THE PRESS GANG
or THE ESCAPED APPRENTICE
An Operetta for Children by Nancy and Alan Bush

VOCAL 3/- SCORE
PUBLISHED BY THE WMA LTD.
THE PRESS GANG

or

The Escap'd Apprentice.

*******************

CHARACTERS.

William, a Shoemaker's Apprentice.
Lucy, his True Love.
Sarah, the Deserted Sweetheart.
Captain Rascalion, leader of the Press Gang.
Mahogany Joe, an old sailor.

Fishermen and Fishergirls.
Members of the Press Gang.
Sailors.

*******************

SCENE I: Falmouth Town, on the quay in front of the Shoemaker's house.

SCENE II: In the hold of H.M.S. Dreadnought.

SCENE III: The living room of the Shoemaker's house.

TIME: Second half of the 18th Century.

THIS WORK MUST NOT BE PERFORMED WITHOUT THE WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHERS.
ATTACCA No.2 AFTER A
PAUSE OF 5-10 SECONDS.
SCENE I. Falmouth Town on the quayside.
Lucy and William are sitting outside the Shoemaker's house, which is one of a row of cottages. William is working at his bench. A group of fishermen and fishergirls enter, singing.

No. 2: Chorus of Fishermen and Fishergirls.

CURTAIN RISES

Tune: original.

Andante con moto \( \frac{d = 138}{d} \)

Blow the west wind, Flow the full tide, How long we've sailed with the Falmouth fleet, For the

haul the nets from the harbour side... Out of the harbour Your man's life is hard to beat. Home with the catch; if

set your sail. The nets are full. The fisher-man's life is the best... of all.

In swam the shoal to a west-or-ly gale.
No. 3: FISHERMEN'S CLOG-DANCE

Allegro molto

Exeunt Fishermen and Fishergirls as Dance finishes

- 7 -


William: The fishermen are all in good spirits. That means they have had a good catch.

Lucy: Yes, when their nets are full they do say fishing is a fine trade. But when the weather is foul and the fish are not coming to them as easy as they could wish, they are dreary and down in the dumps. William, did you ever think you would go to sea?

William: Sometimes I did. A long time ago, when I heard the fishermen say that they had sailed as far as Newfoundland after cod fish, and tell tales of all the storms and icebergs and the strange coasts they had seen, I thought it would be a fine thing to go with them.

Lucy: Icebergs and the coast of Newfoundland! All for the sake of cod - a vile, flat-tasting fish if ever there was one! I'd rather stay at home than go so far to fetch it.

William: So would I, too. For I'm born a landsman and never in my life would I want to go to sea now. Shoemaking is my trade and it is more to my fancy, too. It isn't all cobbling, and I love to turn my hand to a fine pair of shoes.

No. 4: SHOEMAKER'S SONG (William and Lucy)  
Tune: original

Allegro moderato (d = 92)
Then I'll live and work alone,
I'll be master of my trade. BOTH: Then we'll marry, yes, we'll marry,

(fine) Long ago you promised me. BOTH: You and I will live contented

Here in Falmouth by the sea.

A group of fishermen rush in, terrified.
They sing as they run:
No. 5: Chorus of Fishermen. (d. = 138)

Tune: Press-gang Warning Song

Allegro molto.

The warrant's out, the warrant's out, the hang-'er's dram! The Press-gang's a-shore, and water-man, the water-man's their readiest. But they'll have a landsman pray,

Comb-ing all the town. Sure, they are out to make a prize of you! too, I've heard them say. Look sharp, look sharp a-bout it while you may!
Look lively, oh, and hide till they have gone!
Or sure you'll lose your

li-ber-ty to-day! Exeunt last of the Fishermen.

William and Lucy start up, frightened, but are too late to hide.

Enter Captain Rascalion and the Press Gang.

Capt. Rascalion: They say Falmouth is a fine town — but curse me if the men
don't live like moles, not one to be seen. But it seems I've
spoken too soon — here is a sight for sore eyes — a fine young
fellow! (He claps William on the back). A very good day to you,
my young sir. Come now, let me have word with you. You are
idling here, and yet you have your way to make in the world.
Now I have a fine offer for you: what would you say to a blow
on the ocean? Why, there's a life for any man!
No. 6: Song with chorus (Capt. Rascalion and the Press Gang)

**Tune: adapted from “On board a ’98”**

**CAPTAIN:**

**ALLEGRO ENERGICO.** ($d = 84$)

-- Sheet Music --

**CHORUS of PRESSGANG:**

1. *live too soft, my lusty lad, Too easy and no fine. The Step*

2. *King has need of a strong young tar To man his ships o’ the line. On*

3. *board of a man o’ war, my boys, is a lusty, lively life, With the*
The Press Gang have meanwhile cut off William's retreat. One or two put their hands on his arm, but still in a friendly way.

Capt. R: well, what have you to say to it?

William: Honoured Sir, I hope and entreat you will leave me. There is a mistake; I cannot be press'd into the Navy because I am apprenticed and a landsman.

Capt. R: Cannot be press'd, eh? An apprentice, eh? Well, well, and a fine young apprentice, too - what say you, boys?

Ganger: Ay, ay, sir. Fit to fill a good berth, sir.

Capt. R: Do you hear that, my young fellow? A ready seaman we could make of you, I dare swear. Where's your spirit, man? Don't you want to join the King's Navy?
William: I'll say nothing against the Navy, sir, but I would rather keep to my trade and be a shoemaker.

Capt. R: Trade! Trade! I'm sick of the word. Trade must be protected, that is all we hear. But the King must be served, too, do you hear that? The Navy must be manned, and you'll do as well as another. Lay hold of him! (One of the Press Gang says William).

William: (resisting violently). Take your hands off me, you ruffianly devil! Let me go! Warrant or no warrant, I'll stand up for my rights. I tell you it's beyond the law to press me.

Capt. R: (laughing) So, my young blood, you can show spirit when you like. Ruffianly devil - that's good! Stand up for your rights - that's better! 'Sdeath, but I like them lively, and you shall have a run for your money.

(General struggle between William and the Gangers. Lucy throws herself on her knees before the Captain and clutches his arm).

Lucy: Oh, Captain, spare him. Without him his old mother and father must starve.

Capt. R: Then let them starve and be damned to them!

Lucy: But we are to be married, sir. How can you take him away so unjustly?

Capt. R: To be married, eh? Oh, ho, that's another tune. But you must wait, my pretty dear. Others have served their turn and so must he, apprentice or not. Here's the King's Warrant and I must do my duty.

No. 6a: Chorus of Press Gang.

---

ALLEGRO ENERGICO \( \text{d=84} \)

On board of a man o' war, my boy, You'll see what life is like. A swing of the cat will teach you that, Or a touch of the marline.
Capt. E: Have done with it now. Haul him to the boat, you dogs.
They drag William off, struggling. Lucy is left weeping.
Sarah comes to comfort her.

Lucy: Was there ever a girl so wretched as I? By what right did they take him away to serve at sea?

Sarah: By no right, but who can prevent them? Every day young fellows are press'd and put on board, and there is no standing out against it.

Lucy: But when shall I ever see him again? How long are we to be parted?

Sarah: O poor Lucy, don't cry so. Perhaps he will be fortunate and come home after a year.

Lucy: You should know, Sarah, for the tress Gang took your lover, too. You and I are as unhappy as each other now.

Sarah: O cruel, too cruel. I cannot bear to remember it. We were to be married, and close by the church door they seized him and I have never seen him since.
No. 7: Song (Sarah).

Four years ago they stole my love
And once was blithe but I did weep
And

I was left forsaken, To voyage on a Southern Sea.
My mourn upon my wedding day, For he aboard an Indian was

love from me was taken. Oh, the sad rising of the tide That
wrongly press'd and sent away. Oh, the sad rising of the tide That

washes at the silent quay And fills the river to its fringe A-
washes on the silent shore, Four years have seen it ebb and flow, But

- 16 -
CURTAIN FALLS.

End of Scene I.

****************************************

Scene II

The hold of H.M.S. Dreadnought, at anchor in Falmouth Bay.
It is very dark, swm for a hanging lantern. Various seamen lie about asleep.
One sailor, Mahogany Joe, sits mending his clothes under the lantern. William
crouches on one side. The hatch is open and through it the sailors are
heard singing.

No. 8: Introduction and Chorus of Sailors.

No loqueto. (d = 60)

Tune: "Tommy's
gone to Hilo."

CURTAIN RISES.
(Solo off stage)  

CHORUS

Tommy's gone and I'll go too,  
Too,  
Bay more,  
A - way to Hi-lo

Oh, Tommy's  
Oh, Tommy's  
Oh, Tommy's

Solo  

CHORUS

Tommy's gone to Mobile Bay,  
Gone for e-ver-mo-re,  
Tommy's gone to Mobile  
Tommy's gone for e-ver

Hi-lo.

William: It's very hot and dark down here. Is this where we have to sleep?

Joe: Ay, my boy, this is the men's quarters. Nice and snug, eh? But you wait till she begins to roll and pitch. (Gives a cackle of laughter). You'll find it snug then. Ever bin to sea before?

William: Never. They press'd me today in the town.

Joe: So the Press Gang nabbed you, eh? Poor young beggar. A dirty lot, those gangsters. You're full young, too, ain't you?

William: I'm nineteen.

Joe: Oh, well, they was within their rights there. Eighteen's the youngest they can take 'em. But a landsman like you - that wasn't right, neither.

William: (listening uneasily) What was that?

Joe: Rats, my hearty, rats. Plenty o' them in this ship, I can tell you. But you'll get used to it. The food's the worst.

William: What's that like?

Joe: Something you won't believe, my lad. When we've bin to sea a few weeks, it gets down to stale water that beasts would cough at, beef as tough as a bit o' mahogany and weevils in the biscuit. Going to sea's no holiday, that it ain't.

(He sits mending and singing.)
Five years a-float a
The peas we got were as
board this boat I fought in the wars with Spain. Five years or more but a
hard as shot, Never mind how long they soak 'em. If the ship's plum duff was

sight of the shore was all I got for my pain. For they caught me on the
tasty enough The beef was as tough as oak-um. Keep clear of the Press Gang

home-ward trip, They turned me o-ver from my ship. They drove me up the
if you can. The sea's no place for an ho-nest man, To stay on land is a
gang-way slip, and sent me to sea again. A sailor's life is a better plan, so says Mahogany Joe. A sailor's life is a

weary life, "Way, way to the Indies, oh! A sailor's life is a dreamy life, oh, ho! Mahogany Joe, As round the world we go.

round the world we go.
William: Oh, I can't bear this for five years. Isn't there any way of escape?

Joe: Escape? You pore, misguided creature, you'd get a bullet through you in two shakes if you tried.

William: Anything would be better than this. Look, the hatch is open and we are still in harbour. We don't sail till midnight and it is no more than a mile to shore. I believe I could swim for it.

Joe: (amazed) Well! You ain't telling me to my face that you can swim, are you?

William: Of course I can swim. What do you think? I've lived in Falmouth most of my life.

Joe: So you can swim, eh? Well, well, that's rare. It isn't many sailors can swim, though we do live on the briny all our lives. But still, I wouldn't advise you to try. You'll get a lead shot through you, sure, if you do, and food for the fishes you will be.

William: (peering through the hatch) They have finished hauling the ropes and it is nearly dark. If I do try, you won't give me away, will you?

Joe: No, I won't split. But Lord save us, you are crazy. It isn't many press'd men gets back to shore.

William: Listen! When the officer on watch goes to the end of the deck, I'll hide in that great coil of rope. Then will you sing? Will you sing, and perhaps they won't hear me? I can slip into the water as quiet as a mouse and have a try for it. Will you help me?

Joe: (admiringly) You are a tough one, and no mistake. Pity the Navy ain't better - it could do with lively young carders like you. We'll stand up for England, that's right - but they make us live like dogs; no honest man will stand for it if he can help. Ay, I'll sing and you try for the shore.

They shake hands. William waits in silence, then creeps through the hatch. Mahogany Joe sings his song once more. When the chorus comes, he kicks the sleeping sailors, who groaningly join in. The song gets louder and louder. Joe peers out of the hatch. Nods his head approvingly. The song dies down. They sleep.
No. 9: Solo and Chorus (Old sailor and chorus of sailors)

(Old sailor) — A sailor's life is a weary life!

(First group of sailors) — Way, way to the

(Second group of sailors)

(Third group of sailors) — A sailor's life is a dreary life!

Indies, oh!

Oh, ho! Mahogany Joe, as round the world we
SCENE III. - A room in the Shoemaker's house. There is a door centre back stage with a window on one side of it. It is nearly midnight, with a dying fire. Lucy sits by the hearth.

No. 10: Introduction to Scene III and Song (Lucy). Tune: "Farewell, Nancy".

ANDANTE CON moto E CON ESPRESSIONE. (d = 86)
CURTAIN RISES

(Lucy) Beneath the green willow The river runs
I thought that we sat by the banks of a

clear. Far over the water They carried my dear. The
stream. I weakened and wept To find it a dream. Far
Lucy: only a few hours since they took him, and it seems like a hundred years. O, he will never come back, and I shall live as lonely as poor Sarah. (She hears a sound). What was that? Nothing but the wind rattling the door — it is loose and no one now to mend the hinge. But there it is again! (Runs to the window). Again! Someone is knocking, someone is crouching there!

William: (outside) Let me in, let me in, Lucy.

Lucy: (opening the door, which opens on to the quayside). William!

He rushes in, wet and dishevelled. They quickly bolt the door.

William: I swam for it. Quick, Lucy, you must hide me. As soon as they find I have gone the ship's company will give the alarm and the Press Gang will be after me; they will be out for my blood, for this way they lose their prize money. There — can you hear them? (They listen, terrified, as heavy footsteps are heard in the distance and faint shouts of "Open in the King's name!")

Lucy: You must go into the old vault where the shoemaker keeps his stores and his leather. There is a tunnel from it running under the quayside — you remember, we got lost there once when we were children. (She lifts the trap door in the corner of the room, pushing back a chest to do so. Shouts and footsteps come nearer). Quickly, climb down. Here is a blanket to warm you, and some bread, and here is ale in a pitcher. They will never find you, William, never!

William: So the men of Falmouth live like moles, Captain Rascal! But better to live like a mole than die like a rat in a hold. Goodbye, Lucy, and keep secret. (He disappears and Lucy fastens the trap door, pulling back the chest. As she tidies the room there is knocking at the door).
Capt. R. (outside): Open in the name of the King!
Lucy: Who is there?
Capt. R. (outside): An officer of the King. Open, or be damned to you.
Open, I say! (Blows heard on the door. She opens. Captain Rascaljon and the Press Gang crowd in).
Capt. F. There is a press'd man escaped. Is he here? Are you hiding him?
Lucy: Why should you think that, Captain?
Capt. R. Aha, so it is you, my pretty love. We are old friends, it seems.
(Catches her wrist) Come now, you knew him well, and a saucy spirited fellow was he to outwit us all in the end. But I'll have him yet. Where have you hidden him? Answer me that!
Lucy: (shrieks) What, has William escaped?
Capt. R. Yes, and hidden here, I'll swear it.
Lucy: Captain, you are mad to think it! If William were free, he would never come here - the first place you would search.
Look if you like, but you will never find him. I have not seen my William since you so cruelly took him away. (Keeps). The Captain is irresolute. He orders the gangers to search, which they do, upsetting the whole room, while he stands glomering, giving them an occasional kick to hurry matters on.

No. 11: Chorus of Press-Gangers.

PRESTO. (Δ= 132)

A slippery customer

at the best, quite ready to run is the man that's pressed. Clap him in irons and
At last the Press Gang give up the search.

Capt. H. So he is not here, the young devil. Slipped through my fingers after all. A curse on this miserable, rascally town of Falmouth, that has sweated me to the bone and hardly yielded a man to follow the flag.

Essex Captain Rascal and the Press Gang. A pause as the footsteps die away.

Lucy: (opening the trap) William! The Captain and the Press Gang have gone. They have given it up and have all gone away. You can come out, you are safe.

William: (climbing out) This tunnel has served me a good turn. Without it and without you, Lucy, I could never have escaped them. But now I am free – free to be a landsman and live a life of my own.

They embrace and sing:

- 28 -
No. 12: Duet (William and Lucy).

Adapted from
Tune: "Fond, the Pirate".

MENDELO. (d=120)

Poco a poco più animato.

(William) Oh,

Funeral ad

Falmouth is a fine town And one I will not leave, For here I'll live a

work my way, As you may well believe. Then let the captain search again But
he'll not cap-ture me! (Both) And you and I will soon be wed. You'll never go to
sea. (Lucy) Oh, long shall I re-mem-ber the darkness of the bay. The
ris-ing of the tide, my love, that carried you a-way. (William) Then let the captain
search a-gain, but he'll not cap-ture me. (Both) And you and I will soon be wed. You'll
William and Lucy open door and stand together gazing over the harbour. Some faint
glimmerings of dawn are seen in the sky. Off stage the Sailors' Chorus is heard as
the worship sails away.

No. 33: Chorus of sailors (off-stage)

Tempo lento.

Haunt away, Swing the anchor, Wave farewell to your bride....
Hoist the mainsail, Turn to wind-ward, Down, down on the drowning tide....
Down, down, down, down, down down on the drawing, drawing tide...

ALLEGRO (d = 84)

(Leading to No. 14)

Fisherfolk enter as dawn breaks - great and congratulate William and Lucy.
No. 14: Solo & Chorus of Fisherfolk.
Tune: "Young Edwin in the Lowlands low."

SOLO (Fisherman)  m: l 4: d: t: 6: r:  

Now Englishmen are 
(Sarah) Should they all be

is-land-ers And born to go to sea, And taught to bear both foul and fair, But
cap-tured And pressed to serve like slaves A-board a floating pri-sion, Or


born to li-ber-ty. Why try to break the spi-rit Of lads so brave and
lost in wa-ter graves? For they will fight for Eng-land, Stand up and fight a-

bold, Who are cursed a-long the quar-ter-deck And bat-tened in the hold. (Sarah) Why
gain. Give them freedom, they'll de-fend it, Let them live like free-born
No. 15: SONG & DANCE FINALE.

Tune: The Gower Reel.

Syllabic text as sung by the famous folk singer, Philby Tannar.

CHORUS: (a few voices at first and gradually more and more until all are singing & dancing)

Lah dee doo-dle um gee dum gee
rum dee diddlee doo-dle, doo-dle oodle um gee dum gee dum gee diddlee
dum, dahl dee doo-dle oodle um gee dum gee dum gee diddlee
dum, dahl... dahl... dahl... dahl... diddlee dum gee dum gee dum...
THE PRESS GANG

or

The Escap'd Apprentice.

***************

No. 1: Overture.
No. 2: Fishermen's Chorus: "Blow the west wind".
No. 3: Fishermen's Clog Dance.
No. 4: Shoemaker's Song (William and Lucy)
No. 5: Fishermen's Chorus: "The warrant's out"
No. 6: Song with Chorus: (Capt. Rascal, William and Press Gang).
No. 6a: Chorus of Press Gang.
No. 7: Song: "The rising of the tide" (Sarah).
No. 8: Introduction and Sailors' Chorus.
No. 9: Song with Chorus (Mahogany Joe and sailors).
No. 9a: Song with Chorus (Mahogany Joe and sailors)
No. 10: Introduction and Song: Beneath the green willow (Lucy).
No. 11: Chorus of Press Gang.
No. 12: Duet: "O Falmouth is a fine town" (William and Lucy).
No. 13: Chorus of Sailors: "Down, down on the drowning tide."
No. 14: Song & Chorus of Fishermen: "Now Englishmen are islanders."
No. 15: Song and Dance Finale.
Workers’ Music Association Ltd

President:
Alan Bush

Vice-Presidents:

General Secretary:
Will Sahnow

The Workers’ Music Association, a Co-operative Society, was founded in 1936 to co-ordinate the musical activities of working-class organisations and provide for this purpose the necessary musical material and professional resources. The Association acts as a clearing house for information about the music of this and other countries and as a centre where all amateur musical organisations may exchange information and receive help and guidance. The Association seeks collaboration with other musical organisations of all kinds: choirs, orchestras, bands, rhythm clubs, dance bands, gramophone societies, youth clubs, educational and cultural authorities, etc.

The Association publishes textbooks written in a popular style, to advance musical education. All these opportunities for useful activity are open to our members, whose ideas and activities are discussed in the Association’s quarterly journal “Keynote.”

Fees for affiliation are:
Industrial and Educational Organisations £2 2s. 0d. per annum
Branches and Auxiliaries of above 5s. 0d. per annum
Music and other cultural groups, per 50 members 10s. 0d. per annum
Youth Clubs 5s. 0d. per annum
Individuals 7s. 6d. per annum

Membership application form sent on request.

Workers’ Music Association Ltd.
17, Bishops Bridge Road,
London, W.2.