

# Geordie

For S.A.T.B. Choir and Piano

Traditional

Origin: England/Scotland (Child Ballad No. 209)

This variant: Nova Scotia, Canada

Arranged by Gary Ewer

## Historical Information

This song has its origins in England and Scotland, and is listed in the authoritative collection of folk songs by Francis J. Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads (1882-1898)* [Child #209]

According to the song's story, Geordie was a man born of royal blood. Depending on the variant, he was guilty of stealing either the king's geldings, his pearls, his three deer, or in the case of this version, three gold rings. It is likely that the "gold rings" is a corruption of the word "geldings". In most Scottish versions of the song, Geordie is set free through the efforts of his loyal wife, but in this version Geordie suffers the fate we find in most English variants - death by hanging.

It is possible that the character and story of Geordie is based on fact. "Geordie" may have been the nobleman George Gordon, sixth Earl of Huntly (1563-1636). Historically, this Huntly earned royal displeasure by engaging in open rebellion against James VI. There are also suggestions that the song actually refers to Sir George Gordon of Gight (1512-1562), fourth earl of Huntly. Over time, the song acquired the theme of robbery, for which Geordie is found guilty and hanged. That he is hanged by "a golden chain" is an acknowledgement of Geordie's noble ancestry.

In passing sentence, if a judge looked over his right shoulder, it was an indication of mercy and clemency. To look over his left shoulder would have confirmed the guilt of the accused. In this variant, the judge looks over his right shoulder in verse 3, yet "...Your Geordie is condemned forever." Quite possibly the significance of which shoulder he might look over was unknown to the singer of this version.

The melody as it appears in this arrangement was collected by Dr. Helen Creighton, sung for her by Mr. John Bray of Glencoe, Nova Scotia. It can be found in *Traditional Songs from Nova Scotia*.<sup>1</sup> The second-last verse ("If I had my Geordie on yonders plain...") comes from the version found in *Folk Songs of Canada*<sup>2</sup>, by Edith Fowkes.

## Performance Notes

- This arrangement is as much a work for piano as it is for choir. The choir relates the tragic story, and the piano provides important commentary.
- There are many subtle tempo changes throughout; any precise tempo indications should be carefully adhered to with the same zeal that one would learn the correct pitches.
- The baritone soloist that begins and ends this arrangement should sing with great freedom, in an attempt to accurately convey the tragic story.

<sup>1</sup> Helen Creighton and Doreen H. Senior. *Traditional Songs from Nova Scotia*. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1950.

<sup>2</sup> Edith Fowke and Richard Johnston. *Folk Songs of Canada*. Waterloo, Ontario: Waterloo Music, 1954, 1978

# Geordie

For S.A.T.B. Choir and Piano

Traditional  
Origin: England/Scotland  
This variant: Nova Scotia, Canada

Arranged by Gary Ewer

Andante  $\bullet = 84$

Baritone solo:  
*freely*

*mp*  
As

Andante  $\bullet = 84$

*mp*  
*rubato*

*And.*

6

T/B

I went ov - er Lon - don Bridge, Was in the morn - ing ear - ly, And

10

T/B

there I met a fair la - dy La - men - ting for her

13 *a tempo*

T/B

Geor - - - die.

13 *a tempo*

*mp*

13

*And.* *sim.*

Copyright ©2004 Pantomime Music Publications  
PO. Box 31177 Halifax, Nova Scotia CANADA B3K 5Y1  
[www.PantomimeMusic.com](http://www.PantomimeMusic.com)

Made in Canada All Rights Reserved

It is illegal to copy this publication in any manner

16 (solo) freely

T/B *mp* 2. I then

16 *mf* *rall.* *mp*

20

T/B

stepped up to this fair young one, Say-ing, "Where're you going so ear-ly?" "I'm

24

T/B

going to my good lord judge," she cried, "To plead for the life of

27

T/B

Geor - - - - die."

27 *mp* *accel. e stringendo*

27 *And.* *sim.*