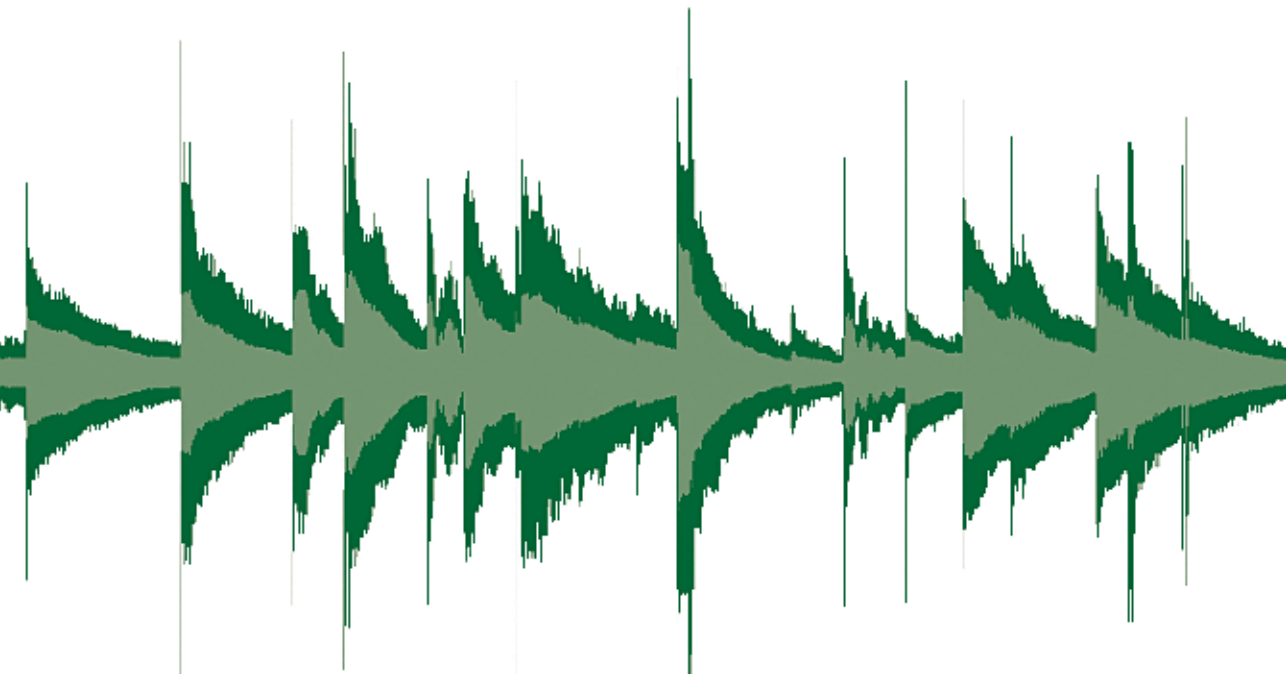


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Silent Night

A Companion to the Song

Thomas Hochradner,
Michael Neureiter (Eds.)

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Back flap: View of the Silent Night Chapel and the Silent Night Museum Oberndorf, 2018.
Silent Night Association, Photo: Hermann Hermeter.
p. 7: LMZ, Franz Neumayr; p. 8: Salzburg Museum, Kilian Bochnig; p. 276/277: Salzburg Museum



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Silent Night. A Companion to the Song Unique Amongst a Flood of Publications



This book is notable amongst the abundance of publications about “Silent Night! Holy Night!” as a unique work drawing from the expertise of its contributors.

The two editors, University Professor Dr. Thomas Hochradner and President MMag. Michael Neureiter, are proven experts who have brought together decades of dedicated commitment to the song. Musicologist Thomas Hochradner is a specialist in Salzburg music history, whose expertise spans not only to the sheet music material of all versions but also the music traditions of the time in which Joseph Mohr and Franz Xaver Gruber received their musical training. Furthermore, he has broadly dealt with the carol’s reception history in numerous publications.

Since 2007, the historian and theologian Michael Neureiter has presided over the “Silent Night Association” on a voluntary basis and has developed a vast expertise regarding the creation, distribution and worldwide reception of the song. His specialist knowledge has been quintessential in supporting the diverse projects, publications and conceptions for the jubilee year in 2018. He was responsible for the Silent Night Association obtaining the inclusion of *Silent Night* in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List. The course “Stille Nacht vermitteln”, presenting the *Silent Night* story, aims to replace the long-standing myths surrounding the song with well-founded academic veracity and has consequently contributed to a growing pool of experts.

The contributions by renowned Salzburg academics place the song within the historical context of a period governed by socio-political and geopolitical upheaval, while also reflecting the Alpine tradition of Christmas and the merciless marketing of a song that expresses a longing for peace.

My special thanks go to the two editors, Professor Hochradner and President Neureiter, the authors and to the publisher Anton Pustet for the successful visual realisation of the content. This book is an important contribution to the 2018 jubilee year and the special exhibition in the Salzburg Museum “Silent Night 200” which is based upon the wealth of knowledge the publication provides. Its translation into English also extends the scope of the subject to an international readership and steers away from the clichés surrounding this all-important Christmas carol.

I hope that this publication attracts many enthusiastic domestic and foreign readers who are enticed to visit the places, which present a backdrop for the “Silent Night! Holy Night!” story, allowing them to trace the lives of Franz Xaver Gruber and Joseph Mohr in their different locations!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wilfried Haslauer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dr. Wilfried Haslauer
Governor

Silent Night. A Companion to the Song Quality-orientated and Sustainable Mediation!



The Salzburg Museum is pleased to announce its multifaceted involvement in the anniversary program “200 years of Silent Night! Holy Night!” in 2018. In addition to partaking in this first decentralised state exhibition “Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht”, the new companion publication provides a very special highlight. The comprehensive commitment to the carol, which is so well known throughout the world, has enhanced the current knowledge horizon of this outstanding cultural heritage by calling upon professional expertise.

The book project was first discussed with the Salzburg Museum when the Silent Night Association had already started to work on a compendium, headed by Professor Thomas Hochradner and President MMag. Michael Neureiter, three years ago. The idea was to bundle resources and release a publication within the context of the anniversary exhibition “Silent Night. 200 Years of History, Message and Presence” in the Kunsthalle of the Neue Residenz Palace. Meanwhile, Professor Hochradner agreed to take over the curatorship of the exhibition. As a result, the book and exhibition have now become a logically entangled comprehensive project with the common goal of a quality-orientated and sustainable mediation for the story of “Silent Night! Holy Night!”.

The Museum’s exhibition is divided into six sections, which correspond to the six stanzas of the song: these tell of the history of the song’s creation and its subsequent journey, the biographies of Josef Mohr and Franz Xaver Gruber in the 19th century, the circulation and distribution of the song, its use as a political and commercial instrument, its textual and compositional features as well as Silent Night’s current position within global, interdenominational and musical contexts.

The beginning and the end of the exhibition are marked by two special rooms. They deal with the intangible character of the song as a cultural heritage and its special connection with the specific event of the Holy Night (Christmas Eve) on 24 December. The two installations do not only function as an overview of the overall project but also provide curatorial answers to the special questions arising from the exhibition itself.

How to deal with the song outside of the Christmas season? How to design experiences in an exhibition? Which artefacts represent an intangible cultural asset? How to avoid contributing to the further commercialisation of *Silent Night*? What tensions arise between the search for historical facts and the strong tradition of romanticised myths, legends and embellished anecdotes surrounding the song's creation? How does an exhibition concept relate to the personal Christmas experiences of museum guests? How does the story of a Christian song relate within transcultural contexts and to members of differing religious communities?

In the 2018 anniversary year, the Salzburg Museum raises these questions with its project "Silent Night 200" and sheds new light on a variety of stories and approaches relating to the song "Silent Night! Holy night!".

We would like to thank the two editors Professor Thomas Hochradner and President Michael Neureiter as well as the Silent Night Association for their openness and the possibilities for collaboration resulting in the committed and competent implementation of this book by Verlag Anton Pustet in Salzburg.

The Salzburg Museum and its employees are genuinely honoured to play a part in this all-encompassing project. Between September 2018 and February 2019 we want to share our gratitude and joy with all guests visiting the Salzburg Museum with an intense, exciting, stimulating and atmospheric exhibition experience in Salzburg.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Hochleitner', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Martin Hochleitner
Director and Business Executive
of the Salzburg Museum GmbH

“Silent Night! Holy Night!”: The Song and Its Authors

The Song’s Beginnings

Coadjutor Joseph Mohr wrote his poem “Silent Night! Holy Night!” in 1816 in Mariapfarr – “inner Gebirg” in the Lungau – when the population of the city and state of Salzburg could finally breathe after experiencing many adversities. The escape of the last ruling Prince Archbishop Hieronymus Count Colloredo (1800) from French troops was followed by the secularisation of the archbishopric (completed in 1803) and a short-lived period as the electorate of Salzburg (1803–1805). However soon afterwards, the small, still sovereign territory found itself in the midst of the military movements of the Napoleonic wars and the greedy haggling of its powerful neighbours Austria and Bavaria. Two occupations and multiple changes of power led to a new stability in 1816. The Treaty of Munich sealed the contract with Austria ending the exhausting back and forth – at that time a feeling of peace would have spread, even if it had been bought with a notable loss of influence. The former sovereign territory was demoted to the ‘Salzburg Kreis’ (District), administratively subordinated to the ‘Duchy above the Enns (River)’ and was administered from Linz. Subsequently, there was a population decline, especially within the civil



Fig. 1: St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf, historical photograph, late 19th century, extract (Stadtarchiv Oberndorf bei Salzburg)

“Wild Night! Striking Night!”. Political Christmas in the 20th Century: Its Effect in Selected *Silent Night* Text Adaptations*

When the song “Silent Night! Holy Night!” was created at the beginning of the 19th century, the Christmas celebration was changing. Religious celebrations (such as Lent, and worship services, modest gifts and small greetings) developed towards an ever more secular form, the centre of which was no longer worship but focused more on the celebration within the family, which was accompanied by the unveiling of the Christmas tree, an exchange of presents and rich food.¹

To put it simply, today the following ways of celebrating Christmas can be distinguished from one another: once the (more or less) secular celebration of children and presents within the family, popular at the end of the 19th century, became a more public celebration (starting with the kindergarten, then at school, in companies, clubs and on streets and squares). Finally there is the ideal of the Christmas celebration, mediated by newspapers and magazines, on billboards and later through film, internet and television – an image that reverts back to domestic and public celebrations. Christmas presents another two sides in the 20th century: a highly commercial and an undeniably political one.² Although this existed since the origin of the festival³, it has become particularly clear since the German Empire (1871–1911): no political group was unable take a position on Christmas in one way or another, by either using (for want of saying – exploiting) it for their own purposes or distancing themselves from it; major political events would affect the way Christmas was celebrated in Germany during the 20th century, be it the two World Wars, inflation or the economic miracle, the building and fall of the Berlin wall, and even the student unrest of the late sixties and early seventies, each have left their own imprint within the festive culture of their time.

The majority of text adaptations of *Silent Night* known today (more than fifty⁴) resulted within political Christmas contexts. Since its genesis, *Silent Night* has stirred minds like no other Christmas carol; many consider it the epitome of the Christmas carol in the German-speaking world. It simultaneously conveys the Christian message of Christmas, connects (childlike) memories of Christmas Eve and imparts – even to its critics – the call to stand still and contemplate. It thus seems to almost invite new versions of the text.

The *Silent Night* text adaptations which emerged in this manner, combine contemporary history in a spectrum of interpretations.⁵ They served both political propaganda (especially in National Socialism) and, for the greater part, as social criticism; only a small percentage suggest satirical witty tones.

In the political Christmas of the 20th century, four epochs can be distinguished: Christmas in the German Empire, Christmas in the Weimar Republic, Nazi Christmas and Christmas in post-war Germany.⁶ In each of these periods, typical text adaptations of the time emerged.⁷

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Foto © Clemens Panagl

Thomas Hochradner

ao.-Univ.-Prof., born 1963, has been Head of the Musicology Department at the Universität Mozarteum in Salzburg since October 2014 and Director of the “Arbeitsschwerpunktes Salzburger Musikgeschichte” (Focus on Salzburg Music History) since 2002. His output includes numerous publications, the most recent being the Thematic Catalogue of the Works of Johann Joseph Fux (Volume 1, 2016).

Michael Neureiter

MMag., born 1950 in Hallein, resides in Bad Vigaun, is married and studied Theology and Philosophy (History) in Salzburg. He was Managing Director of the Österreichischen Bibliothekswerks (Austrian forum of catholic libraries) until 2004, Second President (Deputy) of the Salzburg State Parliament until 2008 and has been President of the Silent Night Association since 2007.



Foto © Daniel Reiter