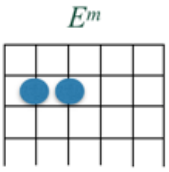
What Child Is This?

Words by William Chatterton Dix, music is Greensleeves by an unknown artist
Sing along with The Choir of King's College, Cambridge @ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwyvWQxoVhk

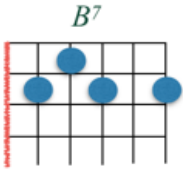
Key ~ Em
Tempo ~ 55bpm
Time ~ 3/4

The red notes are the guitar lead.



Em *D*
What child is this who laid to rest,
E G A B-C B A F# D-E

C *B7*
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
F# G E E-D# E F#-D#-B



Em *D*
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
E G A B C B A F# D E

Em *B7* *Em*
While shepherds watch are keeping?
F# G F# E D#-C# D# E E

G *D*
This, this is Christ the King,
D D-C# B A F# D-E

Em *B7*
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing.
F# G E E D# E F# D# B

G *D*
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
D D-C# B A F# D-E

Em *B7* *Em*
The babe, the Son of Mary.
F# G-F# E D#-C# D# E E

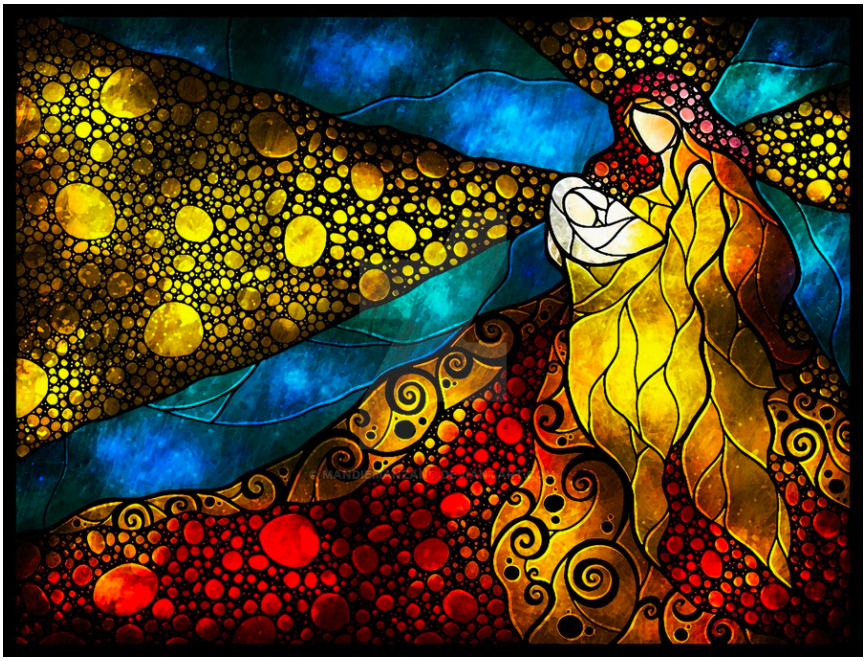
Em *D*
Why lies He in such mean estate,
C *B7*
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Em *D*
Good Christian, fear for sinners here,
Em *B7* *Em*
The silent Word is pleading.
G *D*
Nails, spears shall pierce Him through,
Em *B7*
The cross be borne for me, for you.
G *D*
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
Em *B7* *Em*
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

Em *D*
So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh,
C *B7*
Come, peasant, king to own Him.
Em *D*
The King of kings salvation brings,
Em *B7* *Em*
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.
G *D*
Raise, raise a song on high,
Em *B7*
The virgin sings her lullaby.
G *D*
Joy, joy for Christ is born,
Em *B7* *Em*
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

History

"**Greensleeves**," the song is a product of the sixteenth century. One suspects that this folk classic may have been created in the second half of the century (during the reign of Elizabeth I). In any case, it was mentioned in 1580 and by 1600 was so much a part of the contemporary English culture that it was referred to in Act Two, Scene One of Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Over the centuries the melody has been widely utilized, including use as a party song by the supporters of Charles I during the English Civil War (1642-1648), as a part of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), as the tune for the seventeenth-century folk carol "The Old Year Now Away Is Fled," and as the tune for the well-known nineteenth-century carol "**What Child Is This?**"

The lyrics for "What Child Is This?" were written around 1865 by Englishman William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898) by vocation an insurance executive and by avocation a poet. At the age of twenty-nine, Dix was struck with a sudden near-fatal illness and confined to bed rest for several months, during which he went into a deep depression. Yet out of his near-death experience, Dix wrote many hymns and a poem he called *The Manger Throne*. *The Manger Throne* imagined a visitor to the manger wondering who the child was. Employing this perspective, Dix wove a story of the child's birth, life, death, and resurrection.



What Child Is This?
Digital art by Mandie Manzano © 2012 all rights reserved

William Chatterton Dix
Image from discogs.com

It is unknown who brought Dix's lyrics and "Greensleeves" together, but quite possibly it was John Stainer (1840-1901), who made a harmonization. The very competent verses by Dix are the lyrics most used with the exquisite, sensitive, and haunting sixteenth-century melody. Since Christmas is such an important holiday, with an enormous entourage of music, it is more than a little satisfying to have "Greensleeves," one of the most beloved pieces of music in Western civilization, as a prominent member of the Christmas musical tradition.

Sir John Stainer
Image from Wikipedia

From "Stories Behind the Best-Loved Songs of Christmas" by Andrew (ACE) Collins, 2001, and *Studwell, William E; Hoffmann, Frank; Cooper, B Lee (2012-10-12). The Christmas Carol Reader (Haworth Popular Culture) (p. 38). Taylor and Francis. Kindle Edition.*