Michael Praetorius' In Dulci Jubilo

One night in 1328, the German mystic and Dominican monk **Heinrich Suso** (or Seuse) had a vision in which he joined angels dancing as the angels sang to him
Nun singet und seid froh
or
In Dulci Jubilo.
In Suso's biography (or perhaps autobiography), it was written:

" Now this same angel came up to the Servant [Suso] brightly, and said that God had sent him down to him, to bring him heavenly joys amid his sufferings; adding that he must cast off all his sorrows from his mind and bear them company, and that he must also dance with them in heavenly fashion. Then they drew the Servant by the hand into the dance, and the youth began a joyous song about the infant Jesus, which runs thus: 'In dulci jubilo', etc."

In Dulci Jubilo

"In Dulci Jubilo" is among the oldest and most famous of the "macaronic" songs, one which combines Latin and a vernacular language such as English or German. (Macaronic refers to text using a mixture of languages, particularly bilingual puns or situations in which the languages are otherwise used in the same context.)



Heinrich Suso

The tune first appears in Codex 1305, a manuscript in Leipzig University Library dating from c.1400, some version of the song itself may have existed prior to 1328. It remained well-known and often used by Catholics and Protestants alike throughout the centuries.



In Dulci Jubilo (Leipzig 1582)

The 1533 Lutheran hymnal by Joseph Klug, „Geistliche Lieder”included it with three verses. It also occurred in Michael Vehe's “Gesangbuch,” which was published at Leipzig in 1537. In 1545, another verse was added between the last two: "O Patris caritas!" was likely written by Martin Luther and included in Valentin Babst's “Geistliche Lieder” (Leipzig). There have been a number of translations of the Latin/German poem into English. The most popular that keeps the macaronic structure is Robert Lucas de Pearsall's 1837 translation, which retains the Latin phrases and substitutes English for German.



Geistliche Lieder (1708)

Pearsall noted in January, 1837:

“ The original melody employed, as a Cantus firmus, in the following composition, is to be found in an old German book published in the year 1570 -- which, from its title and contents, appears to have contained the ritual of the Protestant Congregations of Zweibrueken and Neuberg. Even there it is called "a very ancient song (uraltes Lied) for Christmas-eve;" so that there can be no doubt that it is one of those old Roman Catholic melodies that Luther, on account of their beauty, retained in the Protestant Service. It was formerly sung in the processions that took place on Christmas-eve, and is so still in those remote parts of Germany where people yet retain old customs.”



Robert Lucas de Pearsall

Praetorius (c1571-1621) was the first great musical commentator and elaborator of the Lutheran chorale. Prolific he certainly was, with over 1,000 chorale settings (quite apart from a mass of other work in compositional and theoretical fields), but his level of invention is remarkable too. One of its great merits is that in choosing chorales from the Advent, Christmas and Epiphany seasons the tunes are likely to be familiar to many listeners.



Michael Praetorius

Michael Praetorius' “In dulci jubilo” is a gloriously expansive amalgam of sound and text. Composed near the end of Praetorius' life as part of his “Polyhymnia Caduceatrix et Panegyrica” (Polychoral Hymns of Peace and Festivals) of 1619, this setting of the well-known tune In dulci jubilo was actually his 11th, and most ornate. Praetorius sets the stanzas of this utilizing a highly flexible ensemble of three to five choruses and brass ensemble, continuo (organ), and tympani.











In dulci jubilo