

Mary's Boy Child

Jester Hairston

The image shows a musical score for the song "Mary's Boy Child" by Jester Hairston. It consists of four staves of music in 4/4 time, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The notes are primarily quarter and eighth notes. Above the staves are several chords: B-flat, E-flat, Cm7, F7, B-flat, B-flat7, E-flat, Cm7, F, B-flat, Cm7, E-flat, F7, B-flat7, E-flat, Cm7, B-flat, F7, and B-flat. The score is numbered 1, 5, 10, and 15 at the beginning of each staff.

1. Long time ago in Bethlehem
So the Holy Bible say
Mary's boy child, Jesus Christ
Was born on Christmas day.

Refrain

Hark, now hear the angels sing
A new King born today
And man will live forever more
Because of Christmas day.

2. While shepherds watched their flock by night
Them see a bright new shining star
And then them hear a choir sing
The music seem to come from afar.

Refrain

3. Now Joseph and he wife Mary
Come to Bethlehem that night
Them find no place to borne she child
Not a single room was in sight.

Refrain

4. By and by them find a little nook
In a stable all forlorn
And in a manger cold and dark
Mary's boy child he was born.

Refrain

"Mary's Boy Child" is a 1956 Christmas song, written by Jester Hairston. It was recorded by Harry Belafonte in 1956 for his album **An Evening with Belafonte**. I was told by Jamaican singer Stan Shepherd that the grammar in this song, particularly the possessive pronouns, reflect common usage in the West Indies.

This song is fairly well known, enough to be included in store muzak, often in a bogus West Indian accent - kind of a modern version of the nineteenth century minstrel show quasi-Negro accent.