

Sweet Little Jesus Boy

◊ SONG ◊

For Voice With Piano Accompaniment



Words *and* Music
by

ROBERT MAC GIMSEY

Recorded by
ROBERT MERRILL

RCA Victor No. 10-1303

→ Medium Voice in F Major
(V 1233)

Low Voice in D Major
(V 1234)

.75

Choral Arrangements Published

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NOTE ABOUT THE SINGING OF NEGRO SONGS

The white man usually sings his songs *to* someone, but the Negro in his "native state" in America sings most of his songs to himself. In them he talks to himself of his troubles, his hopes and fears, and holds personal communion with his God - without audience. The result is a simple, sincere and intimate expression of feeling.

The vast majority of Negro spirituals are sung in the first person, with occasional advice to an imaginary "you", or a warning to the supposed "sinner". In rendering these songs, therefore, singers should strive to place themselves in the attitude of the Negro and sing *to themselves*, with no attempt to "put the song across" to an audience, if he would approach a sincere interpretation.

When Negro spirituals are being sung with the real native inflections, the melody should not be played on the piano or any other accompanying instrument if the best effect is desired. Instrumental accompaniments should always be unobstructive, for it should be remembered that when the old Negroes sang their songs while at work, at church or at the baptisings, they had no instrumental accompaniments whatsoever. One of the characteristic things about the Negro's singing is the liberty taken in approaching certain notes and in progressing through flourishes and grace notes to the succeeding melody tones, the effect of which is destroyed if the melody is being played simultaneously on an instrument.

Robert Mac Gimsey

Recorded by
George Beverly Shea
with Hugo Winterhalter's
Orchestra and Chorus
RCA-Victor 20-4206

Recorded by
Hugh Downs, Vocalist
Columbia Records
No.: LN-3597 and BN-541

26782

26694 I

Sweet Little Jesus Boy

Medium Voice



Words and Music by
ROBERT Mac GIMSEY

Sing this song with the simplicity of a lullaby to a child. Never hurry the words. Dwell on the meaningful words here and there according to your own feelings, and maintain no rhythm whatsoever.

Bear in mind that this is a meditative song of suppressed emotion, sung by you intimately to the Jesus Child.

With simplicity and sincerity, *Slowly*

Voice

p

Sweet lit - tle Je - sus Boy — they

Piano

una corda throughout

made you be born — in a man - guh. Sweet lit - tle Ho - ly Chil' —
(man - ger)

did - nt know who you was. Did - nt know you'd come to save us Lawd; To
(was)

take our sins a - way. Our eyes wuz bline we could - n't see, — We
(was) (blind)

pp

did - n't know — who you wus. Long time a - go —
(was)

you wus bawn, — Bawn in a man-guh low — Sweet lit - tle Je-sus Boy. De
(was) (born) (man - ger) (The)

(with)

sympathetic fervour)
mf

worl' treat you mean — Lawd, Treat me mean — too, But
(world)

mf

f tat's how — things *is* down heah: — We don't know *who* you is.
(that's) (here)

p

You - done — tol' us how — We is a try-in' —
(told)

Mas-tuh you — done — show'd us how — eb'-m when you's dy - in'.
(Mas-ter) (ev-en) (you was)

rit. *ppp*

rit. (silence - - -) *ppp*

Jes seem like we kan do right, Look how we treat - ed you. But
(Just) (can't)

very slowly

(pleadingly)

please suh fuh-give us Lawd — We did-n't — know 'twas you.
(sir) (for-give) (it was)

pp

CODA

(Under the breath, as though talking to one's self)

pp

Sweet lit - tle Je - sus Boy — bawn long time a - go —
(born)

pp

(dying away)

Sweet lit - tle Ho - ly Chil' — An' we did - n't know who you wus.
(was.)

ppp

HALL JOHNSON

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With Piano Accompaniment

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High Voice in Bb Major (V1220)
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