

## PROGRAM NOTES

The earliest secondary printed source of the many variants of *Mary Had a Baby* that I was able to find is in the book called “Saint Helena Island Spirituals” [Beaufort County, South Carolina]. It is edited by Nicholas George Julius Ballanta-Taylor. (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc. 1925).

It contains three variants of this title along with many lengthy verses (Nos. 46–48). Those variants are markedly different from the variant used in this edition. I was unable to locate a secondary source of this specific variant.

The text authorship used in this variant is unknown, rendering it as a traditional text. The unknown slave poet in this variant no doubt was influenced by oral tradition renditions heard from biblical sources: Matthew 1:16, 1:18 and Luke 2:12. Some of the other Ballanta-Taylor texts tell the entire Nativity Story. Many are rare examples of Storytelling Spirituals.

The organization of the tune reflects a question-and-answer response structure, so commonly used in American Black Spirituals. However, the overall musical structure of this work is strophic in its melodic design.

I first heard this variant sung to me by my father, Mr. William McCullough, Sr.

(1899–1982) in Richmond, Virginia, in the year 1952. My father, a Singing Master, learned this variant from his father, Mr. Samuel Johnson McCullough (1874–1947), in Rock Hill, South Carolina.

The year 1952 was the summer in which I returned to Richmond, Virginia, from my music composition studies at the New England Conservatory. I also noted that summer many other folk music sources long forgotten or never put into printed editions.

I am slowly editing and arranging new scores of those folk melodies sung to me by my father. 1952 was also the summer that I wanted to try out my mastery of melodic, rhythmic, and harmonic dictation, which I had just finally mastered.

Papa sung to me many verses of this variant. However, I have used only three of them in this edition. I have kept the modal quality of the plaintive melody intact. It is garnished only by harmony containing an uncomplicated progression of chords and with no modulations.

I hope you will enjoy singing or listening to this long, lost variant of this poignant, well-known text.

—James McCullough  
Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2019

### TEXT

Mary had a baby! O my Lord!  
Mary had a baby! O my Lord!  
Mary had a baby! O Mary had a baby!  
What did Mary name Him? O my Lord!  
She named Him King Jesus! O my Lord!  
She named Him King Jesus! O my Lord!  
She named Him King Jesus! She named Him King Jesus!  
For He was born to save us! O my Lord!  
O tell me why was He born? O my Lord!  
Why was He born? O my Lord!  
O why was He born? O why was He born?  
Born to bring us peace and joy! O my good Lord!

African American Spiritual

Catalog No. 8864

For Dr. Dale Adelman, Canon for Music, and the Choir of The Cathedral of  
St. Philip, Atlanta, Georgia, and their Dean, The Very Rev Samuel Glenn Candler,  
also in Memory of my loving Mother, Mrs. Mary Maggie McMoore McCullough (1901–1988)

# Mary Had a Baby

for Tenor Solo and SATB Chorus unaccompanied

Traditional Text  
Luke 2:12

African American Spiritual  
Arranged by James McCullough (ASCAP)

**Andante semplice** ♩ = 87

**Tenor Solo** *mp* Tell the story  
Mar-y had a ba-by! O — my Lord!

**Soprano** *p* always flowing, with simplicity and conviction  
O my Lord! O my

**Alto** *p* always flowing, with simplicity and conviction  
O my Lord! O — my

**Tenor** *p* always flowing, with simplicity and conviction  
O — my — Lord! O my

**Bass** *p* always flowing, with simplicity and conviction  
O my Lord! O my

**Keyboard**  
(for rehearsal only)  
*\*\**

**Andante semplice** ♩ = 87

\* May also be performed a half or whole tone lower.

\*\* The soloist's pitches are not included in the reduction.

7

7

*mf poco rit.*

Mar-y had a ba - by! What did Mar-y name \_ Him? O my Lord! \_\_\_\_\_

*mp poco rit.* *p gently*

Mar-y had a ba - by! What did Mar-y name \_ Him? O my Lord! \_\_\_\_\_

*mp poco rit.* *p gently*

Mar-y had a ba - by! What did Mar-y name \_ Him? O my Lord! \_\_\_\_\_

*mp poco rit.* *p gently*

Mar-y had a ba - by! What did Mar-y name \_ Him? O my Lord! \_\_\_\_\_

*mp poco rit.* *p gently*

Mar-y had a ba - by! What did Mar-y name \_ Him? O my Lord! \_\_\_\_\_

*poco rit.*

10 *a tempo*

*mp a tempo, espressivo mf*

She named Him King Je - sus! O my Lord! She

*mp a tempo, espressivo mf*

She named Him King Je - sus! O my Lord! She

*mp a tempo, espressivo mf*

She named Him King Je - sus! O my Lord! She

*a tempo*

13 *f mf*

named Him King Je - sus! O my Lord! She named Him King Je - sus! She

*f mf*

named Him King Je - sus! O my Lord! She named Him King Je - sus! She

*f mf*

named Him King Je - sus! O my Lord! She named Him King Je - sus! She

*f mf*

named Him King Je - sus! O my Lord! She named Him King Je - sus! She

16 *mp*

S named Him King Je - sus! For He was born to save us! O my Lord! \_\_\_\_

A named Him King Je - sus! For He was born to save us! O my Lord! \_\_\_\_

T named Him King Je - sus! For He was born to save us! O my Lord! \_\_\_\_

B named Him King Je - sus! For He was born to save us! O my Lord! \_\_\_\_

19 *Tenor Solo mf Tell the story*

O tell me why was He born? O my Lord!

*mp*

Why was He

*mp*

Why was He

*mp*

Why was He

*mp*

Why was He

22 *mp* *mf*

Why was He born? O my Lord! O

born? O my Lord! Oh!

born? O my Lord! O

born? O my Lord! O

born? O my Lord! O

born? O my Lord! O

24 *mp*

why was He born? O why?

why was He born? O why was He born?

why was He born? O why was He born?

why was He born? O why was He born?

why was He born? O why was He born?

26 *mf dolente e con meno mosso al fine* *mp slower still*

Born to bring us peace and joy! O my good Lord! \_\_\_\_\_

*mp dolente e con meno mosso al fine* *p gently and slower still*

Born to bring us peace and joy! O my Lord! \_\_\_\_\_

*mp dolente e con meno mosso al fine* *p gently and slower still*

Born to bring us peace and joy! O my Lord! \_\_\_\_\_

*mp dolente e con meno mosso al fine* *p gently and slower still*

Born to bring us peace and joy! O my Lord! \_\_\_\_\_

*mp dolente e con meno mosso al fine* *p gently and slower still*

Born to bring us peace and joy! O my Lord! \_\_\_\_\_

*dolente e con meno mosso al fine* *slower still*

Born to bring us peace and joy! O my Lord! \_\_\_\_\_

February 7, 2018  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
1:30

James McCullough (b. 1939)

For biographical information visit: [www.ecspublishing.com/composers.html](http://www.ecspublishing.com/composers.html)