



Sons of Norway
HERITAGE PROGRAMS



IdeaBank35

CHRISTMAS IN NORWAY
(Script & Songs)

Submitted by: Martha Marie Snyder
Restoration Lodge 3-555
Wallingford, Pennsylvania

1988

Christmas in Norway

A Narrated Carol Collection

The following songs are used in this narrated collection of Norwegian and American Christmas songs. The lyrics to songs are included in this Idea Bank unit. Please refer to a standard hymnal for music. If you have any trouble finding the music to these songs, please contact the Heritage Department. Additional numbers by soloists may be added where desired.

1. I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas
2. O Christmas Tree
3. Silver Bells
4. Jolly Old St. Nicholas
5. Du grønne glitrende tre, god dag
6. Deilig er den himmel blå (optional)
7. Jeg synger julekvad (optional)
8. I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day
9. Jeg er så glad hver julekveld
10. We Wish you a Merry Christmas

This program requires a narrator and song sheets for the entire audience. Other musical numbers may be inserted as desired by individual lodges.

* * * * *

Narrator: Welcome to our program about Christmas in Norway! I'll be sharing some of the Norwegian traditions with you and all of us can join together in singing some of the Norwegian favorites as well as a few American ones. We're going to give you a chance on several of the songs to sing a verse first in English and then in Norwegian.

An American song that's become a worldwide favorite during the holidays is "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas." We tend to think of all Norway as blanketed in snow over Christmas, but along the western and southern coasts this isn't always true. Sometimes they, too, are only dreaming of a White Christmas. Let's sing this Irving Berlin classic in English and then in Norwegian. Turn to the first selection on your song-sheets.

(Note): (Another option on some of these is—instead of everyone singing—to have a soloist or group only sing it in Norwegian.)

ALL SING: I'M DREAMING OF A WHITE CHRISTMAS (No. 1)

Pianist: Pauses at close of group song. Then plays a few bars of "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas"—fade away.

Narrator: Yes, it is beginning to look a lot like Christmas.

In Norway, as well as other countries in the world, the first holiday indication is the annual reminder from the postal authorities that it's time to send packages, letters and cards to the tens of thousands of relatives managing the ships of Norway on the seven seas, even the Norwegian possession Jan Mayen—an island between Iceland and Spitzbergen—is getting excited. Here the mailman calls only once a year.

All over the world, wherever a Norwegian ship may be during the holiday season, Christmas trees are being set up on the mastheads. On shipboard, and in Norwegian homes, Christmas is celebrated Norwegian style, which is just a little bit differently than the way other people do it.

Christmas trees were not introduced into Norway from Germany until the latter half of the 19th century and even later in country districts. They are plentiful in this country that is almost one-quarter covered with forests, mostly with spruce and pine. The biggest ones go to the University Square in Oslo, outside most public buildings everywhere, to churches, schools and hospitals. For many years they have been sending giant trees as gifts to London, England, Iceland, the Hague, Netherlands, and a number of other European cities as tokens of friendship and a willingness to share the Norwegian *jul* with everybody everywhere. Most trees have small Norwegian flags. Folks having relatives living in America will trim their trees with American flags as well.

SONG: O CHRISTMAS TREE (No. 2)

Ladies: 1st verse

Men: 2nd verse

All: 1st verse

Narrator: In late November, the plain main streets of Norway turn into jul streets with all the trimmings to remind people that Christmas is only a few weeks away. By then many a Norwegian has written a book for sale, and the bookstores are stocked to capacity. The Norwegians like to preserve their reputation as belonging to one of the world's most avid book-reading nations. Norway is, in fact, the country which annually has the greatest number of published book titles per capita. Total number of books printed every year is about 16 million. The pre-Christmas turnover is still in the lead.

Now store windows have displays with the *nisse* sitting in the barn with his bowl of porridge. There is the same frantic gift-rush in the stores, as we see here in the U.S. "City Sidewalks, Busy Sidewalks." Let's all join in singing "Silver Bells", number 3 on the song-sheet.

ALL SING: SILVER BELLS (No. 3)

Narrator: Back on the farm, the only one not looking forward to jul is the *julegrisen*, or Christmas pig, who by now has grown rather suspicious of all the fuss and attention to him during the last few months. The noble animal provides many culinary pleasures at Christmastime.

And no self-respecting Norwegian housewife would dream of being caught with her rolling pin down, or with less than seven different kinds of cookies in her jars. Some hope to bake 14 varieties. These are to be served starting December 23rd, *lillejulaften*, or Little Christmas Eve.

Kitchens have been busy with preparations many weeks before the festivities begin. A special beer is brewed. And Christmas bread with raisins and citron come out of the ovens with such delicious smells filling the house that children are driven to a fevered pitch.

Another source of entertainment in Norway is the *julebukk* round—people dressing up in masks and old clothes, going house-to-house while extending Christmas wishes and, in return, being treated with freshly-baked cookies—much like our Halloween today.

The cattle, horses and other animals on the farm are taken extra-good care of shortly before Christmas in order to avoid an unfavorable meeting at midnight Christmas Eve, when animals are supposed to be able to speak and discuss the overall impression of the farmer and his family.

Even the birds are remembered with the largest and best sheaves of grain from the harvest. If the birds come in great numbers to enjoy the feast, the year ahead will be a good one.

Children in Norway are as eager for a visit from the *julenisse* as kids are here for Santa. Whatever name he goes by, children around the world love the one who brings their gifts. Let's join in "Jolly Old St. Nicholas"—number 4 on the sheet.

ALL SING: JOLLY OLD SAINT NICHOLAS (No. 4)

Narrator: Before any gift is handed out in the Norwegian family, they first enjoy a solid Christmas Eve meal, then walk around the tree singing the beloved Christmas carols. The traditional meal is usually porridge. But where available, fresh codfish or possibly *lutefisk* (a cured variety of codfish). The rice porridge is a more or less standard feature of the national traditional Christmas menu with a mixed-in almond nut. Lucky finder is awarded a gift.

Norwegian children find it unthinkable to wait until Christmas morning for their gifts. They expect that all gifts have already been delivered by the *julenissen* (a cousin of Santa Claus).

They don't usually enjoy their meal too much, for their eyes keep turning to the closed door. Finally the meal is over, and they tumble into the room with awestruck eyes when they see the big tree aglow with live candles and neatly-wrapped gifts underneath. Today, however, Norwegians have electricity like anyone else. One thing is noted—white lights are used more for decorations than colored ones.

Our next Norwegian song is a greeting to the tree. It's number 5.

ALL SING: DU GRØNNE GLITRENDE TRE, GOD DAG (No. 5)

Narrator: Every farm has its own little tenant, called *nissen*. This little elf resides in the barn and keeps an eye on everything and everybody all year. If his annual bowl of rice on Christmas Eve is found empty, all is well. But if it has been found untouched, there may be trouble ahead!

(Note): These next two are optional and can be done by individuals or the audience. If used, the Narrator adds:

1. Deilig er den himmel blå (No. 6)
2. Jeg synger julekvad (No. 7)

(Note): *Two typical Christmas songs in Norway are “Deilig er den himmel blå” and “Jeg synger julekvad.” The first one is known in English as “Oh How Beautiful the Sky.” We’ll sing the first verse twice, once in English and once in Norwegian. Then we’ll do two verses of “Jeg synger julekvad” in Norwegian.*

Narrator: At about 4 P.M. on Christmas Eve, the church bells start chiming all over Norway and echoing over the mountain-tops. The ringing is no lazy ding, dong. It is an exciting DING, DING, DING for several minutes. As the sound dies away, Christmas peace settles over the farms and villages, while lights glow from the windows into the dark winter afternoon. Imagine all these bells as we sing “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day.”

ALL SING: I HEARD THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY (No. 8)

Narrator: Many Norwegians attend a 4 P.M. service on Christmas Eve; others may go on Christmas Day. But whenever Norwegians gather at Christmas, one of their favorites is “Jeg er så glad hver julekveld.” Lots of Norwegian-Americans have learned it too—perhaps in both languages. Let’s sing a verse in each now: “I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve.”

ALL SING: JEG ER SÅ GLAD HVER JULEKVELD (No. 9)

Narrator: Christmas in Norway is a time for visiting, some by horse and sleigh with the twinkle of sleighbells ringing out over the snow. It is a season of welcoming, of warm light streaming out of open doors as guests are received. There is a tradition of hospitality even to strangers, a feeling that nobody ought to be alone on Christmas Eve. In Norway, they say “*God jul!*” or “*Gledelig jul!*” Here, it’s “Merry Christmas.” We’ll close with “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.”

ALL SING: WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS (No. 10)

THE END

1. I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas (Hvit jul)

(English Version)

I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas
Just like the ones I used to know,
Where the tree top glistened
And children listened
To hear sleighbells in the snow.
I'm dreaming of a White Christmas
With every Christmas card I write.
May your days be merry and bright,
And may all your Christmases be white.

(Norwegian Version)

Jeg drømmer om en hvit glede
Drømmer om jul med hvite trær
Om små barn som synger
Og spurv i klynger
I sne-e-drev og vinter vær
Slik minnes jeg min glade barndom
Med jule-sne på hver en vei
Hils til alle hjemme
Fra meg
Må hver julekveld bli lik for deg.

2. O Christmas Tree

Traditional German Tune

Arranged by Norman Lloyd

Verse 1

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
Your branches green delight us.
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
Your branches green delight us.
They're green when summer days are bright;
They're green when winter snow is white.
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
Your branches green delight us.

Verse 2

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
You give us so much pleasure!
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
You give us so much pleasure!
How oft at Christmastide the sight,
O green fir tree, gives us delight!
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
You give us so much pleasure!

3. Silver Bells

Music and Words by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans

Christmas makes you feel emotional.
It may bring parties or thoughts devotional.
Whatever happens or what may be,
Here is what Christmas time means to me.

City sidewalks, busy sidewalks,
Dressed in holiday style.
In the air there's a feeling of Christmas.
Children laughing, people passing, meeting
smile after smile.
And on every street corner you hear:

Chorus

Silver bells, silver bells,
It's Christmas time in the city.
Ring-a-ling, hear them ring,
Soon it will be Christmas day.

Strings of street lights, even stop lights,
Blink a bright red and green,
As the shoppers rush home with their
treasures.
Hear the snow crunch, see the kids bunch,
This is Santa's big scene.
And above all this bustle you hear:

Chorus

4. Jolly Old St. Nicholas

Jolly old Saint Nicholas
Lean your ear this way!
Don't you tell a single soul
What I'm going to say;
Christmas Eve is coming soon;
Now, you dear old man,
Whisper what you'll bring to me;
Tell me if you can.

When the clock is striking twelve,
When I'm fast asleep,
Down the chimney broad and black,
With your pack you'll creep;
All the stockings you will find
Hanging in a row;
Mine will be the shortest one,
You'll be sure to know.

Johnny wants a pair of skates;
Susy wants a sled;
Nellie wants a picture book;
Yellow, blue and red;
Now I think I'll leave to you
What to give the rest;
Choose for me, dear Santa Claus,
You will know the best.

5. Du grønne glitrende tre

Text: Johan Krohn, Tune: C.E.F. Weyes

Du grønne, glitrende tre, goddag!
Velkommen, du som vi ser så gjerne,
med julelys og med norske flagg
og høyt i toppen den blanke stjerne!
Ja, den må skinne, for den skal minne,
ja, den må skinne, for den skal minne
oss om vår Gud, oss om vår Gud.

Den første jul i et fremmed land
sin store stjerne Vårherre tente.
Den skulle vise vår jord at han
den lille Jesus til verden sendte,
I stjerneglansen gikk engledansen,
I stjerneglansen gikk engledansen
om Betlehem, om Betlehem.

Om Jesusbarnet fortalte mor
så mang en aften vi satt her hjemme;
vi kan hans bud og hans milde ord,
vi vet at aldri vi dem må glemme.
Når stjernen skinner, om ham oss minner,
når stjernen skinner, om ham oss minner
vårt juletre, vårt juletre.

6. Deilig er den himmel blå (O How Beautiful the Sky)

Danish Folktune

(Norwegian Version)

Deilig er den himmel blå,
lyst det er å se der på,
hvor de gylne stjerne blinker,
hvor de smiler, hvor de vinker
:/:oss fra jorden opp til seg.:/:

Det var midt i julenatt,
hver en stjerne glimtet matt,
men med ett der ble å skue
en, så klar på himlens bue,
:/:som en liten stjernesol.:/:

Når den stjerne lys og blid
lot seg se ved midnattstid,
var det varslet i Guds rike
at en konge uten like
:/:skulle fødes på vår jord.:/:

(English Version)

O, how beautiful the sky,
with the sparkling stars on high,
how they glitter, brightly beaming,
how they twinkle, gladsom, beaming,
:/:as they draw our hearts to heav'n.:/:

In the midst of Christmas night,
while the stars were shining bright,
of a sudden, clear and radiant,
one appear'd and shone resplendent
:/:with the lustre of the sun.:/:

Long ago it was foretold
by God's chosen men of old
when at midnight such a wonder
did appear in heav'n up yonder,
:/:born should be a Savior King.:/:

**7. Jeg synger julekvad
(Now Sing We, Now Rejoice)**

by J. Klug, 1535

(Norwegian Version)

Jeg synger julekvad
Jeg er så glad, så glad,
min hjertens Jesus hviler
i stall og krybbe trang,
som solen klare smiler
han på sin moders fang.
Han er Frelser min,
Han er Frelser min.

O Jesus, du barnlill,
deg lenges jeg så til,
kom trøst meg alle sinde
tred in om her er smått,
la meg deg se og finne,
å, da har jeg det godt.
Drag meg efter deg,
Drag meg efter deg.

(English Version)

Now sing we, now rejoice,
Now raise to heav'n our voice;
Lo! He from whom joy streameth,
Poor in the manger lies;
Yet not so brightly seemeth
The sun in yonder skies,
Thou my Savior art,
Thou my Savior art.

A gift from heav'n to me,
I cannot rise to Thee,
O cheer my wearied spirit,
O pure and holy Child,
Through all Thy grace and merit,
Blest Jesus, Lord most mild,
Lead me up to Thee,
Lead me up to Thee.

8. Jolly Old St. Nicholas

Henry W. Longfellow—J. Baptiste Calkin

I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

I thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had roll'd along th'unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bow'd my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong, and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men."

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth he sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,
With peace on earth, good will to men.

Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

9. Jeg er så glad hver julekveld (I Am So Glad on Christmas Eve)

Text: Marie Wexelsen, English Text: Peder Knudsen, Tune: Peter Knudsen

(Norwegian Version)

Jeg er så glad hver julekveld,
for da ble Jesus født
Da lyste stjernen som en sol
og engler sang så søtt.

Det lille barn i Betlehem,
han var en konge stor
som kom fra himmelens høye slott
ned til vår arme jord.

Nå bor han høyt i himmerik,
han er Guds egen sønn,
men husker alltid på de små
og hører deres bønn.

Jeg er så glad hver julekveld,
da synger vi hans pris.
Da åpner han for alle små
Sitt søte paradis.

Dat tenner moder alle lys,
og ingen krok er mørk.
Hun sier stjernen lyste så
i hele verdens ørk.

Jeg holder av vår julekveld
og av den Herre Krist,
og at han elsker meg igjen,
det vet jeg ganske visst.

(English Version)

I am so glad on Christmas Eve,
the night of Jesus' birth.
Then like the sun the stars shone forth,
and angels sang on Earth.

The little child in Bethlehem
he was a King, indeed,
Who came to us from heaven above
to help a world in need.

He dwells again in heaven's realm
the Son of God today,
and still He loves His little ones,
and hears whom when they pray.

I am so glad on Christmas Eve,
His praises then I sing.
He opens then for every child
the palace of the King.

When mother trims the Christmas tree
which fills the room with light,
she tells me of the wondrous star
that made the dark world bright.

And so I love each Christmas Eve
and I love Jesus too,
and that He loves me every day,
I know so well is true.

10. We Wish You a Merry Christmas

Traditional English Song

We wish you a merry Christmas,
we wish you a merry Christmas,
we wish you a merry Christmas,
and a happy New Year.