

## Little Drummer Boy

Written by bluesever

Wednesday, 09 December 2009 17:45 - Last Updated Monday, 16 March 2015 18:14

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When I heard ***Little Drummer Boy*** for the first time I didn't realize it was a carol. I wasn't listening to the lyrics. Besides the first time I never do. It's just my brain's mechanics. It works this way that I mainly focus on the music layer of a given piece.

This seemingly simple melody made quite a big impression on me. I've memorized it straight away. It is my favorite pastorelle.

The piece (lyrics and melody) has been written by **Katherine K. Davis** in 1941. Its original title was '*The Carol of the Drum*'.



**Katherine K. Davis**

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It is often practice to assign its origins to *Henry Onorati* and *Harry Simeone*. In reality all they did was new arrangement and new title '

### **The Little Drummer Boy**

'.

Onorati arranged the song for *Jack Halloran's* choir. He didn't supply author's name and on the recorded album his own name appeared. Simeone did similar thing when he arranged a carol for the choir he himself conducted. I want to believe that both did not know the true author.

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*Katherine Davis* was born in *St. Joseph, Missouri* in 1892. She started composing at the age of 15. She studied music in Massachusetts college and she graduated *New England Conservatory of Music* in Boston.

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After graduation she lectured music at *Concord Academy* in Massachusetts and she taught at *Shady Hill School for Girls*

in Philly. She composed around 600 pieces, mainly for girls choir which she directed. '

*The Carol of the Drum*

' was meant for the choir too.



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The very first record was done by *Trapp Family Singers*, a family of emigrants from Europe.

***The carol tells a story of a young, poor boy who can't even afford a small present for Baby Jesus. And so the boy decides to play for Him on his side drum. Mary agrees to that. The newborn Baby seems to understand everything and rewards the boy with a smile of gratitude..***

The story is similar to Seventeenth Century french legend that was brought by *Anatol France* in  
'  
*jongleur de Notre-Dame* Le

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' (The Hunchback of Notre Dame). Basing on France's story

*Massenet*

wrote an opera in 1902. Though in this french legend the drummer plays only in front of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The piece became very popular after *20th Fox Records* issued it on, just so, *Harry Simeone Chorale* album in 1958. Since then it has been recorded many times by different singers, bands and instrumentalists. In December you can surely hear it in America and Europe. On Favorite Christmas Carols of Past United States Presidents' album published in 1972 it is placed as Richard Nixon's favorite.



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### *Little Drummer Boy: Lyrics*

*Come they told me, pa rum pum pum pum*

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*A new born King to see, pa rum pum pum pum  
Our finest gifts we bring, pa rum pum pum pum  
To lay before the King, pa rum pum pum pum,  
rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,*

*So to honor Him, pa rum pum pum pum,  
When we come.*

*Little Baby, pa rum pum pum pum  
I am a poor boy too, pa rum pum pum pum  
I have no gift to bring, pa rum pum pum pum  
That's fit to give the King, pa rum pum pum pum,  
rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,*

*Shall I play for you, pa rum pum pum pum,  
On my drum?*

*Mary nodded, pa rum pum pum pum  
The ox and lamb kept time, pa rum pum pum pum  
I played my drum for Him, pa rum pum pum pum  
I played my best for Him, pa rum pum pum pum,  
rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,*

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*Then He smiled at me, pa rum pum pum pum  
Me and my drum.*