

10 Brown Girl in the Ring

Jamaican trad.
arr. Kevin Stannard

With gentle energy

Piano

f

M.

mf

1. There's a brown girl in the ring, tra-la-la-la-la, There's a

mf

brown girl in the ring, tra-la-la-la-la, There's a brown girl in the ring,

f

tra-la-la-la-la. For she like su-gar an' I like plum.

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (D major). It features a piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The piano part consists of a steady bass line in the left hand and chords in the right hand. The vocal line is marked with dynamics like *f* and *mf*. The score is divided into systems, with measures 4, 7, and 10 marked at the beginning of their respective systems. Chord symbols are placed above the piano part: D, G/A, D, G/A, D, Em7, A7, Em, G/A, D, D/F#, G, D, A, D.

13

M. *mf* There's a brown girl in the ring,
2nd time only (until b. 22)

H. *mf* There's a brown girl,
1st time only (until b. 22)

B. *mp* Su-gar, su-gar, su-gar, plum, plum! Su-gar, su-gar,

D G/A D

mp *mf*

16

tra-la-la-la-la, There's a brown girl in the ring, tra-la-la-la-la, There's a

there's a brown girl, there's a brown girl, there's a brown girl,

su-gar, plum, plum! Su-gar, su-gar, su-gar, plum, plum!

Em7 A7 Em G/A

19

brown girl in the ring, tra-la-la-la-la, For she like su-gar an'

there's a brown girl, there's a brown girl. For she like su-gar an'

Su-gar, su-gar, su-gar, plum, plum! Su-gar, su-gar,

D D/F# G

22

I like plum. 2. Then you skip a-cross the o - cean, tra-la-la-la-la, Then you
3. Then you show me your mo - tion, tra-la-la-la-la, Then you

I like plum. 2. Then you skip a-cross the o - cean, tra-la-la-la-la, Then you
3. Then you show me your mo - tion, tra-la-la-la-la, Then you

plum, plum, plum. 2. Then you skip a-cross the o - cean, tra-la-la-la-la, Then you
3. Then you show me your mo - tion, tra-la-la-la-la, Then you

D A D (N.C.) D

13 Christmas a come

A

Relaxed and lyrical

Descant

Melody *mf (mp)*

Harmony 1

Harmony 2

Bass

1. Christ-mas a come me wan' me lah-ma,
2nd time only *mf*

1. Christ-mas a come me wan' me lah-ma,

A

Relaxed and lyrical

Piano

mf *mp*

G G C D

M. 5

H.1

Christ-mas a come me wan' _ me lah - ma. Pret-ty, pret-ty girl me wan' _ me lah - ma,

Christ-mas a come me wan' _ me lah - ma. Pret-ty, pret-ty girl me wan' _ me lah - ma,

Am D7 G C D

9 B *mp*

M. pret-ty, pret-ty girl me wan' me lah - ma. 2. Not a ring to me fin-ger me wan'

H.1 *mp*

H.1 pret-ty, pret-ty girl me wan' me lah - ma. 2. Not a ring to me fin-ger me wan'

H.2 2nd time only *mf*

H.2 2. Not a ring to me fin-ger me wan'

B. *mf (mp)*

B. 2. Not a ring to me fin-ger me wan'

D7 Am D7 G B G

13

_ me lah-ma, not a ring to me fin-ger me wan' me lah-ma. Pret-ty, pret-ty girl me wan'

_ me lah-ma, not a ring to me fin-ger me wan' me lah-ma. Pret-ty, pret-ty girl me wan'

_ me lah-ma, not a ring to me fin-ger me wan' me lah-ma. Christ - mas a come,


_ me lah-ma, not a ring to me fin-ger me wan' me lah-ma. Oh Christ - mas a come,

C D Am D7 G

15 Born to rule

RESOURCES ► CD1 track 15 (performance); CD2 track 16 (backing)

■ You need to know

The simple yet captivating melody of 'Born to rule' is typical of Jamaican traditional music in its use of a repeated  figure, which is a simple form of syncopation. This figure forms the basis of the first three bars of the tune. The syncopated figure is then discarded in favour of the 'on the beat' rhythms of the last two phrases of the melody. The song is unusual in that each verse is six bars, rather than four or eight bars, long. It is arranged for up to six parts, in different combinations to give it variety, and to create a full and joyous sound for the 'What a joy!' section. The structure is **A B A C A Coda**.

The words to which this traditional melody is set are by Louise Bennett who, until her death in 2006, led the movement which sought to preserve Jamaica's traditional music and language. Bennett recorded many Jamaican songs (including No. 10 'Brown Girl in the Ring') and wrote several books of poems which explore a variety of Jamaican themes through the medium of the national language. In the case of 'Born to rule', the phoneticizations stem from Jamaican language usage. They are 'de' (pronounced 'dee' and a version of 'the' in English), 'eart' (earth), 'worl' (world), and 'deh' (there).

■ Warming up

- Practise standing tall and breathing deeply. Place both hands over the middle of the stomach and, while breathing in slowly, pull the hands outwards, imagining a big barrel of air in front of you. Breathe out, doing the reverse, keeping the shoulders down.
- Sing Ex. 1 at the foot of the page, changing key to stretch the voices across the full range.

■ Teaching and learning

- First learn the melody of the 'A' section; bars 11–16 are a repeat of bars 5–10. Sing all three verses warmly and with clear diction.
- Now work on putting all parts in the 'A' section together. Start with the simple bass part—sing the words even though they belong to verse 3. Add as many of the harmony parts as you can, starting with the top line, and practise them with the bass part until it sounds confident and together.
- The 'B' section (bars 17–23) comes next. The harmony part shadows the melody up to bar 20, and moves with the bass part in bars 22–3. Practise it with both the other lines separately before putting them all together. Make sure 'What a joy!' is strong in the lower two parts

even though the rhythm is different.

- The parts switch roles in the 'C' section, with the bass part on the tune. Practise the upper parts together slowly, making sure they move together on the beat until bar 29, and aren't tempted to 'swing' with the basses.
- When putting the whole song together, check carefully that the joins between sections are confident—every singer must know which note they are moving to. Practise moving from bar 23 and bar 30 back to bar 5, as there is no piano break to give singers time to think and prepare.
- Finally practise the Coda—singers must know where they are getting their notes from so that the chords are confident and tidy.

■ Listen out

- Is everyone confident about the structure of the song? Talk through the geography of the song, singing the few bars around the joins if necessary. See the performance plan below.
- Are the words pronounced as indicated in 'You need to know', above? Read through the words to check that everyone is doing the same.
- What is the balance like when all the parts are together? The melody could be obscured—check this and redistribute voices if required.

■ Performing

- Performance plan: 'A' section (verse 1)—melody only (upper or mixed voices); 'B' section—all three parts, *a cappella*, or with piano for support; 'A' section (verse 2)—melody plus harmony (one, two, or three parts as appropriate); 'C' section—all three parts, *a cappella*, or with piano for support; 'A' section (verse 3)—all parts; Coda.

Ex. 1



Born to rule de eart', born to rule de eart',
born to rule de eart', born to rule de eart'
eart'. What a joy!

15 Born to rule

Words: Louise Bennett

Music: Jamaican trad.

arr. Michael Burnett and Peter Hunt

Joyous but steady

Melody

Harmony

Bass

Piano

mf

G D7 G D7

A

5 *mf*

1. Born to rule de eart', born to rule de sky, Born to rule de worl', to walk up-on the sea, Lit - tle
 2. Poor an' low - ly born, pure an' ho - ly born, Sure an' sole-ly born to res-cue you an' me. What a
 3. Je - sus rule de eart', Je - sus rule de sky, Je - sus rule de worl' an' walk up-on the sea, Loo-koo
div. mp 1st time tacet

2./3. ah ah
mp 3rd time only

3. oo oo

A

G Am G C Am D

mp

9

f boy. What a joy!
 joy! Lit - tle boy!
 deh! Loo-koo deh!

mf Born to rule de eart', born to rule de sky,
 Poor an' low - ly born, pure an' ho - ly born,
 Je - sus rule de eart', Je - sus rule de sky,

(2.) Lit - tle boy! _____
 (3.) Loo-koo deh! _____

mf Loo - koo, loo-koo deh! _____
mp oo _____

G Cmaj7 Dsus D G Am

13

Born to rule de worl', to walk up-on the sea, Lit - tle boy. What a joy!
 Sure an' sole - ly born to res-cue you and me. What a joy! Lit - tle boy!
 Je - sus rule de worl' an' walk up-on the sea, Loo-koo deh! Loo-koo deh!

f ah _____ (2.) Lit - tle boy! _____
 (3.) Loo-koo deh! _____

f Loo-koo, loo-koo deh! _____
 oo _____

G C Am D G Cmaj7 Dsus D

1st time on to B
2nd time to C
last time to Coda ⊕