

A scenic mountain landscape. In the foreground, a small village with several houses is nestled in a green valley. Behind the village is a dense forest of evergreen trees. In the background, a large, rugged mountain with rocky peaks rises against a cloudy sky. The overall lighting is soft, suggesting dusk or dawn.

Silent Night

THE STORY OF A CHRISTMAS CAROL



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On a wintry night in 1816, Joseph Mohr, a 24-year-old curate, who was posted to a hamlet near the Austrian Alps, wrote the lyrics that evolved into “Silent Night.”

Mohr was born in Salzburg, Austria in 1892, the son of a seamstress and soldier-for-hire who never married.

Early in life, Mohr came to the attention of the director of music at Salzburg Cathedral who, impressed by Mohr's musical ability, arranged for his education.





Mohr was raised at the Benedictine Abbey at Kremsmünster where he studied singing and violin. His favorite instrument was the guitar.





Two years after he wrote the words, Father Mohr was serving at St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf, Austria. That Christmas Eve, Mohr's thoughts turned to his lyrics. He went to see his friend, music director and schoolteacher Franz Xaver Gruber, who lived above the school in nearby Arnsdorf. Mohr asked Gruber to set his lyrics to music.



Photograph by Gakuro

That Christmas Eve at St. Nicholas' midnight Mass, the two men sang "Stille Nacht" for the first time.

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A few years later, Karl Mauracher, a master organ builder from Salzburg, was in Oberndorf to repair an organ at St. Nicholas'. Father Mohr gave Mauracher a copy of his Christmas carol.

Thanks to the organ builder's network, "Silent Night" was soon being sung far and wide by families of traveling folk singers.

Largo. *Weihnachts-Wee.* *Melodie von Fr. Xav. Gruber.*

Voci.

1. Still in Nacht! still-ge Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht!

2. Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht!

3. Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht!

4. Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht!

5. Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht!

6. Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht!

Gitarre.

1. Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht!

2. Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht!

3. Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht!

4. Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht!

5. Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht!

6. Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht! Still in Nacht!

Over many years Mohr and Gruber were forgotten. People thought Mozart, Beethoven or Hayden had composed the melody for "Silent Night."

In 1995, a manuscript written by Father Mohr surfaced that credited Franz Xaver Gruber with writing the melody.



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In 1848, Father Joseph Mohr died, as he was born, in obscurity and poverty. He used his resources to comfort the elderly and educate children.

Today Father Mohr's song has been translated into over 140 languages. A museum in Wagrain, Austria commemorates his memory and "Silent Night."



Jiří Sedláček, CC BY-SA 4.0

And, every year on Christmas Eve, the young curate's vision of an infant sleeping in "heavenly peace" echoes gently throughout the world.