

The Big Hewer

Song by Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger

Arrangement for choir in 1-3 parts (SAB) and piano

JANET WHEELER

Duration 3'30"



Out of the dirt and darkness I was born, go down!
Out of the hard black coalface I was torn, go down!
Kicked on the world and the earth split open,
Crawled through a crack where the rock was broken,
Burrowed a hole away in the coal, go down!

In a cradle of coal in the darkness I was laid, go down!
Down in the dirt and darkness I was raised, go down!
Cut me teeth on a five-foot timber,
Held up the roof with my little finger,
Started me time away in the mine, go down!

On the day that I was born I was six foot tall, go down!
And the very next day I learned the way to haul, go down!
On the third day worked at board and pillar
Worked on the fourth as a long-wall filler
Getting me steam up, hewing the seam, go down!

I'm the son of the son of the son of a collier's son, go down!
Coal dust flows in the veins where the blood should run, go down!
Five steel ribs and an iron backbone.
Teeth that can bite through rock and blackstone
Working me time, away in the mine, go down!

Three hundred years I worked at the coal by hand, go down!
In the pits of Durham and East Northumberland, go down!
Been burned and gassed and blown asunder
Buried more times than I can number
Digging a hole, away in the coal, go down!

I've scabbled and picked at the face where the roof was low, go down!
Crawled in the seams where only a mole could go, go down!
In the thin-cut seams I've ripped and redded
Where even the rats are born bow-legged
Digging a hole, away in the coal, go down!

I've worked in the Hutton, the Plessey, the Brockwell Seam, go down!
The Bensham, the Busty, the Beaumont, the Marshall Green, go down!
Lain on me back in the old three-quarter
Up to the chin in stinking water
Hewing a hole, away in the coal, go down!

In the northern pits I've sweated and earned me pay, go down!
Toiled in the worn-out drift mines night and day, go down!
Where the anthracite is hard and shining
I've tried me hand at the hard-rock mining
I dug a hole away in the coal, go down!

Down in the dirt and darkness I was born, go down!
Out of the hard black coal-face I was torn, go down!
Lived in the shade of the high pit heap
I'm still down there where the seams are deep
Digging a hole, away in the coal, go down!

*(Indented verses are omitted from this arrangement,
but may be added back in, perhaps sung by small groups or solos)*

The Big Hewer

For voices in up to 3 parts and piano

Written by Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger

Arranged by Janet Wheeler

Mysteriously ♩ = 76

Optional Solo(s)
p cresc.

Voices

1. Out of the dirt and dark-ness I was born, Go__

Pno.

pp

poco a poco cresc.

p

8ve lower ad lib.

6

mp cresc.

mf

down! Out of the hard black coal - face I was torn, Go__ down!

mp

mf

11

f

dim.

Kicked on the world and the earth split o - pen, Crawled through a crack where the rock was bro - ken,

f

15 *mp* rit. With drive ♩ = 92

Bur-rowed a hole a - way in the coal, Go_ down!

mp *mf* *loco*

20 *mf* PART 1

Go_ down 2. In a

mf PART 2

Go_ down 2. In a

PART 3 (lower voices) *mf*

Go_ down 2. In a

25

cra-dle of coal in the dark - ness I was laid, Go_ down! Down in the dirt and
son of the son of the son of a col li-er's son, Go_ down! Coal-dust runs in the

30

dark - ness I was raised, Go_ down! Cut my teeth on a five-foot tim - ber,
 veins where the blood should run, Go_ down! Five steel ribs and an ir - on back-bone,

35

Held up the roof with me lit - tle fin - ger, Start - ed me time a - way in the mine, Go_
 Teeth that can bite through rock and black-stone, Work-ing me time a - way in the mine, Go_

39

1. 2. PART 1
 down! down! 3. I'm the Go_

42

down PART 2 4. I've
 Go_ down PART 3 4. I've
 Go_ down 4. I've

PARTS 1 & 2

46

scrab-bled and picked at the face where the roof was low, Go__ down!
 north - ern pits I've sweat-ed and earned my pay, Go__ down!

PART 3

scrab-bled and picked at the face where the roof was low, Go__ down!
 north - ern pits I've sweat-ed and earned my pay, Go__ down!

50

Crawled in the seams where on - ly a mole could go, Go__ down! In the
 Toiled in the worn - out drift mines night and day, Go__ down! Where the

Crawled in the seams where on - ly a mole could go, Go__ down! In the
 Toiled in the worn - out drift mines night and day, Go__ down! Where the

54

thin - cut seams I've ripped and red - ded, Where e - ven the rats are born bow - leg - ged,
 an - thra - cite is hard and shin - ing, I've tried my__ hand at the hard rock min - ing, I

thin - cut seams I've ripped and red - ded, Where e - ven the rats are born bow - leg - ged,
 an - thra - cite is hard and shin - ing, I've tried my__ hand at the hard rock min - ing, I

58

1.

Win-ning the coal a - way in the hole, Go__ down!
dug me a hole a - way in the coal, Go__ down!

5. In the

62

2.

1.

Go__ down, go__ down, go__ down. Go__

Go__ down go__ down, go__ down,

Go__ down go__ down, Go__ down,

rit. Slower ♩ = 76
Optional Solo(s)

67

2.

p

6. Out of the dirt and dark-ness I was born, Go__ down!

rit. Slower ♩ = 76

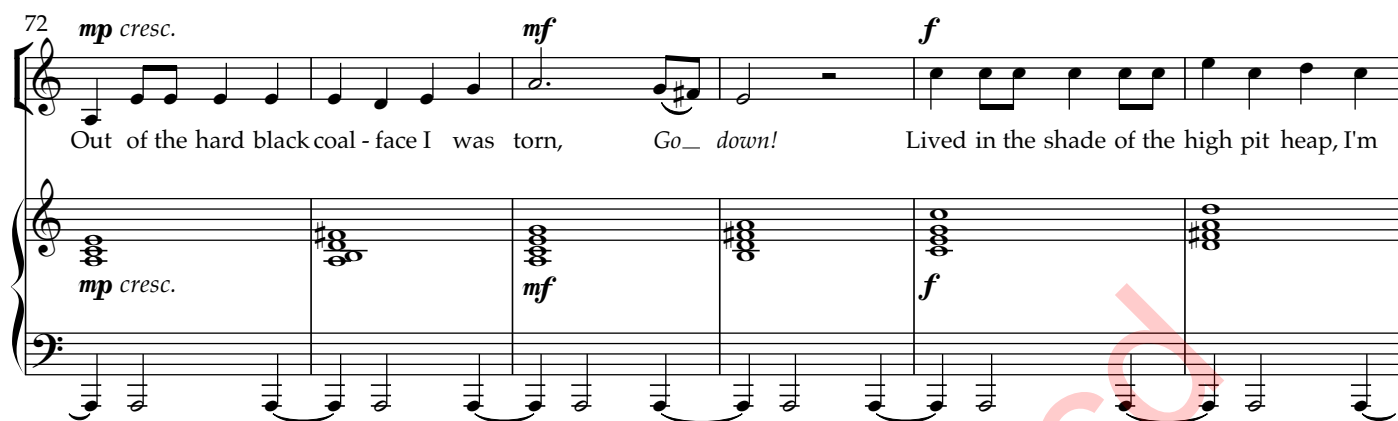
p

poco a poco cresc.

8ve lower ad lib.

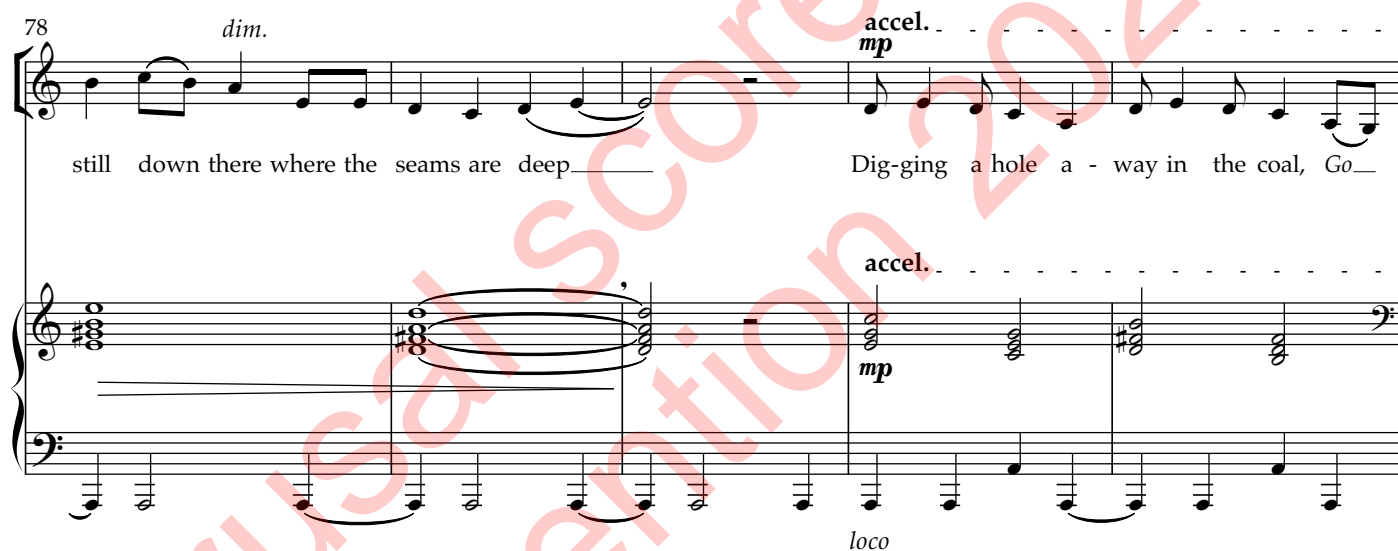
72 *mp cresc.* *mf* *f*

Out of the hard black coal - face I was torn, Go_ down! Lived in the shade of the high pit heap, I'm



78 *dim.* *accel. mp*

still down there where the seams are deep_ Dig-ging a hole a - way in the coal, Go_



83 *With drive* ♩ = 92

down!



Sing/play BARS 68-71 FOUR TIMES

87 *Sing 3rd and 4th time* 1.2.3.

Down. down, down, down, down, down, Go down.

Sing every time

Down. down, down, down, down, down, Go down.

Sing 2nd, 3rd and 4th times

Down, down, down, down, down, Go down

91 4.

Go down. Go down! gliss.

Go down. Go down Go down! gliss.

Go down, Go down Go down! gliss.

4.

Some other music by Janet Wheeler

Larger-scale works with orchestra or instruments

I Sing and Ever Shall - SATB with medium orchestra and baritone solo	25'
Magnificat cum Angelis – SATB with soprano solo and chamber orchestra	40' or 50'
On the Breath of the Sky – SATB, S solo children's choir and jazz ensemble	15'
Sea Tongue – Setting of Kevin Crossley Holland for S and Bar solos and orchestra	50'
The Ceaseless Round of Circling Planets – SATB, solo waterphone and orchestra (Also available with piano duet and waterphone accompaniment)	20'
The Measure of a Tree – SATB with A and Bar solos and orchestra (Also available soon in a version with children's choir)	50'
Train in the Rain – ghostly tale for SATB, children's choir, narrator and ensemble	20'

Secular mixed voices

Gather the Good Days (<i>cycle of five SATB settings on the theme of memory</i>)	13'
Gaudeamus Igitur (<i>double choir a cappella setting of Kevin Crossley Holland poem</i>)	3'30"
Imagine it! (<i>written for and recorded by NYCGB double choir with percussion duo</i>)	6'
This Moment of Here and Now (<i>for accompanied choir for Requiem to Cancer 2022</i>)	5'30"
Time Becomes a Song (<i>cycle of five SATB settings of John Clare</i>)	15'

Sacred mixed voices

Alleluia, I heard a voice (<i>SSATB anthem with joyful syncopated middle section</i>)	4'
Be This Thine Ark (<i>setting of John Donne for Lincolns Inn Chapel</i>)	5'30"
Beati Quorum Via – Homage to Stanford (<i>anthem for SSATTB</i>)	4'
By Thee I Will Abide (<i>setting of text from Psalm 56 for single then double choir</i>)	5'
Ely Service (<i>canticles commissioned for Ely Cathedral's 1350th anniversary</i>)	12'
Homage to Albright (<i>textured choral soundscape made from simple repeating fragments sung individually with organ accompaniment – duration variable</i>)	
In Every Corner Sing (<i>anthem for the 200th anniversary of St Pancras Church</i>)	4'30"
Loquebantur Variis Linguis (<i>Pentecost motet for SATB with no divisi</i>)	2'
Psalm 121 (<i>setting of the Scottish metrical version for SATB and organ</i>)	5'30"
Preces and Responses	
The Martyrdom of St Edmund (<i>prizewinning anthem for SATB and organ</i>)	4'
We Sing to God, the Spring of Mirth (<i>SATB with optional organ</i>) <i>Prizewinning introit/anthem published by Novello</i>	2'

For Christmas – a selection of carols in a variety of styles

Advent Song (<i>Gospel carol for children's choir and SATB with piano</i>)	2'30"
A La Media Noche (<i>Puerto Rican carol arranged for children, SATB and piano duet</i>)	4'30"
Because a Little Child is Born (<i>a cappella SATB with divisi apart from tenors</i>)	3'
Behold I Come (<i>winner of the Hendrix Candlelight Carol competition 2017</i>)	4'30"
Carol of the Poor Children (<i>rhythmic and folk-inspired for SATB and piano</i>)	2'30"
Christmas at Sea (<i>setting of Robert Louis Stevenson for upper voices or cambiata</i>)	3'
Ding Dong Diggety! (<i>jazzy a cappella arrangement of Ding Dong Merrily on High</i>)	2'40"
God Bless You Brother (<i>a Christmas blessing for the homeless, words E. Farjeon</i>)	2'30"
It Came Upon the Midnight Clear (<i>original setting for SATB and harp</i>)	5'
Listen to the Angels (<i>jazzy carol incorporating Of the Father's Heart Begotten</i>)	3'
Noel, Noel, Noel (<i>a cappella setting of a medieval text for SSATB</i>)	4'
The Gift on the Living (<i>setting of Celtic text from Carmina Gadelica</i>)	4'30"
The Spirit of Christmas (<i>carol for children's voices, SATB and keyboard</i>)	4'
<i>Words by Martin Angel and Janet Wheeler, published by Hal Leonard</i>	

For score videos of some of these pieces see YouTube MazeMusic Channel
For more information on other and larger works see janetwheeler.co.uk

