

Orientis Partibus

anon. medieval carol
English words, Susan Cooper

$\text{♩} = 120$

O - - ri - - en - tis par - ti - - bus ad - ven - ta - - vit a - - si - - nus,

[5]
pul - cher et for - tis - si - mus, Sar - ci - nis ap - tis - si - mus. Hez, Sir As - nes, hez!

1. Orientis partibus,
Adventavit asinus,
Pulcher et fortissimus,
Sarcinis aptissimus.
Hez, Sir Asnes, Hez!
2. From the East the donkey came,
Stout and strong as twenty men;
Ears like wings and eyes like flame,
Striding into Bethlehem.
Hez, Sir Asnes, Hez!
3. Faster than the deer he leapt,
With his burden on his back;
Though all other creatures slept,
Still the ass kept on his track.
Hez, Sir Asnes, Hez!
4. Still he draws his heavy load,
Fed on barley and rough hay;
Pulling on along the road -
Donkey pull our sins away!
Hez, Sir Asnes, Hez!
5. Wrap him now in cloth of gold;
All rejoice who see him pass;
Mirth inhabit young and old
On this feast day of the ass.
Hez, Sir Asnes, Hez!

The "Song of the Ass," important in the early history of Western music, was sung during the Middle Ages as a processional at Sens, when a donkey was ridden into the Cathedral. The irrepressible popular humor of the Feast of Fools and similar mediaeval festivals is found in the carol's "braying" refrain, which was sung by the clergy.

Source: The Christmas Revels Songbook, 2nd edition, 1995. [The Feast Day of the Ass or Festum Asinorum is January 14.]