have rested at Cologne since 1164 but the city has produced very few songs in their honour, and these have not established themselves either. Significantly, the songs devoted to the Three Kings in today's hymn books are of modern origin, the outcome of the revival of Epiphany carol singing after the Second World War.

**Children's songs** Children's songs for Christmas are also of recent origin, dating from around 1800. The best-known and most popular of them all starts:

“Come little children,  
come all of you”.