

A song is celebrated: 200 years of "Silent Night" Advent 2017 was the start of the big anniversary celebrations

On 24 December 1818, Joseph Mohr and Franz Xaver Gruber sang the song "Silent Night" in Oberndorf near Salzburg for the first time. The poem was written by Mohr, a young pastor from Salzburg, and the melody was composed by the teacher and organist Gruber from Upper Austria. Two hundred years later, the song is sung by around two billion people in over 300 languages and dialects around the world. "Silent Night" is a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage and world peace song, international cultural asset and musical legacy. The big anniversary is duly celebrated in the 13 Silent Night locations in SalzburgerLand, Tirol and Upper Austria, with new museum openings, special exhibitions in Salzburg and Linz, a new stage play and numerous events. Guests from all over the world can enjoy a genuine, authentic holiday experience on the traces of "Silent Night".

The new "Silent Night" anniversary website www.silent-night.com is online since November 2017. It was the first official representation to ring in the celebration of the world's most famous Christmas carol. There are 13 Silent Night locations in the provinces of Salzburg, Tirol and Upper Austria. The anniversary celebration is a joint project to enable participation by visitors from all over the world. Not many people know that the origins of the Christmas song can be found in SalzburgerLand, that Franz Xaver Gruber was born and raised in Upper Austria and that the song was spread via Tirol. Even today, many myths about the song are in circulation, for example, that it was composed by Michael Haydn or is an American folk song.

Origin and dissemination of the song

The Salzburg-born Joseph Mohr wrote the touching poem stanzas of "Silent Night" as a young assistant priest in Mariapfarr in Salzburg's Lungau region in 1816. Two years later, he met the teacher Franz Xaver Gruber in Oberndorf near Salzburg and handed the poem to him with the request to compose a melody. It was performed by the two in the St. Nikola church in Oberndorf.

Only a few years later, the song reached Tirol – via the Zillertal valley organ builder Carl Mauracher – where the Tirolean national singing came about at the beginning of the 1830s. Musically talented farmer families travelled through Europe as mobile merchandise dealers and performed in front of audiences. The Strasser siblings and the Rainer singers from the Zillertal valley in particular made the song internationally known, in Europe, across America and in Russia. The song's popularity was further spread via missionaries.

"Silent Night" is like a message of peace that spread like wildfire around the world. Today, there is hardly anyone who does not know the contemplative melody.

Experience the song with all your senses in the 13 Silent Night locations

Many of the 13 Silent Night locations have already been honouring the song for some time with museums, exhibitions or memorial plaques and chapels. For the big anniversary, these efforts are intensified to bring the song's history even more to life.

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A journey on the trail of "Silent Night" promises exciting insights into the historical background, church history, music and art history, architecture and regional characteristics. It also guarantees a unique experience for the senses for all who know and love the song.

The 7 Silent Night locations in SalzburgerLand at a glance:

City of Salzburg: Birthplace of Joseph Mohr, Salzburg Cathedral with the baptismal font of Joseph Mohr, guided Silent Night city tours

Arnsdorf: Residence of Franz Xaver Gruber / Silent Night Museum, pilgrimage church, Origin of the melody of "Silent Night! Holy Night!"

Oberndorf: Place of first performance / Silent Night Museum, Silent Night chapel in the Silent Night district

Hallein: Last residence and grave of Franz Xaver Gruber / Silent Night Museum (currently closed due to renovation and the re-opening is scheduled for 29 September 2018)

Mariapfarr: First employment place of Joseph Mohr / Silent Night Museum, pilgrimage church

Hintersee: First autonomous parish of Joseph Mohr / Silent Night Museum, Joseph Mohr memorial chapel, Joseph Mohr memorial trail (available from Summer 2018)

Wagrain: Last mission and grave of Joseph Mohr / new Silent Night Museum, Cultural walk

The 3 Silent Night locations in Upper Austria at a glance:

Hochburg-Ach: Birthplace of Franz Xaver Gruber / museum, Franz Xaver Gruber peace trail, history play on the third weekend of Advent

Ried im Innkreis: Franz Xaver Gruber's place of education / original Silent Night Nativity Scene in the Museum Innviertler Volkskundehaus

Steyr: Oldest preserved print of the song / replica of the print in the Christmas Museum (from 2018 onwards)

The 3 Silent Night locations in Tirol at a glance:

Fügen: Home of Carl Mauracher and the Rainer family / local heritage museum, memorial plaques

Hippach: Home of the Strasser siblings / local heritage museum in the Strasser Häusl

Achensee region: Home of national singer Ludwig Rainer / exhibition, chapel, grave site

The highlights in the anniversary year 2018

- A total of nine Silent Night locations and museums – including the Salzburg Museum – take part in the **national exhibition "200 years Silent Night! Holy Night! – Austria's message of peace to the world"** which takes place from 29 September 2018 to 2 February 2019. The museums in Salzburg, Arnsdorf, Oberndorf, Hallein, Wagrain and Mariapfarr show different facets of the song and its creator. In Hintersee, a new theme trail is dedicated to the song. Beyond the borders of Salzburg, Hochburg-Ach (Upper Austria) and Fügen (Tirol) also take part in the exhibition.
- On 24 November 2018, the new stage piece with the provisional title **"My Silent Night"** will premiere at Felsenreitschule. The production offers all the

prerequisites to bring a "Broadway" feeling to Salzburg. American film composer and Emmy award winner John Debney ("Ice Age", "Sin City", "The Jungle Book") composed the music.

- The screenplay is written by author, director and musician Hannah Friedman. Andreas Gergen, known for the successful production of "The Sound of Music", is directing.
- From 1 December 2018 to 2 February 2019, the special exhibition "**Christmas Singing**" at Schlossmuseum Linz will be dedicated to the 200th anniversary of "Silent Night" and the 135th anniversary of the song "Es wird scho glei dumper". In addition to the history of the Christmas song culture in Upper Austria, the special exhibition presents the references of Upper Austria to these two internationally popular songs.

A journey on the traces of the song

SalzburgerLand, Upper Austria and Tirol – all represent a paradise for Advent and winter enthusiasts. Romantic Christmas and Advent markets, which usually open their doors on the last weekend in November, can be combined with the exciting anniversary events of "Silent Night". Numerous other activities such as skiing, experiencing nature or a visit to the spa will delight. Route suggestions for individual tours through the Silent Night locations as well as bookable packages and further information can be found here: www.stillenacht.com