

Samson and Delilah

Words and music by Reverend Gary Davis



The Reverend Gary Davis recorded many versions of "Samson and Delilah," and this one came from his 1965 performance at the Newport Folk Festival. Davis was 69 years old, but he could still nimbly pick those signature bass lines and project his huge voice over the top to provide a rousing performance.

In the transcription below, Davis' right-hand thumb strokes are notated with downstems while his fingers are notated with upstems (just as they are throughout the examples). Notice how he provides much of the driving rhythm with the thumb, sometimes leaving the fingers out for several measures at a time. As a general rule, use your thumb for almost every note

on the beat and fingers to pinch along with the thumb or to fill in the eighth-note subdivisions on the offbeats. The major exception is in measure 55, where Davis plays one of his favorite rolls. To play the roll like Davis does, play two notes in a row with your thumb on beat two, and follow that with two notes in a row with your fingers on beat three. In measure 63, notice how he doubles the vocal melody with a bent note on the sixth fret.

On the final chorus, Davis alternates finger snaps and toe taps with a hammered bass line performed with his fretting hand. The "Fill on Final Chorus" shows Davis's fret-hand hammers, and the trickiest move is pulling off from the fifth string to sound the open fourth string in the first measure.

—ANDREW DUBROCK

Intro

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G C G7 C

* Chorus

* Chorus

Gm D G G with Fill, last time

If I had my way

* Play chorus twice, last time.

** finger taps and toe taps in place of guitar, last time.

with Fill, last time

C G

If I had my way If I had my way

21 Lord knows I'd tear this old build-ing down 1. Well De -

C G7 C Gm D7 G

Fine

Verse G

27 li - lah she was a wom-an fine and fair She had good looks God knows and

2-3. See additional lyrics.

33 coal black hair De - li - lah she came to Sam-son's mind The first he saw this

40 wo-man could be the last time De - li - lah she sat down on Sam-son's knee

(skip these 16 measures on second and third verses)

46 Said tell me where your strength lies if you please She spoke so kind

52 — and she talked so fair — Till Sam-son said "De - li - lah cut off — my hair —

58 — You can shave my head clean as my hand — My strength come na-tu-ral — as

(repeat three times)

65 an - y man" — If — I

Chorus

G **C**
If I had my way, if I had my way

G **C** **G7** **C** **Gm** **D7** **G**
If I had my way, Lord knows, I'd tear this old building down

- G**
- Well, Delilah she was a woman fine and fair
She had good looks, God knows, and coal black hair
Delilah, she came to Samson's mind
The first he saw this woman could be the last time
Delilah, she sat down on Samson's knee
Said "Tell me where your strength lies, if you please"
She spoke so kind and she talked so fair
Till Samson said "Delilah, cut off my hair
You can shave my head clean as my hand
My strength come natural as any man"

Repeat Chorus

Fill on Final Chorus

- G**
- Well, old Samson, Samson, from his birth
He was the strongest man that ever lived on Earth
So one day while Samson was a-walkin' along
He looked on the ground and saw an old jawbone
He stretched out his arm and it broke like flint
When he got to movin', ten thousand dead, good God

Repeat Chorus

- G**
- And good old Samson and the lion started to attack
Samson he jumped up on the lion's back
So you read about this lion, had killed a man with his paws
But Samson, he got his hand in the lion's jaws
He ripped that beast until he killed him dead
And the bees made honey in the lion's head

Repeat Chorus