

And Jacob begot Joseph, the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

—Matthew 1:16 (KJ 21)

And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.

—Luke 2:16 (KJ 21)

The Text

A little Child there is yborn,
Eia, eia, susanni, susanni, susanni.
And He sprang out of Jesse's thorn,
Alleluya, alleluya,
To save us all that were forlorn.

Now Jesus is the Child's name,
Eia, eia, susanni, susanni, susanni.
And Mary mild she is His dame;
Alleluya, alleluya,
And so our sorrow is turned to game.

It fell upon the high midnight,
Eia, eia, susanni, susanni, susanni.
The stars they shone both fair and bright,
Alleluya, alleluya,
The angels sang with all their might.

Now sit we down upon our knee,
Eia, eia, susanni, susanni, susanni.
And pray we to the Trinity,
Alleluya, alleluya,
Our help, our succour for to be.

Program Note

Few traditional Christmas carols have ever had a more confusing, intriguing history than *Susanni*, or *Susani* with one “n”, or *Susani, Sus, Sus, Sus!* (with an explanation mark).

The above three song titles, the later insertion of a Latin trope and a refrain, the two German texts, and later an Old English text have all compounded the elements of confusion surrounding this title. The one issue that the musicologist can agree upon is that the original tune is unknown.

However, there is little doubt that this current tune with a then vernacular (“folk”) text first started out in Germany, probably in Cologne, in 1393. This fact is documented in the Ashmolean manuscript, which is housed in Oxford University's Bodleian Library, and first published in 1901. Nevertheless, because the English translation of the folk text is so similar to Martin Luther's English 1535 translation, the two German versions are often confused.

Fortunately, I found the earliest contemporary source (1911) available to me of this tune in *Story of the Carol*, edited by Edmondstoune Duncan (Scribner, N. Y.). In the cited first verse, it contains the repeated tropes, a refrain (1854) and the vernacular 1535 first verse text of Martin Luther's *Vom Himmel hoch ihr Engel kommt (From Heaven on High, The Angels Sing)*. However, the title source is given as *Susani* (with one “n”), *Sus, Sus, Sus!* Above the vocal line is the legend: “Weihnachtlied, 14th century” (Christmas Song).

No doubt the British (who always know a good tune when they hear one) later created original verses to the tune in their own vernacular (Old English) in the 15th century. Nevertheless, it is the public domain Old English text from *The Oxford Book of Carols* which appears in this edition.

The Old English text originally had six verses, of which I have not used verses two and five in this edition, as is also used in *The Oxford Book of Carols* (Dearmer.OUP.1964). And also, in the Old English first verse, the last words of the first and third lines are “yborn” to rhyme with “more.” However, most current editions have now updated those rhyming words to become “yborn” and “thorn.” There are also other language updates in the remaining verses which are not cited here.

Regarding an explanation of the title *Susanni*, Elizabeth Poston (1905–1987) asserts that it is a German lulling word. However, she gave no details. So after some research, I discovered that *susanni* is a variant German spelling of *susani* (with one “n”), or *sauseninne*, or *sussanine*, or *susenyn*. Further early evidence is found in The Brothers Grimm's “Warterbuch” (DWB: 1838–1854) in the line: ... “eya, eya, susani, susani” (Cologne: 1635), with the main entry as *sauseninne*. Each variant word means “lullaby” or “soft humming” in a now obsolete spelling from the root word “sausen” (to sleep) or modern-day “saesein.” And “Eia” is a variant spelling of the exclamation, “Ei!” Specifically, it is from the word “eiapopaia,” also meaning “lullaby.”

The performer and listener should dismiss any historical confusion surrounding this title. The tune used here is jolly (even if sung in updated Old English), and it is always understandable and perfectly clear. So confusion be banished, just enjoy it!

—James McCullough

James McCullough (b. 1939)

For biographical information about the arranger, please visit this Web site.

<<http://www.ecspublishing.com/compBiosM.html#mccullough>>

For the University Choir of Millersville University (Pennsylvania),
 Dr. Mark A. Boyle, Director of Choral Activities,
 to celebrate his first year as Artistic Director

Susanni

for SATB Chorus unaccompanied

Probably a 15th-century German Text
 Later An Old English Text*

Tune: *Vom himmel hoch*
 An Early German Christmas Carol
 Cologne, circa 1393
 Arranged by James McCullough

Always flowing, with tenderness and good cheer (♩ = 132–145)

Soprano
 A lit - tle Child there is y - born, —

Alto
 A lit - tle Child there is y - born, —

Tenor
 A lit - tle Child there is y - born, — Ei - a, ei - a, —

Bass
 A lit - tle Child there is y - born, — Ei - a, — ei - a, —

Keyboard
 (for rehearsal only)

* The text from *The Oxford Book of Carols* published by Oxford University Press is in the public domain.

Suggested use: Christmas.

9

(mp) *mp*

su-san-ni, su-san-ni, su-san-ni. — Al-le-lu-

(mp) *mp*

su-san-ni, su-san-ni, su-san-ni. — Al-le-lu-

mp *mf dolce* *mp*

su-san-ni, su-san-ni, su-san-ni. — And He sprang out of Jes-se's thorn, Al-le-lu-

mp *mf dolce* *mp*

su-san-ni, su-san-ni, su-san-ni. — And He sprang out of Jes-se's thorn, Al-le-lu-

18

p *mp* *mp gently*

ya, — al-le-lu-ya, — To save us all that were for-lorn. — Ei-a, (as a gentle echo)

p *mp* *p*

ya, — al-le-lu-ya, — To save us all that were for-lorn. — Ei - - -

p *mp* *mf dolce*

ya, — al-le-lu-ya, — To save us all that were for-lorn. — Now Je-sus is the

p *mp* *mp*

ya, — al-le-lu-ya, — To save us all that were for-lorn. — Ei-a, - - -

28

mf dolce

ei - a, — And Ma - ry mild she

mf dolce

a, ei - a, — And Ma - ry mild she

f dolce

Child - ès name, — su - san - ni, su - san - ni, su - san - ni.

f dolce

ei - a, — su - san - ni, su - san - ni, su - san - ni.

37

mp *p* *mp*

is — His dame; — Al - le - lu - ya, — al - le - lu - ya, — And so — our sor - row is turned to

mp *p* *mp*

is — His dame; — Al - le - lu - ya, — al - le - lu - ya, — And so — our sor - row is turned to

mp *p* *mp*

Al - le - lu - ya, — al - le - lu - ya, — And so our sor - row is turned to

mp *p* *mp*

Al - le - lu - ya, — al - le - lu - ya, — And so our sor - row is turned to

46

game. —

game. —

mp dark and rich

mf brightly

game. — It fell up - on the high mid - night, — Ei - a, ei - a, —

mp dark and rich

mf brightly

game. — It fell up - on the high mid - night, — Ei - a, — ei - a, —

56 *mp* lyrical and lightly (mp)

su - san - ni, su - san - ni, su - san - ni. — Al - le - lu -

mp lyrical and lightly (mp)

su - san - ni, su - san - ni, su - san ni. — Al - le - lu -

mf warmly *mp*

The stars they shone both fair and bright, — Al - le - lu -

mf warmly *mp*

The stars they shone both fair and bright, — Al - le - lu -

Poco maestoso

65

p *mp* *f*

ya, — al - le - lu - ya, — The an - gels sang with all their might. — Now sit — we

p *mp* *f*

ya, — al - le - lu - ya, — The an - gels sang with all their might. — Now sit — we

p *mp* *f*

ya, — al - le - lu - ya, — The an - gels sang with all their might. — Now sit — we

p *mp* *f*

ya, — al - le - lu - ya, — The an - gels sang with all their might. — Now sit — we

Poco maestoso

74

Legato
mf brightly *mp lightly*

down up - on — our knee, — Ei - a, ei - a, — su-san-ni, su-san-ni,

mf brightly *mp lightly*

down up - on — our knee, — Ei - a, ei - a, — su-san-ni, su-san-ni,

mf brightly *mp lightly*

down up - on — our knee, — Ei - a, ei - a, — su-san-ni, su-san-ni,

mf brightly *mp lightly*

down up - on — our knee, — Ei - a, ei - a, — su-san-ni, su-san-ni,

Legato

Poco maestoso

Legato

83

f *mf* *mp*

su - san - ni. — And pray we to the Trin - i - ty, — Al - le - lu - ya, — al - le - lu -

f *mf* *mp*

su - san - ni. — And pray we to the Trin - i - ty, — Al - le - lu - ya, — al - le - lu -

f *mf* *mp*

8 su - san - ni. — And pray we to the Trin - i - ty, — Al - le - lu - ya, — al - le - lu -

f *mf* *mp*

su - san - ni. — And pray we to the Trin - i - ty, — Al - le - lu - ya, — al - le - lu -

Poco maestoso Legato

With finality, senza rit.

Slowly until the end

92

mf *f* *mp*

ya, — Our help, our suc - cour for to be. — Ei - a, — ei - a. —

mf *f* *mp*

ya, — Our help, our suc - cour for to be. — Ei - a, — ei - a. —

mf *f* *mp*

8 ya, — Our help, our suc - cour for to be. — Ei - a, — ei - a. —

mf *f* *mp*

ya, — Our help, our suc - cour for to be. — Ei - a, — ei - a. —

With finality, senza rit. Slowly until the end

October 22, 2010 | Glen Allen, Virginia | 1'40''