

Little Donkey

A 'Christmas Classic' for Children

ERIC BOSWELL ARR. HUGH LEVEY



SAX 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.

This arrangement for saxophone 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 Ab Major for voices, although it may be too low for young singers. The clarinet quartet version is in Bb Major and may be more suitable.

Duration: 3' 20"

Cover images: (1) Edited version of *The Little Donkey* by Edgar Bundy 1889, via Wikimedia Commons, (2) Saxophone, 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

The musical score is arranged for four saxophone parts: Soprano Saxophone, Alto Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone, and Baritone Saxophone. The key signature is one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as 'Gentle Calypso Feel' with a quarter note equal to 90 beats per minute. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 4, and the second system contains measures 5 through 8. A large, semi-transparent watermark reading 'PREVIEW ONLY' is overlaid across the center of the page. A stylized logo, consisting of a blue circle with a white, rounded, 'W'-like shape inside, is also overlaid on the page. The Baritone Saxophone part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, while the other parts play a melodic line of quarter and eighth notes.

9

S. Sax.

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

Bar. Sax.

PREVIEW ONLY

14

S. Sax.

A. Sax.

T. Sax.

Bar. Sax.