

# Schönster Herr Jesu

Fairest Lord Jesus

Beautiful Savior

## Dejlig er Jorden

Fair is Creation

**Silesian folk tune first printed in 1842**

**set by Klaus Smedegaard Bjerre (2016)**

**for 4 natural horns (2 in Eb & 2 in Bb basso) with transposed versions for celli, bass clarinets, bassoons, and euphoniums**

The five titles given tell the story of this popular hymn tune. The text existed with a baroque tune (in minor) since before 1700 in the German Catholic church. In 1842 it was printed with the Silesian folk tune, which became popular in the German Protestant church. This version exists in English known by two titles. The Danish hymn poet and author of historical novels, B. S. Ingemann, in 1850 was inspired by the Silesian tune, then thought to be a crusaders' hymn, to write his Dejlig er jorden, which has no relation to the original German text. It is immensely popular in Denmark for Christmas and for funerals. This text version also exists in an English translation.

I have performed this hymn for both of its purposes at several occasions. Even if the 4-part setting of the Danish hymnal is very good, I since long have heard other potentials in this tune, which invites to the use of natural horns. The opening verse of a not yet finished version for the 14-piece brass ensemble had been on my disk for a few years in a setting for 4 horns, 4 trumpets, and timpani. The horn parts have been reedited quite thoroughly for this quartet version.

Settings for natural horns (without the application of chromatic hand-horn techniques), as seen in orchestral horn parts by Mozart in contrast to his complex solo horn parts, have their own laws, because the selection of notes is limited, so dissonances cannot always get their ideal resolution like in vocal settings. But then this Hornquinten-logic gives a certain tonal flavour also when played by other instruments. So the horn quartet version in Eb major has been supplemented by a C major version for 4 celli and four Bb major versions for 4 bass clarinets, for 4 bassoons, and for 4 euphoniums (treble clef Bb & bass clef concert notations). The Bb major versions all are fully compatible between each other. The horn version would work well with unison sopranos on the melody. The other versions would more point towards unison mezzo-sopranos or altos singing the melody.

It may surprise that the melody is split between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> parts, and that the bass line is split between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> parts, but that is part of the Hornquinten-logic, which becomes more obvious by looking at the horn quartet score. The ranges used are also wide for the setting of a hymn. Two octaves and a fifth for the 2<sup>nd</sup> part, two octaves and a major second for the 3<sup>rd</sup> part, one octave and a minor sixth for the 1<sup>st</sup> part, and one octave and a fifth for the 4<sup>th</sup> part. The combined range is 3 octaves.

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Klaus Smedegaard Bjerre

yorkmasterbbb@yahoo.com

Bassbone Music

DK 4220 Korsør

Denmark