

THE FRIENDLY BEASTS

Lyrics, Traditional 12th c. French Carol; Trans. Robert Davis, ~1920
Tune: ORIENTIS PARTIBUS, 12th c. Latin Melody, arr., Pierre de Corbeil

"The Friendly Beasts" is a traditional Christmas song about the gifts that a donkey, cow, sheep, camel, and dove give to Jesus at the Nativity. The song seems to have originated in 12th-century France, set to the melody of the Latin tune: ORIENTIS PARTIBUS. The current English words were written by Robert Davis (1881-1950) in the 1920s.

The song is also known as *"The Song of the Ass"*, *"The Donkey Carol"*, *"The Animal Carol"* and *"The Gift of the Animals"*.

Burl Ives included the song on his 1952 album, *"Christmas Day in the Morning"*. Since then, it has been recorded by many other artists, including Harry Belafonte, Johnny Cash (Belafonte and Cash use the title *"The Gifts They Gave"*), Risë Stevens, Danny Taddei, Peter, Paul and Mary, and Sufjan Stevens. Brian Stokes Mitchell sang this song with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, complete with the donkey, cow, and sheep 'voices'. Garth Brooks recorded it on his 1992 platinum album *"Beyond the Season"*.

~Tull

