The origin of the tune used here is not known. It has been ascribed to Reginald Heber (English, 1783-1826), whose poem "Brightest and Best" (1811) is the source of most of the lyrics. However, there are other hymns named Star in the East, and other lyrics, so that definite attribution is not possible. It is usually called an american folk carol, which likely arose from the Appalachian mountain range of southeastern USA.

The tune first appeared in 1831 in "The Christian Lyre", a collection of hymns printed with shaped notes. Other early publications include "The Southern Harmony" and "The Kentucky Harmony", both in 1835 and also in shaped notes. Since then, the tune has become popular among shaped-note singers, and it is often used as example of that practice.

Brightest and Best a poem by Reginald Heber

Brightest and best of the sons^a of the morning; Dawn on our darkness and lend us thine aid; Star in the East, the horizon adorning, Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Cold on His cradle the dewdrops are shining; Low lies His head with the beasts of the stall; Angels adore Him in slumber reclining, Maker and Monarch and Savior of all!

Say, shall we yield Him, in costly devotion, Odors of Edom and offerings divine? Gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean, Myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation, Vainly with gifts would His favor secure; Richer by far is the heart's adoration, Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

2. "sons" is often replaced with "stars".

Other lyrics, not from the poem are used in early versions of "Star in the East", beginning with "Hail the blest morn, see the great Mediator..."

Several choral versions of the tune are available. The best I have found is by Brad Holmes. An excellent performance of his arrangement by the Thornton Chamber Singers of USC is found at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= ZQmwyMXG M&list=RD ZQmwyMXG M&start radio=1

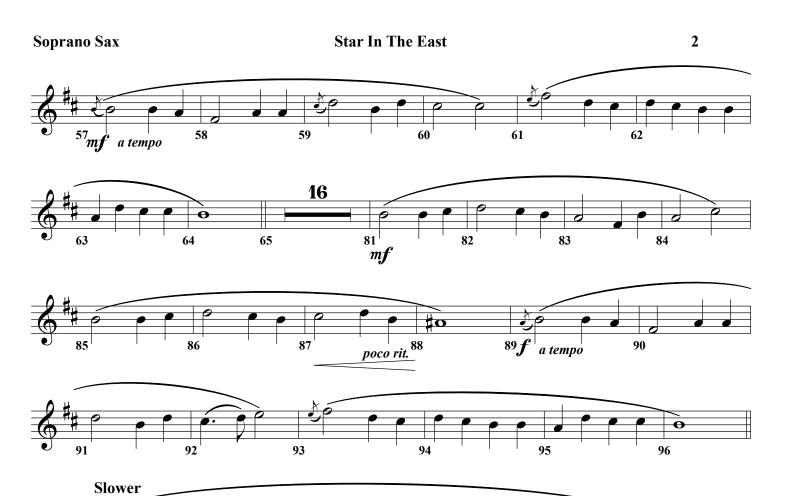
With his permission, I have adapted his harmonies for the saxophone quartet.

Bruce Evans, 2023

American Christmas Carol

Anonymous





American Christmas Carol

Anonymous

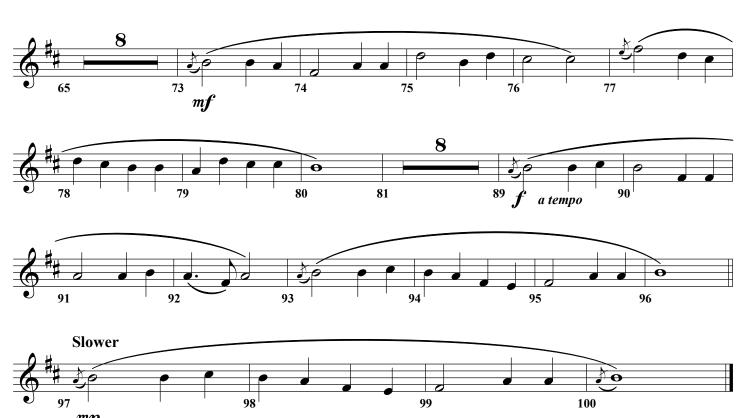




American Christmas Carol

Anonymous





American Christmas Carol

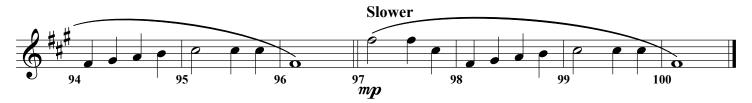
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2023



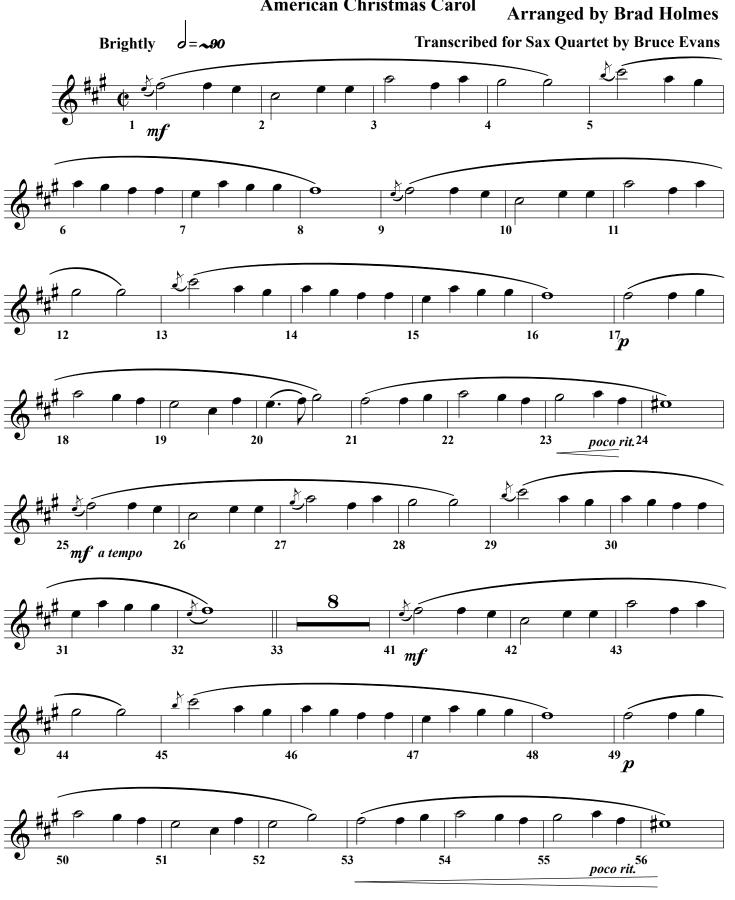




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American Christmas Carol



2023

