

A
MEASURE
IN
TRANCE

six songs for choir (SATB)
on texts of Al-Mutazz

Karim Al-Zand
(2000)

PROGRAM NOTE:

These six brief songs use texts by the Arab classical poet Ibn Al-Mutazz (861-908 C.E.). Al-Mutazz was a prince in the Persian imperial house during the Abbasid period, though he had no particular political ambitions himself. For most of his life he was content to hunt, ride horses and write poetry. He wrote numerous volumes of verse and several critical works on the poetic art. Later in his life, during a time of political turmoil in the region, he was persuaded to leadership and was hastily proclaimed caliph. The very same day, the ill-fated monarch was overthrown and Al-Mutazz fled to the house of a friend. It was there, twelve days later, that he was found and put to death.

The titles of the songs have been added here—poems from this era are typically classified by rhyme and rhyme scheme. But the texts chosen for *A Measure in Trance* are similar in that they each evoke a single poignant image: the colorful new moon signaling the end of Ramadan; a mysterious performer singing to the accompaniment of a lute; a love-crazed young man; the advent of spring; a woman enjoying a guilty pleasure in music-making. The text of the first song is especially touching as it seems to refer to Mutazz's brief sanctuary before his execution.

 July 2000

Premiere performance: The New England Conservatory Camerata, Lorna Cooke deVaron, director; May 24, 2000
Jordan Hall; Boston MA.

PERFORMANCE NOTES & DURATION:

1. [Fateful Shackles] 1'30"
The piece begins SATB but at m.9 divides into two choirs, one SATB, one in two parts only (high voices and low voices). Measure 10 returns to the full choir texture, now SSAATTBB.
2. [Silver Galleon] 30"
Four-part SATB.
3. [A Black Amour] 1'30"
Four-part SATB
4. [Incantations and Spells] 30"
The piece uses two three-part choirs (high, middle and low voices in each) and the choirs effect a gradual crescendo to m.24. Beginning in measure 7ff. the parts for choirs I and II, though notated in rhythmic unison, should be realized as a canon. Choir I starts with the anacrusis to m.8; choir II then enters (with its anacrusis) at the sign. The two parts continue canonically until m.23, taking all repeats. Downbeats within each part should be emphasized. Following the piece, a realization of the canon using a single time signature is given. This may be used if needed, though this is not ideal. If the realization is used, the effect of multiple, simultaneous meters should still be the goal, achieved through emphatic accents in each voice of the canon.
5. [Her Inscrutable Self] 1'30"
Eight-part SSAATTBB throughout. The initial 'r's of the 'Rah' figures should be rolled slightly. Each of the accompanimental stacked chords—including those in m15ff.—should start strong and fade gradually to nothing. The melody line should always be prominent, especially when it is passed between voices in m.15ff.
6. [Dreaming Nights Awake] 2'20"
Six-part SAATTB. Two thirds of the choir should be divided between the middle four parts mm.8-22 and between the outer four parts in mm.29-34. During these measures, the remainder of the choir takes one of the two 'pedal point' parts. In the last two measures the choir is divided equally.

TOTAL: ca. 8'

TEXT:

[Fateful Shackles]

When they came with the fateful shackles in hand,
preparing to go on the morning of doom,
in wonder I laughed at my sudden repose:
To die no more when the soul had flown.
Laughed, that my enemies thought me alone
re-living memories shared with a friend.

[Silver Galleon]

Come, break the Fast! The moon is new.
Bring the wine, awake, and see
that silver galleon drawing deep
with a load of amber down the dawn.

[A Black Amour]

She plays the flute, her face shines white,
with loving eyes that draw yet plead
as if tenderly caressing a child of hers
darkly conceived in a black amour.

[Incantations and Spells]

They came with incantations and spells
and over him poured concoctions obscure:
'Possessed by a demon!' -in truth they'd have said
'obsessed with a human' and abandoned the cure.

[Her Inscrutable Self]

She sings, and the merry-makers all
beyond reason call for a measure in trance
as her voice interweaves the chords of the lute
and the shadows pervade her inscrutable self.

[Dreaming Nights Awake]

Remember the dreaming nights awake
when from beams of the moon we cupped the wine
and around, from faces ghostly-white,
with saffron eyes the daffodils gazed.
When a whisper arose to a straying wind
and they lost their bearing, it seemed that each
embraced another departing, spoke
urgent words to stay the tide,
till the sky with dew-drops touched their frowns
and dreamward bent their drowsy heads.
Spring had counterchanged the land,
with profusion of tears unearthed the unseen.

by Ibn Al-Mutazz (861-908)
Translations by Charles Greville Tuetey
(used by permission)

A MEASURE IN TRANCE

six songs for choir (SATB) on texts of Al-Mutazz

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1. FATEFUL SHACKLES

Slowly; severe, declamatory $\text{♩} = 48$

S, A

ff heavily

When they came _____ with the fate - ful sha - ckles, _____ with the fate - ful sha - ckles in

T, B

ff heavily

[REHEARSAL ONLY]

PIANO

5

hand, _____ pre - par - ing to go _____ on the morn - ing of doom, _____

fff

fff

5

CHOIR in 2

Unmeasured; very freely, rhapsodic

9 *sub. p* (stagger breathing) chords are cued

S1, A1
T1, B1 *sub. p*

S2, A2 *mp*
T2, B2 *mp*

in won-der I laughed at my sud - den re - pose:

9 *coll' S^{vo}*

cresc. *f*

(oo)

(b) #

cresc. *f*

to die no more when the soul had flown.

coll' S^{vo}

FULL CHOIR

Tempo I; now ebullient

10

ff *mp*

S Laughed, that my en - em - ies thought me a - lone re -

A Laughed, that my en - em - ies thought me a - lone re -

T Laughed, that my en - em - ies thought me a - lone re -

B Laughed, that my en - em - ies thought me a - lone re -

poco ritardando - - - - -

14

pp

- liv - ing mem - or - ies shared with a friend.

- liv - ing mem - or - ies shared with a friend.

- liv - ing mem - or - ies shared with a friend.

- liv - ing mem - or - ies shared with a friend.

2. SILVER GALLEON

Very Quickly (in 1); joyous ♩. = 92

Musical score for the first system of "Silver Galleon". It includes vocal parts for Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto 1 (A1), Alto 2 (A2), Tenor 1 (T1), Tenor 2 (T2), Bass 1 (B1), and Bass 2 (B2), along with piano accompaniment. The tempo is "Very Quickly (in 1)" with a metronome marking of ♩. = 92. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "Come, come, come. Come, break the fast!". Dynamics include *f*, *cresc.*, *ff*, and *fp*. A rehearsal mark "[REHEARSAL ONLY]" is present above the piano part.

Musical score for the second system of "Silver Galleon". It includes vocal parts for Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto 1 (A1), Alto 2 (A2), Tenor 1 (T1), Tenor 2 (T2), Bass 1 (B1), and Bass 2 (B2), along with piano accompaniment. The tempo is "Very Quickly (in 1)" with a metronome marking of ♩. = 92. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "The moon is new. Bring the wine, a - wake and". Dynamics include *fp*, *mf*, and *fp*. A rehearsal mark "8" is present above the vocal parts.

16 *mp*
and see that sil - - - ver gal - leon draw - ing deep
mp and see
see that sil - - - ver gal - leon draw - ing deep
mp
see that sil - - - ver gal - leon draw - ing deep
mp (stagger breathing) *p*
see

16

25 *pp* like an echo *poco ritardando* - - - - *niente*
with a load of am - ber down the dawn.
pp like an echo *niente*
with a load of am - ber down the dawn.
pp like an echo *niente*
with a load of am - ber down the dawn.
ppp *niente*

25

3. A BLACK AMOUR

Slowly; flexible and sinuous ♩=92

S
A
T
B

PIANO

She plays the flute, her face shines white, with lov - ing

She plays the flute, her face shines white, with

She plays the flute, her face shines white, with

She plays the flute, her face shines white, with

[REHEARSAL PIANO]

5

eyes that draw yet plead, as if ten - der - ly ca -

lov - - ing lov - ing eyes that draw yet plead, ten - der - ly ca -

lov - - ing lov - - ing eyes that draw yet plead, ten - der - ly ca -

lov - ing eyes that draw yet plead, ten - der - ly ca -

5

decresc. to end

12

ress - ing a child of hers dark - ly con - ceived in a

ress - ing a child of hers dark - ly con - ceived in a

ress - ing a child of hers dark - ly con - ceived in a

ress - ing a child of hers dark - ly con - ceived in a

12

17

pppp almost whispered, breathy (niente)

black a - - - mour.

pppp almost whispered, breathy (niente)

black a - - - mour.

pppp almost whispered, breathy (niente)

black a - - - mour.

pppp almost whispered, breathy (niente)

black a - - - mour.

17

4. INCANTATIONS AND SPELLS

Extremely Quickly; foreboding, becoming frenzied ♩=184-190

* CHOIR I

They came with in-can - ta-tions and o - ver him poured

CHOIR II

and spells con - coc - tions ob -

[REHEARSAL ONLY]

PIANO

crescendo poco a poco

⑦ *mf*

They came with in-can - ta-tions and spells and o - ver him poured con -

mf

⑦ *mf* **

- scure: They came with in-can - ta-tions and - spells and o - ver him poured con -

mf

⑦

2nd time

* The voices should be divided equally into two 3-part choirs. The entire ensemble effects a gradual crescendo to m.24ff.

** The parts for choir I and II, though notated in rhythmic unison, are realized as a canon. Choir I starts with the pick-up to m.8; choir II then enters (with its anacrusis) at the \oplus sign. The two parts continue canonically through m.23, taking repeats. Downbeats within each part should be emphasized.

(crescendo)

13

1. 2.

f

- coc-tions ob - scure: They scure: They came with con - coc-tions ob - scure in-can -

13

1. 2.

f

- coc-tions ob - scure: They scure: They came with con - coc-tions ob - scure in-can -

13

1. 2.

2nd time

(crescendo)

19

1. 2.

ff

- ta - tions and spells and o - ver him poured They poured Pos - sessed

19

* 2nd time

1.

ff

- ta - tions and spells and o - ver him poured They spells and

19

1. 2.

* On the repetition, choir II follows the $\%$ sign to m.24. Choir I continues through the 2nd ending. The parts line up in m.24.

25

by a de-mon!

25

o-ver him poured in-can-ta-tions and spells and con-coc-tions ob-scure and they o-ver him

25

32

mf In truth they'd have said *mp* 'ob-sessed with

32

mf *mp*

32

39

a hu - man' and a - ban - doned the cure.

- coc - tions ob - scure and they o - ver - him poured and a - ban - doned the cure.

39

39

INCANTATIONS AND SPELLS

(realization of the canon)

crescendo poco a poco

7 *mf*

They came with in-can - ta-tions and spells and o - ver him poured con

7 *mf*

scure: They came with in - can - ta - tions and

7

crescendo

13

13

- coc - tions ob - scure: They came with in-can - ta-tions and spells and o - ver him

13

spells and o-ver him poured con-coc - tions ob scure: They came with in - can - ta

13

(crescendo)

19

poured con - coc - tions ob - scure: They came with con - coc-tions ob - scure in - can -

f

19

- tions and spells and o-ver him poured con-coc - tions ob-scure: They came with

f

19

(crescendo)

25

- ta - tions and spells and o - ver him poured They came with con - coc-tions ob-

25

con - coc - tions ob - scure in - can - ta - tions and spells and o - ver him poured

25

(crescendo)

31

- scure in - can - ta - tions and spells and o - ver him poured 'Pos - sessed

31

They came with con - coc - tions ob - scure in - can - ta - tions and spells and

31

ff

ff

5. HER INSCRUTABLE SELF

Rapidly; sweeping and sonorous ♩ = 92

Soprano (S): *f* *Rr - ah** *fade* *sim. to m. 14* *Rr - ah*

Alto (A): *f* *Rr - ah** *fade* *sim. to m. 14* *Rr - ah*

Tenor (T): *f* *Rr - ah** *fade* *sim. to m. 14* *Rr - ah*

Bass (B): *f* *swiftly, mordent-like* *Rah** *fade* *Rah*

PIANO: [REHEARSAL ONLY]

④

Soprano (S): *Rr - ah*

Alto (A): *Rr - ah*

Tenor (T): *Rr - ah*

Bass (B): *mf prominently* *She sings,* *and the mer - ry mak - ers*

PIANO: [REHEARSAL ONLY]

* The initial 'R' should be rolled slightly. Each of the accompanimental stacked chords—including those in m.15ff.—should start strong and fade gradually to nothing, always provided the melody line remains prominent.

⑦

Rr - ah Rr - ah

Rr - ah Rr - ah

Rr - ah Rr - ah

all be - yond rea - son

⑦

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 7 and 8. It features four vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are in treble clef, and the piano part is in bass clef. The lyrics 'Rr - ah' are written under the first three vocal staves. The lyrics 'all be - yond rea - son' are written under the bass line. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving lines in both hands.

⑩

Rr - ah

Rr - ah

Rr - ah

cresc.

call for a mea - - - - - sure in

⑩

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 10 and 11. It features four vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The vocal parts are in treble clef, and the piano part is in bass clef. The lyrics 'Rr - ah' are written under the first three vocal staves. The lyrics 'call for a mea - - - - - sure in' are written under the bass line. The piano accompaniment includes a *cresc.* marking and consists of chords and moving lines in both hands.

13 $\bullet = 69$

f

Rr - ah as her voice

Rr - ah Ah

Rr - ah Ah in - ter -

f

trance Ah

13

16 *mp* *f* *mp* *f*

Ah the chords Ah and the

Ah Ah of the lute

weaves Ah Ah

Ah Ah Ah

16

emphasize every syllable

19

per - vade *mp* *p*

shad - dows per - vade her *p*

mp *mf* her in *p*

Ah her in - scru *p*

scru - ta

Ah scru - ta - ble *p*

Ah

19

22

f vigorously *fade*

Rah

f vigorously *fade*

Rah

p *fade*

self.

f vigorously *fade*

Rah

22

6. DREAMING NIGHTS AWAKE

Slowly but with rubato; luminous ♩=66

S *pp* the dream - ing ___ nights a - wake ___ *p* when from

A **pp* Re - mem - ber ___ *p* Re - mem - ber ___

T *pp* the dream - ing ___ nights a - wake ___ *p* when from

B

PIANO [REHEARSAL ONLY]

⑤ beams of the moon ___ and a - round, ___ *mp*

___ Re - mem - ber ___ *** mp* with fa - ces ghost - ly -

beams of the moon ___ we cupped the wine ___ *** mp* with fa - ces ghost - ly -

we cupped the wine ___ and a - round, ___ *mp*

⑤

* In the sustained parts (throughout) it may be necessary to stagger breathing.
** 2/3 of the choir should be divided between the middle four parts (to m. 22).

9 *mf*
 _____ and a-round, _____ and a-round, _____
 white _____ with saf - fron eyes _____ the daf - fo - dils gazed. When a
 white _____ with saf - fron eyes _____ the daf - fo - dils gazed. When a
mf *ppp*
 _____ and a-round, _____ and a-round, _____

gradual crescendo - - - - -
 13 *ppp* *cresc. poco a poco* *p*
 a - rose _____ to a stray - ing wind _____ their bear - ing, _____
 whis - per _____ to a wind _____ and they lost their bear - ing, _____
 whis - per _____ to a wind _____ and they lost their bear - ing, _____
ppp *cresc. poco a poco* *p*
 a - rose _____ to a stray - ing wind _____ their bear - ing, _____

13

17

mf *f*

it seemed an - oth - er spoke ur - gent words to -

it seemed that each em - braced de - part - ing spoke ur - gent

each oth - - - er de - part -

each oth - - - er de - part -

it seemed that each em - braced de - part - ing spoke ur - gent

mf *f*

it seemed an - oth - er spoke ur - gent words to

17

Slower; delicately ♩ = 56
(4 equal parts)

21

ff *p*

stay the tide, _____ till the sky with dew - drops _____ touched their words _____

ing, _____ till the sky _____ with dew - drops _____ touched their ing, _____

words _____ till the sky with dew - drops _____ touched their

stay the tide, _____ till the sky with dew - drops _____ touched their

21

rit. - - - - -

(25) (no breath) *ppp*
 frowns and dream - ward bent their drow - sy heads.

(no breath) *ppp*
 frowns and dream - ward bent their drow - sy heads.

pp *ppp*
 frowns and dream - ward drow - sy heads.

pp *ppp*
 frowns and dream - ward drow - sy heads.

(25)

Tempo I (♩=66)

(29) **mf* *poco f*
 had coun - ter - changed the land, with pro - fus - ion of tears un -

mf *poco f*
 Spring Spring Re - mem - ber Spring

mf *poco f*
 Spring Spring Re - mem - ber Spring

**mf* *poco f*
 had coun - ter - changed the land, with pro - fus - ion of tears un -

(29)

* 2/3 of the choir should be divided between the upper two and lower two parts (to m. 34).

(equal parts)

33 *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

earthed the un - seen. Spring.
Re - mem - ber
Re - mem - ber

earthed the un - seen. Spring.

33

Detailed description: This musical score is for a voice and piano piece. It consists of two systems. The first system has four staves: two vocal staves (Soprano and Alto) and two piano staves (Right and Left Hand). The vocal parts have lyrics: 'earthed the un - seen. Spring.' and 'Re - mem - ber'. The piano accompaniment features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand. Dynamics include piano (*p*), forte (*f*), and piano (*p*). The second system has two staves for the piano accompaniment, continuing the triplet pattern. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

