

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A sea shanty is a distinct genre of work song developed centuries ago aboard sailing ships. Shanties served as a way for crew members to synchronize their labor and stay focused on repetitive, demanding tasks. The songs needed to last as long as the job required, but end as soon as the work was finished. Therefore, a key feature of shanties is the absence of a proper storyline.

“Leave Her, Johnny” is an example of a pump shanty. Water leakage was common aboard ships, and crew members regularly needed to pump water out. The frequency (not to mention monotony) of operating the large pumps inspired this subgenre. Traditionally, verses alternated between a leader and the chorus. The word “her” in the lyrics refers to the ship itself:

Leader: Oh the times was hard and the wages low.
All: Leave her, Johnny, leave her.
Leader: In one more day, ashore we'll go.
All: And it's time for us to leave her.

This particular shanty was usually saved for the final round of pumping—the sailors' last task before leaving the ship and (finally) getting paid. It was also an opportunity for humor, allowing the crew to voice candid opinions on their grueling working conditions and demanding officers. An additional verse, not included in this arrangement, is:

Leader: It's rotten beef and weevily bread.
All: Leave her, Johnny, leave her.
Leader: It was “pump or drown,” the old man said.
All: And it's time for us to leave her.

Though this arrangement's slow tempo and legato nature imply melancholy, this is ultimately a hopeful song: Home was quite literally on the horizon.

J.Z.

SEAFARER'S PARTING SONG (Leave Her, Johnny)

for T.T.B. voices and piano*

Traditional Sea Shanty
Arranged by JACK ZAINO

Gently (♩ = ca. 92)

TENOR I
TENOR II

BARITONE

PIANO

mp

Time to leave

Gently (♩ = ca. 92)

mp

3

mp

It's time to leave her.

Time to leave her.

Time to leave

her. Time to leave her, to leave

* Also available for S.A.T.B. (52291) and S.S.A. (52292). PianoTrax accompaniment available (A-00016667). Visit alfred.com for digital scores and audio.

6

her. I thought I heard the

p

p

9

old man say, Leave her, John - ny, leave her. "To -

p

12

mor - row you will get your pay." And it's time for us to

mel.

mel.

17

15

leave__ her. Oh, the times was hard and the

mp

18

wag - es__ low. Leave her, John - ny, leave__ her. In__

mp

21

one more day a - shore we'll__ go. And it's time for us to

mel.

25

leave__ her. Leave her, John - ny, leave__ her. Oh, __

mf *mel.* *mf*

mf

leave her__ John - ny, leave__ her. Oh, the voy-age is done and the

winds won't blow And it's time for us to leave__ her. Oh, the

mel. *opt. SOLO mp*

33

work was hard and the voy-age was ___ long. Leave her, John - ny,
 (end solo) ALL

mp

36 *opt. SOLO (melody line)* *mel. mp* *(end solo)* *ALL mel.*
 leave ___ her. And the seas was high, and the gales was ___ strong. And it's

39 *mf* *41*
 time for us to leave ___ her. Leave her, John - ny,
mel. mf

mf

42

leave _ her. *mel.* Oh, _ leave her _ John - ny, leave _ her. Oh, the

45

voy-age is done and the winds won't _ blow And it's *mel.* time for us to

50

leave _ her. It's time to leave _
Time _____ to leave _
Time to leave _____ her. _____

51 her. — It's time to leave her. —

her. — Time — to leave her. —

Time — to leave — her, to leave her. —

54 55

We — swear by rote for — want of — more.

p

57

Leave her. John - ny, leave her. But — now we're through, so we'll

p

60

mel. *cresc.*

go on__ shore. And it's time for us to leave__ her.

cresc.

63

mf

Leave her, John - ny, leave__ her. *mel.* Oh,__ leave her__ John - ny,

mf

mf

66

poco rit. e decresc.

leave__ her. Oh, the voy-age is done and the winds won't__ blow._____

decresc. mel.

poco rit. e decresc.

poco accel.

Slower (♩ = ca. 72)

69

mel.

And it's time for us to leave her.

mf

Time to leave

Slower (♩ = ca. 72)

p

poco accel. e cresc.

Tempo I (♩ = ca. 92)

72

mf

It's time to leave her. It's time to leave

mf Time to leave her. Time to leave

her. Time to leave her, to leave

rit. al fine

Tempo I (♩ = ca. 92)

mf

cresc.

rit. al fine

f

75

her.

mp