

# BLACK IS THE COLOR

from APPALACHIAN LOVE SONGS  
WOMEN'S REFLECTIONS ON LOVE, LOSS, AND STRENGTH



SSA A CAPPELLA

a traditional folk song adapted by

LINDA TUTAS HAUGEN



ephrim bay publishing



# BLACK IS THE COLOR

from

## APPALACHIAN LOVE SONGS

for

SSA A Cappella

adapted and arranged by

# LINDA TUTAS HAUGEN

*Appalachian Love Songs* was commissioned in 2017-18 by a Consortium of American Choral Programs,  
the Appalachian Folk Songs Women's Choir Commissioning Consortium,  
Nana Wolfe-Hill, Wingate University, coordinator.

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## ***Black Is the Color***

**Performance notes:** This “round” can be performed a cappella, or with an instrumental accompaniment such as a dulcimer, guitar or piano; it also would be lovely with three flutes or clarinets each accompanying a vocal part or any combination of instruments listed.

### **Program Notes**

This folk song is the lament of a young woman over the death of her true love. Scholars believe the song originated in Scotland, based upon its reference to the river Clyde, where the young man drowned in a logging accident (the word “river” is substituted in this setting). The first verse is also very similar to two other songs, *The Faithful Sailor Boy* and *Sweet William*, both of whom were drowned at sea. *Black Is the Color* later became well known in the Appalachian Mountains. Alan Lomax calls this song an American “re-make of British material where the mountain people have woven a new song...touching it with passionate lyricism.”

### **Text:**

But black is the color of my true love's hair,  
His face is something wondrous fair,  
The prettiest eyes and the gentlest hands,  
I love the ground on which he stands.

The winter is passed and the leaves are green,  
The time is gone that we have seen,  
If you no more on this earth I see,  
I still hope one day to be with thee.

This variant was first collected by Cecil Sharp and Maud Karpeles in Appalachia in 1916, sung by Mrs. Lizzie Roberts in Hot Springs, NC. Later, Kentucky folk singer and collector John Jacob Niles wrote a different tune between 1916-21 simply because his father liked the lyrics, but thought the original tune was “terrible.” The Niles tune became popular and the gender also shifted to a male lamenting the death of a woman. However, this setting uses a slight variant of the lovely and haunting *original* tune.

I go to the river for to mourn and weep,  
But satisfied I never could sleep,  
I'll write you a letter in a few short lines,  
I'll suffer death ten thousand times.



Joan Baez and Bob Dylan, 1963. Joan Baez recorded *Black Is the Color* early in her career.

# BLACK IS THE COLOR

TRADITIONAL AMERICAN

Arranged by LINDA TUTAS HAUGEN

$\bullet = 72$   
*mf*

Voice 1: But black is the co-lor — of my true love's hair, His face is some -

Voice 2: —

Voice 3: —

6 10

V 1: - thing won-drous fair, The pret-ti-est eyes — and the gen-tl-est hands,

V 2: —

V 3: —

12 Verse 2  
*mp*

V 1: I love the ground on — which he stands. The win - ter is passed and the

V 2: — *mp* The win - ter is

V 3: —

17 20

V 1 leaves are green, The time is gone that we have seen,

V 2 passed and the leaves are green, The time is gone that we have

V 3

22

V 1 If you no more on this earth I see, I still hope one

V 2 seen, If you no more on this earth I see,

V 3

27 30

V 1 day to be with thee. I go to the ri-ver for to mourn and weep,

V 2 I still hope one day to be with thee. I go to the ri-ver for to

V 3

Verse 3  
*p*

*p*  
I go to the

32

V 1 But sat - is - fied I ne - ver could sleep,

V 2 mourn and weep, But sat - is - fied I ne - ver could

V 3 ri - ver for to mourn and weep, But sat - is - fied

36

V 1 I'll write you a let - ter in a few short lines,

V 2 sleep, I'll write you a let - ter in a few short

V 3 I ne - ver could sleep, I'll write you a let - ter

40 *mp* rit. e dim.

V 1 I'll suf - fer death ten - thou - sand times.

V 2 lines, *mp* I'll suf - fer death ten - thou - sand times.

V 3 *mp* in a few short lines, I'll suf - fer death ten - thou - sand times.



## Linda Tutas Haugen

Performed on four continents, Linda Tutas Haugen's music has been critically acclaimed as "music of character and genuine beauty." [*Minneapolis Star Tribune*.] *Opera Today* praised her opera, *Pocahontas*, as "superbly crafted," "engaging," and "beautiful and powerful." She has written for instrumental and vocal chamber ensembles, symphony orchestra, wind ensemble, solo voice, chorus, and opera. She has received national awards, fellowships and commissions from ASCAP, American Composers Forum, American Guild of Organists, Meet The Composer, National Endowment for the Arts, National Kidney Foundation, San Francisco Girls Chorus, and Virginia Arts Festival and Virginia Opera. Her choral music has been performed by high school, university and adult choirs throughout the U.S., in Europe, Asia and Australia.

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