

Little Donkey

A 'Christmas Classic' for Children

ERIC BOSWELL ARR. HUGH LEVEY



CLARINET QUARTET

SCORE & PARTS

Little Donkey (1959)

ERIC BOSWELL (1921-2009)

English composer, Eric Boswell, learned the piano and organ as a child, but went on to gain degrees in Electrical Engineering and Physics. This wide education enabled him to lead a dual career, working as an electrical engineer and physics lecturer, while also composing. His early compositions were in a serious 20th Century 'classical' style and some were performed in London's prestigious Wigmore Hall.

Despite this success he became somewhat disillusioned with the contemporary classical music scene. In a 2001 newspaper interview he said, *"I soon had enough of that [contemporary classical music]. I decided to go right to the other extreme. I'll write a simple song for children to sing, and I wrote Little Donkey. It was published in 1959 by Chappells in London and they were so pleased with it that I was put under contract to them."* In the 1960s he went on to write for some of the leading popular music singers of the day, such as Matt Munro and Ricky Valance

In the 1970s and 1980s he shifted his musical focus to writing modern folks songs about life in the North East of England, and he remained a well known figure in music, theatre and the arts there until his death in 2009.

This gently lilting song about the Little Donkey has been immensely popular, since it was first recorded in 1959 by Gracie Fields. It has been covered by dozens of well known artists such as the Beverley Sisters, Nina and Frederik, Vera Lynn and, more recently, Cerys Matthews. It also features in many school nativity plays and holiday season celebrations because the melody is easy for young children to sing. The song tells the Christmas story from the perspective of the donkey, as it plods along carrying Mary to Bethlehem.

This arrangement for clarinet quartet adds a syncopated bass line to help provide rhythmic movement and to capture the uneven plodding along of the donkey. It also gives the piece a gentle calypso feel. Although written as an instrumental, this can be used to accompany singing in the key of Bb Major for voices.

Duration: 3' 20"

Cover images: (1) Edited version of The Little Donkey by Edgar Bundy 1889, via Wikimedia Commons, (2) Clarinet, Yamaha Corporation, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

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Little Donkey

Eric Boswell arr by Hugh Levey

Gentle Calypso Feel ♩ = 90

Clarinet in B♭ 1

Clarinet in B♭ 2

Clarinet in B♭ 3

Bass Clarinet

The first system of the musical score is for four instruments: Clarinet in B♭ 1, Clarinet in B♭ 2, Clarinet in B♭ 3, and Bass Clarinet. The music is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 90 beats per minute. The first two measures are rests for all instruments. The third measure begins with a repeat sign. The Clarinet parts play a melody of quarter notes: G4, A4, B♭4, C5, B♭4, A4, G4. The Bass Clarinet part plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes: G3, A3, B♭3, C4, B♭3, A3, G3, with accents on the first and third notes of each pair.

Cl. in B♭ 1

Cl. in B♭ 2

Cl. in B♭ 3

B. Cl.

The second system of the musical score continues the music for the four instruments. It begins with a measure rest for all instruments, followed by a measure with a fermata over the first measure of the previous system. The Clarinet parts continue with the melody from the first system. The Bass Clarinet part continues with the rhythmic accompaniment. A large blue watermark with a white stylized 'W' logo is overlaid on the center of the page.

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Cl. in B \flat 1

Cl. in B \flat 2

Cl. in B \flat 3

B. Cl.

PREVIEW ONLY

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Cl. in B \flat 1

Cl. in B \flat 2

Cl. in B \flat 3

B. Cl.

PREVIEW ONLY