

Li Bai Songs

by David McMullin

*for baritone voice, violin, and guitar;
text in Mandarin Chinese.*

duration 12 minutes

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*Dedicated to Dr. Su Yu Xu and Dr. Pei Chen Ning,
who introduced me to the poems and uncovered for me their sound and meaning.*

Poems by Li Bai (701-62)

I.

Have you not seen how the Yellow River, which flows from heaven
And hurries toward the sea, never turns back?
Have you not seen how at the bright mirrors of high halls
 men mourn their white hairs,
At dawn black silk, by evening changed to snow?
While there is pleasure in life, enjoy it,
And never let your gold cup face the moon empty!
Heaven gave me my talents, they shall be used;
A thousand in gold scattered and gone will all come back again.

(translated by A. C. Graham)

II.

Moonlight in front of the bed,
Or is it frost on the ground?
I raise my head and look at the bright moon,
Lower my head and think of my homeland.

III.

Where Heaven's Gate Mountain ends, the Chu River begins,
Emerald water flows east and returns north.
The two banks' blue-green peaks face each other,
A single sail comes, in sunlight.

IV.

Among the flowers, a bottle of wine,
I drink alone, without loved ones.
Lifting my cup, I toast the bright moon.
Facing my shadow, we are three.
But the moon does not drink,
And the shadow just follows my body.
For now, with the moon and shadow I keep company;
We should make merry while it is spring.
I sing, and the moon paces back and forth.
I dance, and the shadow jumbles in disarray.
While sober we share happiness,
Once drunk, we go our separate ways.
In a bond eternal but passionless, we travel.
We will meet far beyond the cosmos.

V.

The sun shining on Incense-Urn waterfall makes purple smoke.
From the distance I see the pouring cloth hanging in front of the mountain.
It flies, flowing straight down three thousand feet.
It could be the Silver River [Milky Way] falling through nine heavens.

VI.

From the boat going to Guangling,
The moon shines brightly over Zhengluo pavillion.
The mountains blush with floral embroidery.
The lanterns on the river flow like fireflies.

(II-VI translated by P.C. Ning)

A pronunciation guide for the *pinyin* spellings used in the score, and a recording of a native speaker's recitation of the poems, are available from the composer upon request.

v. *rit.*
 Jūn bu jian, gao tang ming jing

gt. (loco)
 #0 #0 #0 #0 #0 #0 #0 #0

v. bei bai fa. Zhao ru ching si,

gt. 8va
 #0 #0 #0 #0 #0 #0 #0 #0

v. mu cheng xue. Ren sheng ru yi
 mp crescendo - - -

gt. crescendo - - - f

v. xū jin huan, Mo dai jin zuen kong dui yue
 cresc. mf

gt. #0 #0 #0 #0 #0 #0 #0 #0

2. *poco maestoso*

5 3

4 4

mf Tian sheng wo cai

15

gt. *f*

5 2 3

4 4 4

8va

2. *f*

4 5

4 4

bi you yong. Qian jin san jin huan fu lai.

diminuendo *mp*

27

gt. (8va)

ff *diminuendo* *mp*

5 4

4 4

2.

gt. 8va

II.

andante rubato ♩ = 80

v. *mp* *crescendo . . .*

Chuang qian ming yue guang, yi shi

violin *pp* *crescendo . . . p*

guitar

v. *mf* *pp* *mf*

di shang shuang. Ju tou wang ming

violin *mp* *pp* *p* *mf*

sul tasto
non vibr. → *ord.*

guitar *ad lib.* *8va* *p*

v. *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *n*

yue, Di tou si gu xiang.

violin *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *pp*

guitar *ad lib.* *8va* *p*

ritardando

$\text{♩} = 72$
maestoso

III.

rit.

pizz.

Violin and Guitar score for measures 1-4. The violin part features a melodic line with accents and a trill, while the guitar provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and triplets. Dynamics range from *ff* to *mf*.

a tempo

ritardando

Vocal line with lyrics: "Tian men zhong duan Chu jiang kai." The melody is in a 2/4 time signature. Dynamics include *ff*, *mf*, *p*, and *pp*. The tempo is marked *a tempo* and *ritardando*.

Violin and Guitar score for measures 5-8. The violin part includes an *arco* section with a long note. The guitar part continues with chords and triplets. Dynamics range from *f* to *pp*.

a tempo

rit.

Vocal line with lyrics: "Bi shui dong liu zhi bei hui." The melody is in a 2/4 time signature. Dynamics include *f*, *mf*, *mp*, and *pp*. The tempo is marked *a tempo* and *rit.*

Violin and Guitar score for measures 9-12. The violin part features a melodic line with accents and a trill. The guitar part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and triplets. Dynamics range from *f* to *mp*. The piece concludes with *ad lib.*

a tempo *poco rit.* *ritenuto*

v. *Liang an qing shan xiang dui chu. Gu fan yi*

f *mp* *mf* *f*

vln. *mp* *mf* *f* *mf*

gt. *f* *mp* *mf* *f*

$\text{♩} = 63$ *ritardando*

v. *pian* *mf* *mp* *p* *pp* *n*

ri bian lai

vln. *mf* *mp* *pp* *n*

gt. *mf* *mp* *mp* *p*

vln. *p* *pp* *n*

ad lib. Sra *(A-string harmonics...)*

gt. *p* *ad lib. Sra* *(loco) b♭*

IV.

vivace ♩ = 176

Violin I and Guitar I part, measures 1-4. The violin part is in 3/4 time, and the guitar part is in 3/4 time. The guitar part starts with a forte (ff) dynamic and includes a *ritardando* marking.

Violin II and Guitar II part, measures 1-4. The violin part is in 2/4 time, and the guitar part is in 2/4 time. Both parts start with a forte (f) dynamic and include a *ritardando* marking.

Vocal line, measures 1-4. The lyrics are "Hua jian yi hu jiu,". The dynamic starts at *mf* and ends at *mp*.

rit. - - - moderato ♩ = 108, sempre rubato

Violin I and Guitar I part, measures 5-8. The violin part is in 3/4 time, and the guitar part is in 3/4 time. Dynamics range from *f* to *p*.

Vocal line, measures 5-8. The lyrics are "du zhou wu xiang qin,". The dynamic starts at *mp* and ends at *pp*.

Violin I and Guitar I part, measures 9-12. The violin part is in 3/4 time, and the guitar part is in 3/4 time. Dynamics range from *mp* to *p*.

19

v. *Jü bei yao ming yue,*
mp mp mf > mp

violin

guitar

24

v. *dui ying cheng san ren.*
mp mf p

violin

guitar

31

v. *Yue ji bu jie yin,*
mp

violin

guitar

8.

v. *vivace*
 ying tu sui wo shen. Zhan ban yue jiang ying,
mp *mf* *mf*

35

mp *mf* *cresc.*
mp *mf* *cresc.*

v. *mf* *ff*
 xing le xü ji chun. Wo
mf *ff*

40 *poco ritardando*

f *ff*
f *ff*

v. *ff* *f*
 ge yue pai huai, wo wu ying
ff *f*

45 *♩ = 160*

ff *mf* *f*
ff *mf* *f*

4p
 v. *ling luan.* *Xing shi tong jiao huan,* *zui hou*
f *f > mf* *f*

vln. *f* *mf*
 vc. *f* *mf* *f*

v. *ge fen san.* *Yong jie wu qing you,* *xiang qi*
mf *mp* *mp* *pp*

57 *moderato*
 ♩ = 108
 vln. *sul pont.* *ord. p.* *pont.*
mp *pp* *mp* *ppp*

v. *miao* *yün* *han.*
pp *p* *mp* *n*

63 *ritardando*
 vln. *p* *ppp* *p* *mp* *ppp*
 vc. *p* *mp* *ppp*

V.

violin. *f* $\text{♩} = 116$ *sempre rubato*

guitar. *f*

violin. *mf* *mp*

guitar. *mf*

3

Ri zhao xiang lu sheng zi

violin. *mp* *p* *mp*

guitar. *p* *mp* *mp*

7

yan,

12

v. $7:4$ $7/4$ $3/4$ $4/4$ $3/4$ $4/4$

yao kan pu bu gua qian

mf

vln. $(\#)^{\circ}$ f $\#^{\circ}$ mp mp pp

gc. mp mf f pp

16

v. $\#^{\circ}$ p

chuan.

molto rubato

vln. mf f 3 mf f

gc. mf mf mf f

20

v. $7:2$ $3/4$ $4/4$ $4/4$

vln. mf f 3 f

gc. mf f

12.

v. *mf*
 Fei liu zhi xia san qian chi.

25

vln. *f* *mf* *ord.* *f* *mf*
 pizz. *mf*

gt. *f* *mf* *mf* *f*

v. *mf*
 yi shi yin he le jiu tian.
ritardando

28

vln. *mf* *mp* *p*

gt. *f* *mf* *mf* *p*

VI.

gently rocking, ♩ = 80
sempre rubato

Violin I (vln.) and Guitar (gt.) staves. The violin part is marked *mp* and *sempre legato*. The guitar part is also marked *mp* and *sempre legato*. The music is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Violin II (vln.) and Guitar (gt.) staves. The violin part is marked *mp* and *sempre legato*. The guitar part is also marked *mp* and *sempre legato*. The music is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Violoncello (v.) staff with lyrics: *Chuan xia guang ling qiu.* The music is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Violin I (vln.) and Guitar (gt.) staves. The violin part is marked *mp* and *sempre legato*. The guitar part is also marked *mp* and *sempre legato*. The music is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Violoncello (v.) staff with lyrics: *Yue ming zheng luo ting.* The music is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Violin I (vln.) and Guitar (gt.) staves. The violin part is marked *pp* and *dim.*. The guitar part is also marked *pp* and *dim.*. The music is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#).

16

v. *mp* Shan hua ru xiu jia.

violin

guitar

20

v. *p* Jiang huo si liu ying.

violin

guitar

24

violin

guitar

8va

pp

pppp

senza misura, ad lib.
parts need not coordinate precisely.

8va

pp