

Little Donkey

A 'Christmas Classic' for Children

ERIC BOSWELL ARR. HUGH LEVEY



WIND QUINTET

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 wind quintet 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. The flute has additional syncopated flourishes above the melody at times, further enhancing the calypso feel.

Duration: 3' 20"

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Little Donkey

Eric Boswell arr by Hugh Levey

Gentle Calypso Feel ♩ = 90

The musical score is arranged for five woodwind instruments: Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in B, Horn in F, and Bassoon. The piece is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 90. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 1 through 4. The second system starts at measure 5 and continues through measure 8. Dynamics include *mp* (mezzo-piano), *p* (piano), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The Flute and Oboe parts have rests in the first two measures. The Clarinet in B, Horn in F, and Bassoon parts have rests in the first two measures. The Bassoon part has accents in measures 1, 3, 5, and 7. The Horn in F part has a long note in measure 4. The Flute and Oboe parts have a melodic line starting in measure 3. The Clarinet in B part has a melodic line starting in measure 3. The Bassoon part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Horn in F part has a melodic line starting in measure 5. The Flute and Oboe parts have a melodic line starting in measure 5. The Clarinet in B part has a melodic line starting in measure 5. The Bassoon part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Horn in F part has a long note in measure 8.

9

Fl.

Ob.

Cl. in B

Hn. in F

Bsn.

mf

mf

mp

mp

Melody

Detailed description: This block contains the first system of a musical score, measures 9 through 12. It features five staves: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet in B (Cl. in B), Horn in F (Hn. in F), and Bassoon (Bsn.). The Flute and Bassoon parts include accents (v) and dynamic markings of *mf* and *mp*. The Horn part has a dynamic marking of *mp* and is labeled 'Melody'. A large, semi-transparent watermark with the letters 'w' is centered over the score.

13

Fl.

Ob.

Cl. in B

Hn. in F

Bsn.

mf

mp

mf

mf

Detailed description: This block contains the second system of a musical score, measures 13 through 16. It features the same five staves as the first system. The Flute and Bassoon parts continue with accents (v) and dynamic markings of *mf* and *mp*. The Clarinet in B part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Horn part has a dynamic marking of *mp*. The Bassoon part has dynamic markings of *mf* and *mf* with a slur. A large, semi-transparent watermark with the letters 'w' is centered over the score.