

Nancy McKibben

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The publisher of this work, Musica Russica, commissioned me to write English lyrics for "... a rare surviving example of... [Russian] 'spiritual verse' attributed to St. Dimitry of Rostov (1651-1709), an outstanding scholar, poet, and musician of his time." (Vladimir Morosan). See Footnote 3 below for information on ordering the sheet music.

[Click here to listen](#) to a *Shepherds of Bethlehem* recording (1 min. 30 sec., MP3) [1]

[Click here to view](#) the *Shepherds of Bethlehem* sheet music (PDF) [2]

Celebrate throughout the earth
 For we have seen Messiah's birth:
 God has saved us!
 God with us now and ever,
 Allelu, alleluia!
 With our own eyes have we seen
 In the town of Bethlehem
 Christ is born! Glorify Him!
 Such a wonder! Dark the cave
 Where Jesus sleeps who came to save us.
 In the night shines God's light.
 Elder Josph, Virgin Mary
 Watch the Child and adore Him.
 With rejoicing we return
 To tell our friends all we have learned.
 God is with us,
 For His Son is born, the Savior!
 Heartily, with one accord,
 We celebrate the newborn Lord.
 Alleluia! Allelu!
 Glorify Him! Christ is born! Christ is born!

Complete text of the Editor's Note for the sheet music:

"Shepherds of Bethlehem" is a rare surviving example of a "spiritual verse" (*duhovniy stih*), a Russian devotional song sung in connection with various church feast days outside the context of the liturgy. With the advent of secular poetry and instrumental music in the late 17th and 18th centuries, spiritual verses lost their importance and were gradually forgotten. Only with the resurgence of interest in ancient church chants and folk song in the late 19th century, led by composers such as Alexander Kastalsky (1856-1926), did some spiritual verses again see the light of day, serving as materials for new musical arrangements.

The text of this spiritual verse is attributed to St. Dimitry, Metropolitan of Rostov (1651-1709), an outstanding scholar, poet, and musician of his time. The text, set to different music, is found in his *Christmas Drama (The Rostov Mystery-Play)*, which was reconstructed and published in 1989 by Yevgeny Levashov (Moscow: Sovetsky Kompozitor). Kastalsky's arrangement, on the other hand, was never published. The manuscript upon which this edition is based is a mimeograph copy found in the composer's archive in the Glinka Museum of Musical Culture in Moscow.

An edition of this carol with the original Russian text in Cyrillic and phonetics is available from the [Musica Russica](#) under catalog number CC 001."[3]

— *Vladimir Morosan* [4]

Footnotes:

[1] **Recording:** The Schola Cantorum of St. Peter's in the Loop, Chicago. "Shepherds of Bethlehem." By A. Kastalsky and Nancy McKibben. Rec. June 1998. *Light From the East - Carols From Central and Eastern Europe II*. The Order of St. Benedict, 1999.

[2] **Sheet Music:** Kastalsky, Alexander. English lyrics by Nancy McKibben. *Shepherds of Bethlehem*. Madison, CT: Musica Russica, 1999.

[3] Go online to <<http://www.musicarussica.com>>, click "Search the Catalog", type "CC 001" in the Catalog Number field, then click "Find" or simply hit your Enter key on your keyboard. You will then be able to order *Shepherds of Bethlehem* performance sheet music and choral coaching. Follow the links to other English lyrics I have work on with Musica Russica.

[4] Kastalsky and McKibben, op. cit., p.2.

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