

Ring De Christmas Bells

for male voices: main chorus, overlay chorus, and soloist, plus calypso rhythm band

Words & Music by JESTER HAIRSTON

Arranged by Dave Briner
for *Masters of Harmony*

Intro

$\text{♩} = 132$

la la la— la la la (etc.)

tum tum— tum tum tum— tum (etc.)

Verse 1

SOLOIST:

I gwine make me a song— a-bout Christmas, 'cause Christmas time— is so

tum tum ta tum tum ta (etc.)

sweet. Gwine tell how da t'ree wise kings of old— came to pray at de Christ— child's

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OVERLAY CHORUS

Chorus 1, 2, & 3

13 feet. Ring de bell! Ring de bell, ring de

13 tum Ring de bell, child Christ he born.—

16 bell, ring de bell.

16 Ring de bell, child Christ he born.— Ring de bell, child

19 Christ he born,— and He shall be king of kings.— la la la— la la la

rd time

tum ta tum tum— tum

Verse 2 & 3

23 24 25

Gas - par was de name— of de first wise king,— an' 'tis
Old Mel - choir he— was de rich - est king— of de

la la la— la la la tum tum ta tum tum ta

tum tum— tum (etc.)

26 27 28

said that he came— from a - far. A— vi - sion of de Christ child
t'ree— wise kings,— so dey say. He had twen - ty ca - mels in he

(etc.)

29 30 31

came to he— as— he gazed at de e - ven - ing star. Den—
car - a - van— dat came to Beth - le - hem— dat day. And a -

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32 33

straight - way Gas - par - some pack he train, an' a -
 mong he gifts - was some pre - cious myrrh, so

34 35 36

cross de sands - came he with a pre - cious gift - of -
 rare in all - of de land. King - Mel - choirbrought - it to de

37 38 39

frank - in - cense, Ma - ry's lit - tle child - to see. Ring de bell! Ring de
 ho - ly child - for to rub on he cold - lit - tle hand.

37 38 39

tum

(Go back to measure 14 twice)

40 41 42

Coda (*Jump to here from measure 20 on 3rd pass.*)

Bal -

(kings) tum ta la la la— la la la la la la— la la la

ta tum ta tum tum— tum (etc.)

Verse 4

43 44 45

tha-zar he— was a might-y king— with rich-es and lands— un -

tum tum ta (etc.)

46 47 48

told that he con-fis-ca-ted from he en - e - mies— be-cause he

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49 50 51

was so strong—and bold. But he ma-ma she say—to king

This system contains measures 49, 50, and 51. It features a vocal line with lyrics, a piano accompaniment in the right hand, and a piano accompaniment in the left hand. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 8/8. Measure 49 starts with a treble clef and a common time signature 'C'.

52 53 54

Bal - tha - zar—"Son, ye must be meek—and mild when

This system contains measures 52, 53, and 54. It features a vocal line with lyrics, a piano accompaniment in the right hand, and a piano accompaniment in the left hand. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 8/8. Measure 52 starts with a treble clef and a common time signature 'C'.

55 56 57

ye pre-sent—thy gift of gold—to de mo-ther of de ho - ly

This system contains measures 55, 56, and 57. It features a vocal line with lyrics, a piano accompaniment in the right hand, and a piano accompaniment in the left hand. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 8/8. Measure 55 starts with a treble clef and a common time signature 'C'.

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Chorus 4

58 59 60

child. Ring de bell! Ring de bell, ring de

This system contains the first three measures of Chorus 4. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. Measure 58 has the lyrics 'child. Ring de bell!'. Measure 59 has 'Ring de bell,' and measure 60 has 'ring de'. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand.

58 59 60

tum Ring de bell, child Christ he born.—

This system continues the musical notation for measures 58-60. The vocal line has 'tum' under measure 58 and 'Ring de bell, child Christ he born.—' under measures 59 and 60. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and single notes.

61 62 63

bell, ring de bell.

This system contains measures 61-63. Measure 61 has the lyric 'bell,'. Measure 62 has 'ring de' and measure 63 has 'bell.'. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and single notes.

61 62 63

Ring de bell, child Christ he born.— Ring de bell, child

This system continues the musical notation for measures 61-63. The vocal line has 'Ring de bell, child Christ he born.—' under measures 61 and 62, and 'Ring de bell, child' under measure 63. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and single notes.

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1 64 65 66

SOLOIST: and he shall be king of kings. — Ring de bell!

(Go back to measure 59)

1 64 65 66

Christ he born, — and He shall be king of kings. —

2 67 68 69 70 71 72

Majestically *a tempo* ♩ = 132

Christ he born, — and He shall be king of kings. —

(split bass section)

Performance Notes

SOLOIST:

1. Feel free to stylize pronunciations, timing, and notes during the four verses. Do not feel rigidly tied to the annotated score. It's more important to get into the role of a Jamaican performer and sell the story in a personal manner.
2. Though not annotated in the score, sing "Ring de bell" along with the overlay chorus in measures 15-18 (constant pitch of D) and in measures 60-63 (constant Eb).

RHYTHM BAND:

1. Use whatever Caribbean instruments you can gather (conga drum, bongo drum, clave, woodblock, ratchet, cow bell), and improvise your parts.
2. Background should be softer (e.g. no cowbell) behind soloist's verses, and louder (e.g. add cowbell) behind the choruses.
3. Instruments must be silent in measures 13, 39, 58, and 66. During fermata in measure 67, there should be only a drum roll. Instruments remain silent until start of measure 69, when they resume full tempo and volume behind sustained chord.

GENERAL: For a good performance model, listen to the Masters Of Harmony recording "Caroling! Caroling!"