

ON WINGS OF SONG: EXPLORING THE FIRST-GENERATION CHINESE ART SONG

COMPOSER ELLINOR VALESBY (1894–1969)

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The dissertation presents a female German composer Ellinor Valesby, who composed Chinese art songs in Chinese with classical Chinese poetry. For political reasons, she used her pseudonym rather than her given name Irmgard Heinrich (1894-1969). As a western composer, also the wife of a Chinese poet and composer Ching-chu, who lived in China for 25 years, Valesby's songs present various interpretive challenges stemming from the combination of traditional Chinese poetry, folk music vernacular, and Western music components. Because no documentation in English can be found about Valesby or her songs, there is a need to provide performers with a better understanding of her perspective in these increasingly multicultural times. In addition, the dissertation discusses the germination and development of the Chinese Art Song and introduces the school song, the predecessor of Chinese art songs. The focus is on examining the Chinese and Western influences that appear in Valesby's art songs, revealing through examination of text setting, form, musical texture, and the role of piano how this female Western composer who did not speak Chinese set Chinese poetry from her unique cross-cultural perspectives. Today the legacy of these Chinese art song pioneers remains incomplete, but Valesby and her husband Ching-chu's profound contribution to both Chinese art songs and Chinese musicology remains indisputable.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The origin of the Chinese Art Song (CAS) is said to be the year 1920 when Ching-chu, the pseudonym of Shangguo Liao (1893–1959), composed “大江东去” (*The River Flows Eastwards*).<sup>1</sup> However, the contributions of Ellinor Valesby (1894–1969), Ching-chu’s wife, a Western female composer, to Chinese art songs has not yet received significant scholarly attention. While it is interesting to speculate as to why this is the case, despite her compositional gift and abilities, we may assume that because of her gender she may have generally been considered only in the shadow of her husband. The fact is that the shadows were more than just husbands: more precisely, they reflected the male-dominated society. For example, because of her gender, Barbara Strozzi (1619–1677) was refused entry to Venetian opera, much alone a job at St. Mark's, when she tried to bring her music out into the traditionally male-dominated public sphere, because of her gender. Fanny Hensel also was denied the professional and international opportunities given to her brother, Felix Mendelssohn. As musicologist Nancy Reich states, Schumann had mixed feelings about Clara’s compositional talent. Even though Schumann supported his wife, he also said Clara’s “main occupation is as a mother and I believe she is happy in the circumstances and would not want them changed.”<sup>2</sup> The mindset of the time they lived in was patriarchal, and so generally speaking being a wife came before being a creator in that society. Regarding Valesby’s contribution, Youmei Xiao<sup>3</sup> was effusive in his views of

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<sup>1</sup> Changyong Liao and Hartmut Höll, ed., *Three Wishes from A Rose—16 Selected Chinese Art Songs* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 2021), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Nancy B. Reich, *Clara Schumann—The Artist and the Woman* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 215.

<sup>3</sup> Youmei Xiao (1884–1940) was a Chinese composer and educator. He studied in Germany from 1912 to 1919. In 1919, he received his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Leipzig for his dissertation “Eine geschichtliche Untersuchung über das chinesische Orchester bis zum 17. Jahrhundert” (A historical study about the Chinese orchestra up to the seventeenth century). He is known as the “Father of modern Chinese music education,”

Valesby: “She composed Chinese art songs that used Western compositional methods with traditional Chinese poetry, opening a new path for our music. Her achievements are unparalleled.”<sup>4</sup>

This is a remarkable story, never told before in English. Because the story is so unusual, as well as essential for my purpose, a little background information is necessary here.

Shangguo Liao, Valesby’s husband, who, for political reasons, used the pseudonym Ching-chu Li or just Ching-chu, is a well-known figure as a poet, composer, and music aesthetician in the history of modern music in China.<sup>5</sup> At a time when China was facing interior disturbances and foreign aggression, Ching-chu believed that in order to learn about the military, it was necessary to study in Germany, which had acquired a worldwide reputation as a military power when it won the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>6</sup> He arrived in Berlin, the capital of Germany, in 1912, when he was 19 years old, to study at the School of Law. Immediately, he was magnetically attracted to German literature, poetry, and music and became smitten by a young German woman, Irmgard Heinrich (Valesby’s birth name).<sup>7</sup>

Valesby’s total compositional output is comprised of almost 20 Chinese art songs,

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as cited in Hai Sun, “萧友梅留德史料新探” [A New Study of the History of Youmei Xiao’s Stay in Germany],” *音乐研究* [Music Research] 1 (2007): 18–32.

<sup>4</sup> Maochun Liang, “乐艺新声谱古诗” [New musical sounds for classical Chinese Poetry], *音乐探索* [Music Exploration] 1 (January 2014): 59.

<sup>5</sup> There are several English versions of Ching-chu’s name. The standard Mandarin pinyin would be Qingzhu. But since he used Ching-chu on the title page of *Music Infinity*, I have adopted that in this dissertation. All other versions of his name that appear here stem from other authors.

<sup>6</sup> The biographical information in this proposal is taken from Naixiong Liao, *忆青主——诗人作曲家的一生* [Memoirs of the Poet and Composer Ching-chu] (Beijing: 中央音乐学院 [Central Conservatory of Music Press], 2008), 13.

<sup>7</sup> Chong Liao, *Der deutsche Chinese—Das Wechselvolle Leben des Komponisten Qing Zhu* (Augsburg: Wißner, 2009), 20.

although reportedly she did not know a word of the language.<sup>8</sup> She communicated with her husband in German. Most of Valesby's works were discovered only by a small minority of scholars at the beginning of the twentieth century in China. A CD compilation of both Valesby and Ching-chu's works was recorded in Taiwan in 2001 by coloratura soprano Ming-Lu Chen and pianist Shuyuan Chen. The CD features 26 of their Chinese art songs, of which 17 are by Ching-chu and 9 by Valesby.

Selected works the two composers composed individually between 1921 and 1931 were compiled into a joint song collection, *Music Infinity*.<sup>9</sup> The collection contains eighteen Chinese art songs, half of which were written by Valesby. The collection includes nine art songs by Valesby with words in both Mandarin Chinese and English.

In order to mix her advanced compositional technique with profound Chinese poems and convey the “wings of song,”<sup>10</sup> she employs descriptive musical writing and characteristic themes. Valesby's songs present various interpretive challenges stemming from the combination of traditional Chinese poetry, folk music vernacular, and Western music components. Because no documentation in English can be found about Valesby or her songs, there is a need to provide performers with a better understanding of her perspective in these increasingly multicultural times. While unfolding this fascinating story, the dissertation briefly discusses the germination and development of the Chinese Art Song and introduces the school song, the predecessor of CAS. The focus is on examining the Chinese and Western influences that appear in Valesby's art songs, revealing through examination of text setting, form, and musical texture how this female

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<sup>8</sup> Naixiong Liao, *Memoirs*, 51.

<sup>9</sup> Ellinor Valesby and Qing-chu, 音境 [Music Infinity] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1931).

<sup>10</sup> The “On Wings of Song” (*Auf Flügeln des Gesanges*) of the title of the dissertation is a song by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy from 1834. I chose this title because the poem expresses the desire to take the lover to a new place through music. The phrase depicts how Valesby bridged the gap between Germany and China with her songs.

Western composer who did not speak Chinese set Chinese poetry from her unique cross-cultural perspective.

## CHAPTER 2

### A FEMALE COMPOSER FROM THE WEST

#### 2.1 Biographical Sketch of Ellinor Valesby

Many researchers have explored Ching-chu's life, but as mentioned above, there are no significant writings in English about Ching-chu's first wife, Ellinor Valesby, and her works.

Table 2.1 gives an overview of Valesby's life and experience.

**Table 2.1: Background and Experience**

Time	Residence	Education	Occupation
1894–1921	Berlin, Germany	Self-learning & Berlin Conservatory	No information found
1921–1926	1921 Married Ching-chu Potsdam, Germany	No information found	No information found
1926–1951	1926 moved to China 1932 divorced	No information found	Piano & Voice Professor at Shanghai Conservatory 1929–35
1951–1969	Buenos Aires, Argentina	No information found	Freelance Voice Teacher

Chong Liao<sup>11</sup> wrote about Valesby in the biography of her grandfather, Ching-chu. According to Chong Liao, Valesby's birth name was actually Irmgard Heinrich, nicknamed Irmi.<sup>12</sup> Valesby developed musically early in life, despite having no musical background from her family.. She played a Beethoven sonata for her guests when she was twelve, drawing the attention of the Royal Prussian Orchestra conductor Adolf Steinmann. He volunteered to teach her piano, violin, theory, and vocal lessons. She was later trained at the Berlin Conservatory (now Universität der Künste Berlin) In addition to her studies at the Berlin Conservatory, Steinmann provided her with opportunities for involvement in the dress rehearsals of the opera

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<sup>11</sup> Chong Liao (born 1955) is the daughter of Naixiong Liao and granddaughter of Ching-chu. She was a piano teacher at the University of Augsburg in Germany since 1992. She is now retired.

<sup>12</sup> Chong Liao, *Der Deutsche Chinese*, 23–24.



performances, prompting her to choose voice as her main subject. She finally devoted herself entirely to lieder by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Wolf rather than opera.



**Figure 2.1: Photograph of Ellinor Valesby (1894-1969)<sup>13</sup>**

While at the Berlin Conservatory, she was hired as a violin teacher for Ching-chu and also taught him German.<sup>14</sup> Ching-chu said: “She was the pearl in the deep sea.”<sup>15</sup> Although there are few historical records about Valesby, there is a description of when Ching-chu first met her:

She was so beautiful! She had dark brown hair, blue eyes, and a little snub nose expressing her will. She was wearing a beautiful blouse with a matching skirt. I cannot remember if she wore make-up, but she was wearing high-heeled shoes: I had a good look at those. She played the violin well, although singing was her major. She showed me how to pick up a violin. After just a few notes, she was amazed at my undiscovered talent and my spontaneous musicality. Nevertheless, she refused my intention to play the Beethoven Violin Concerto. She said, “You must first have a solid foundation—technically and musically. The door of paradise will one day open to you. But you have to have patience and practice, practice, practice!”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> All photos are reproduced by permission of Professor Naixiong Liao, son of Ching-chu.

<sup>14</sup> Chong Liao, *Der Deutsche Chinese*, 20–21.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>16</sup> “Sie war wunderschön! Sie hatte dunkelbraunes Haar, blaue Augen, die kleine Stupsnase drückte ihren Willen aus. Sie hatte eine schöne Bluse an, dazu einen passenden Rock. Ich weiß nicht mehr, ob sie sich geschminkt hatte, aber ein Paar Schuhe mit hohem Absatz hatte sie an, darauf hatte ich einen Blick geworfen. Sie spielte gut Geige,

Valesby's parents were wealthy and associated with the Royal Imperial Porcelain Manufactory in Germany. They were educated and influential, and they moved into prestigious circles. A Chinese son-in-law was unwelcome, perhaps harmful to the family business. Valesby, on the other hand, had a strong will. She refused her inheritance, despite the threat of never seeing her family again. She married this young Chinese man and acquired his surname, Liao, a courageous step.<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 2.2: Family photo; from left to right, Ching-chu, Fushu Liao, Valesby; Yuki Liao in the middle; photograph taken at 6 Grouchy Road (now Yanqing Road), Shanghai, ca. 1930.**

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obwohl Gesang ihr Hauptfach war. Sie zeigte mir, wie man eine Geige in die Hand nimmt. Schon nach einigen Tönen wunderte sie sich über meine unentdeckte Begabung und meine spontane Musikalität. Sie lehnte trotzdem meine Absicht ab, das Violinkonzert von Beethoven zu spielen. ‘Sie müssen erst eine solide Grundlage besitzen — technisch und musikalisch. Die Tür des Paradieses wird sich Ihnen eines Tages öffnen. Aber Geduld muss man haben und üben, üben, üben!’” Quoted in Chong Liao, *Der Deutsche Chinese*, 20. My translation.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 51–52.

After the couple married in 1921, Ching-chu went back to China alone the next year, and Valesby joined him there in 1926 with their daughter, Yuki.<sup>18</sup> But the lives of the family were complicated by politics. The 1920s and 1930s were the periods of rule by the Northern Warlords and the Nanjing Nationalist Government in China. Ching-chu opposed the inhumane massacre of communists by the right-wing of the Kuomintang led by Chiang Kai-shek. Therefore, Kuomintang naturally sought to kill him. He went into exile in Hong Kong and later Macao. When he returned to mainland China, Shangguo Liao and Irmgard Heinrich took on the assumed names Ching-chu (sometimes Ching-chu Li) and Ellinor Valesby, respectively, in order to protect themselves.

Valesby also composed Chinese songs, although reportedly she did not speak Chinese. Although Valesby did not achieve the same reputation as Ching-chu, in China or abroad, they both were members of the first generation of advocates for Chinese Art Songs. In order to learn from the advanced technologies from the West, the Qing government sent many students abroad. Other musicians of the same period, who went abroad were referred to as “first-generation musicians,” such as Guangqi Wang<sup>19</sup> and Youmei Xiao. Later, Xiao hired Ching-chu as the editor-in-chief of the journal *Music Arts* and Valesby as a teacher of piano and voice at Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1939. Valesby became one of the first foreign professors at that conservatory.

In addition, the couple founded the X Bookstore in Shanghai in 1928 to sell their compositions. They also acted as publishers for many masterpieces from the Classical and

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<sup>18</sup> Yuki Liao 廖玉玑 (1922–2014) was the violin soloist at the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra. She got married and changed her name to Lenore Kovacs, then emigrated to Argentina in 1950.

<sup>19</sup> Guangqi Wang (1892–1936) was a modern Chinese social activist and musician. He studied in Germany in 1920–27. He was the first Chinese musicologist to earn a doctorate in Germany and played a significant role in integrating Chinese and Western music theory.

Romantic periods by composers such as Schubert and Schumann, with Chinese lyrics carefully translated and underlaid by Ching-chu in addition to the original texts.<sup>20</sup> X Bookstore also published literature and books on painting. The couple translated and published Heinrich Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo*. Ching-chu remarked that Heine's poems were simple and powerful, with sincere and strong emotions, and these characteristics were closest to his own character and style. Therefore, he used Heine's poems the most, both in his later teaching of German and in his translations;<sup>21</sup> in painting, the couple printed reproductions of works by Pablo Picasso and Marc Chagall, which were scarcely accepted in China in the 1930s.<sup>22</sup>

Their joint creative work was terminated, however, when they divorced in 1932. After leaving her job at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1936, Valesby still worked as a private piano and voice teacher in China. She left China in 1951 and went on to settle in Argentina with her daughter Yuki and her son-in-law. According to Yuki's letter to Professor Liang, "Valesby, in her late years, served as a renowned voice teacher in Mendoza, and she was always preparing her students' performances."<sup>23</sup>

## 2.2 Cross-Cultural Influence in the Music of Valesby and Ching-chu

Valesby was able to compose Chinese songs of high artistic value and with refined text setting, achievements inseparable from the help she received from her husband. The couple shared the same vision of music and all the arts.<sup>24</sup> *Talking to Music* and *The General Theory of*

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<sup>20</sup> Naixiong Liao, *Memoirs*, 56–57.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>22</sup> Chongxiang Liao and Xudong Huang, ed., *廖辅叔的乐艺人生* [The musical life of Fushu Liao] (Beijing: 中央音乐学院出版社 [Central Music Conservatory Press], 2008), 42.

<sup>23</sup> Liang, "New Musical Sounds for Classical Chinese Poetry," 71.

<sup>24</sup> Naixiong Liao, *Memoir*, 68.

*Music* are two publications by Ching-chu on musical aesthetics. *Talking to Music* was published in 1930 by The Commercial Press and written in the form of a diary of a conversation between Ching-chu and his deceased wife Ah-Qiu, presenting Ching-chu's main idea that music is “the language of the soul.”<sup>25</sup> Both books systematically discuss the essence of music, the relationship between music and real life, and the functions of music. These two works contain his criticism and reflection on Chinese music history and the relationship between Chinese and Western music. They represent his overall understanding of musical art. He also had his own unique ideas about piano performance. Music “starts from our souls, passes through fingers, and reaches the souls of others.”<sup>26</sup> In addition, he affirmed in 1930 in the journal *Music Arts*, “I have a life of Art and the art of living because of you [music and poetry].”<sup>27</sup> Throughout their musical journey, clearly, Valesby had a thorough comprehension of ancient Chinese poetry and philosophy as a result of Ching-chu’s instruction<sup>28</sup>; conversely, Ching-chu’s compositions were influenced by Valesby.

Valesby liked to sing the melodies of songs by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, and Wolf when she taught Ching-chu to play the violin. The way Valesby instructed students was confirmed later by her daughter, Yuki:

My mother is not a violinist, but she accompanies those etudes that beginners find boring on the piano by singing the theme as a song, which raised my interest. We practiced sonatas by Mozart and Beethoven together after I came home from school.... She taught me until I could play Mozart’s Violin Concerto in A major with the Shanghai Municipal Orchestra and Band, with me as the soloist, when I was 17 years old.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ching-chu, *General Theory of Music*, chapter 10, 59.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Naixiong Liao, *Memoir*, 63.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>29</sup> Maochun Liang, “华丽丝的中国诗词艺术歌曲” [Chinese art song by Ellinor Valesby with classical Chinese Poetry], *歌唱世界* [Art of Singing] 1 (2015): 30.

Valesby was a musician, but her cultural training was not limited to music. Ching-chu also introduced Valesby to the poems of the Tang and Song dynasties, Lao Tse's philosophy, and the worldview of Taoism. Under his guidance, Valesby was also knowledgeable about Chinese literature. According to a recollection by Ching-chu's younger brother Fushu Liao, Valesby was acquainted with a number of Chinese poets, including Yuanming Tao (365–427), Bai Li (701–762), Fu Du (712–770), Juyi Bai (772–846), Xiu Ouyang (1007–1072), and Dongpo Su (1097–1101). She translated poems of the Tang Dynasty (618–907) for publication in German magazines, based on translations by Ching-chu and Fushu. When Qichao Liang<sup>30</sup> visited Germany, Valesby sang a song she composed based on Bai Li's setting of the poem *The Tune of Qing Ping* at a welcome party for him by international students. When she talked about Europeans' understanding of Eastern literature, Fushu was taken aback by her ability to use the writer Lafcadio Hearn<sup>31</sup> as an example of a Westerner with a fine understanding of it. In Fushu's opinion, "her cultural and artistic cultivation as a musician was remarkable."<sup>32</sup>

It is curious how a German, who reportedly did not know any Chinese, developed a strong interest in classical Chinese poetry,<sup>33</sup> doubtless through the influence of her husband and brother-in-law Fushu Liao,<sup>34</sup> and composed Chinese art songs. Fushu Liao also learned German from her. In *The Musical Life of Fushu Liao*, Fushu translated Chinese poems, stories, and Chinese classical literature in which Valesby was interested into German and gave them to

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<sup>30</sup> Qichao Liang (1873–1929) was a Chinese politician, journalist, social and political activist, and thinker. His ideas had a profound impact on the political transformation of modern China.

<sup>31</sup> Patrick Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904), also known as Koizumi Yakumo, was a Greek–Japanese writer, translator, and educator who popularized the culture and literature of Japan in the West.

<sup>32</sup> Liao and Huang, ed., *Musical life of Fushu Liao*, 31.

<sup>33</sup> Liao, *Der deutsche Chinese*, 21–29.

<sup>34</sup> Fushu Liao (1907–2002), a Chinese musicologist, poet, and translator.

Valesby to correct. This all added to her Chinese cultururation. Fushu also recalls, “Not only did I learn German with Valesby, but I also spoke with my niece, Yuki, whenever I had the chance.”<sup>35</sup>

As Fushu Liao states, after Ching-chu and Valesby divorced in 1932, Valesby continued to support Fushu in piano and German.<sup>36</sup> Valesby recited Goethe’s poem “Erlkönig” strictly in rhyme and expression, which was “the first time I directly enjoyed the recitation of poetry,”<sup>37</sup> Fushu said. Valesby gave a detailed introduction to the accent and rhythms of German, which made Fushu interested in the German language. With her guidance, Fushu became one of the most excellent Chinese musicologists and linguists. This three-way relationship is reminiscent of Robert Schumann, his wife Clara, and Johannes Brahms.

Valesby profoundly analyzed Chinese people’s understanding of the ideals of pentatonicism and Western harmonic systems in a presentation published in Shanghai, China, in 1936.<sup>38</sup>

### 2.3 Limitations and Contribution

Valesby was a significant source of inspiration to her husband. In addition to his books and other writing, Ching-chu composed 32 musical works, including 4 opera arias co-composed with Valesby, during their 11 years of marriage. According to the communication from Professor Maochun Liang and Yuki, Valesby started composition after she taught at the Shanghai Conservatory in 1929. After they divorced, Valesby did not write any more songs. Therefore, they worked together on Chinese poetry for a relatively short time, just over two years between

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<sup>35</sup> Liao and Huang, ed., *Musical life of Fushu Liao*, 31-45.

<sup>36</sup> Liang, “New musical sounds for classical Chinese Poetry,” 70.

<sup>37</sup> Liao and Huang, ed., *Musical life of Fushu Liao*, 44–45.

<sup>38</sup> Ellinor Valesby-Heinrich, “Über chinesische Poesie und Musik und die Möglichkeit ihrer Verschmelzung mit der abendländischen Klangwelt,” *Nachrichten aus der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens*, no. 42 (Shanghai, 1936): 17–20.

1929 and 1931.<sup>39</sup> Today, people can see how she ingeniously combined Western compositional style with Chinese poetry. Maochun Liang praised her as “a person who made significant contributions to Chinese music and Liao’s family.”<sup>40</sup>

Compared with lieder and other art song repertoires, CAS is a relatively young genre. Despite the increased attention it has received in recent years, CAS still lacks intensive research, systematic review, and dissemination. As stated above, the aim of this dissertation is to examine the influence of cultural integration on the formation and creation of CAS by exploring the compositional style of Valesby’s art songs, by focusing on her nine songs in *Music Infinity*, written in Chinese and English, to ascertain compelling components such as music mode, tonality (including pentatonic), structure, range, text setting, text painting, melodic contour, rhythm, and Chinese folk music elements.

Today the legacy of these Chinese art song pioneers remains incomplete, because many of their compositions, poems, and letters were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. But Valesby and Ching-chu’s profound contribution to both art songs and Chinese musicology remains indisputable. I was fortunate to contact Naixiong Liao,<sup>41</sup> Ching-chu’s only son, and receive some primary research material from him. I am deeply touched by the incredible journey of Ching-chu and Valesby and feel strongly inspired to introduce their great works of CAS to the musical world.

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<sup>39</sup> Maochun Liang, “New musical sounds for classical Chinese Poetry,” 62.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>41</sup> Naixiong Liao (b. 1933) is a Chinese music theorist and educator, formerly the director of the Institute of Music of the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and currently a visiting professor at the Central Conservatory of Music. He settled in Canada in 1989.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE BACKGROUND OF CHINESE ART SONGS

#### 3.1 The Emergence of Chinese Art Songs

Just as the maturity of the German Lied cannot be separated from the changes in the political and social environment,<sup>42</sup> the emergence of CAS came about because of the social and political climate, the transformation of the language, and international exchange.

In 1840, China was defeated in the Sino-Japanese War. After that, a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society began. The national crisis, the decline of the national fortune, and the cultural dilemma forced Chinese intellectuals and patriots to turn their vision of “salvation” from the field of traditional culture to the West. It was a time of turmoil from internal strife and foreign aggression. If they did not want to abandon their country to despair, Chinese people had to produce a solution. In the Opium War in 1840, the Anglo-French War in 1856, the Sino-French War in 1885, the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, and the so-called Battle of the Eight-Power Allied Forces in 1900, China was defeated on every occasion. At this time, however, the Asian country that was completely different from China’s sluggish social situation was Japan. The reforms of Japan’s Meiji Restoration led to the country’s rapid rise to one of the world’s military powers. The Chinese reformists, represented by Youwei Kang<sup>43</sup> and Qichao Liang, spoke of abolishing the imperial examinations and opening new schools. Qichao Liang strongly advocated the establishment of “music lessons” in the new-style schools. Liang wrote in 1898: “If you are committed to education, singing is an indispensable subject in school.”<sup>44</sup> In response, the Qing

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<sup>42</sup> Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2006), 40.

<sup>43</sup> Youwei Kang (1858–1927) was a politician, thinker, educator, and reformer in China.

<sup>44</sup> Qichao Liang, *饮冰室诗话* [Anthology of Qichao Liang] (Beijing: People’s Literature Publishing House, 1982), 97.

Government implemented the New Policies of the Late Qing Dynasty in the first decade of the twentieth century, gradually abolished the imperial examination, and dispatched many people to Japan and Europe to investigate the military, education, music, etc.<sup>45</sup>

The maturity and prosperity of the social and political situation set the stage for the creation of the school music song.<sup>46</sup> The school song is the predecessor of CAS, which may be said to resemble the *volkstümliches Lied*<sup>47</sup> in Germany, in the way it emerged from the social and political situation. Through the transmission of school songs and education, Western music theory and compositional technique began to spread systematically and on a large scale in China. During the first twenty years of the twentieth century, the school song described the social unrest as like rising winds and surging clouds, becoming a new influence on musical expression. According to the musicologist Jingwei Zhang, more than 1,300 songs have survived that were written specifically for schools (not including duplicate publications).<sup>48</sup> Among them, the most popular song, “Farewell,” was written by Shutong Li<sup>49</sup> in Chinese in 1915, based on the melody of the song “Dreaming of Home and Mother” by American musician John Pond Ordway (1824–1880). Shutong Li just set Chinese lyrics to the tune. School songs also nurtured the first generation of Chinese musicians to expand, produce, and improve school music instruction and contributed significantly to the eventual development of contemporary Chinese music. The May Fourth Movement started to emerge around this time.

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<sup>45</sup> Tingfu Jiang, *中国近代史* [Modern history of China] (江苏人民出版社 [Jiangsu People's Press], 2017).

<sup>46</sup> School music songs are songs written in the late Qing Dynasty and early Republican period for the music or singing classes of new-style schools. The majority of the tunes come from Japan, the United States, and Europe, although a handful employs Chinese folk songs and newly composed music, filling in the words in Chinese.

<sup>47</sup> *Volkstümliches Lied*, German for “folk-like song.”

<sup>48</sup> Jingwei Zhang, “近代中国音乐思潮” [Modern Chinese musical trends of thought], *音乐研究* [Music Research] 4 (1985): 80.

<sup>49</sup> Shutong Li (1880–1942) was a Chinese musician, calligrapher, poet, and Buddhist monk.

What was particularly outrageous was that in 1915, when the Japanese proposed the “21 Articles” to China. Japan wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to seize the German rights and interests in Shandong, China, to expand its power in China and even dominate the country. All these were the primary reasons for the outbreak of the May Fourth Movement. The immediate trigger for the outbreak was the opening of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. At the conference, the Chinese people could not tolerate Japan’s sequence of demands, such as land cession and reparations. Therefore, a massive movement spread across the whole country.

The indirect result of the May Fourth Movement was an unprecedented cultural awakening. During and after the May Fourth period, various cultural activities arose. The Movement opposed feudal ethics, advocated coeducational education, and wanted women to break away from the shackles of the family. A series of concepts such as equality between men and women, and rights to vote and be elected for women were also born. People gradually realized the significance of democracy and science. There was also considerable development in language, namely the transition from classical Chinese to vernacular usage. The consciousness of people and the accompanying language revolution created an impressive musical atmosphere of preparation. Therefore, the Chinese vernacular song developed into an art form at the beginning of the twentieth century. The musical ideas implied by the lyrics of the poetic setting are embodied in the piano and the singing, both interrelated and independent.

### 3.2 First-Generation Chinese Art Song Composers

Chinese musicians were inspired by the process of studying abroad and wanted to promote the progress of Chinese society. Therefore, following the turbulent social and musical revolutions that occurred in early twentieth-century China, Chinese musicians moved to Europe and America for college education, as the Japanese obtained their advanced education from the

West. While there are no records available for those artists whom the Ching Dynasty sent abroad to Japan for students, Table 3.1, based on articles by musicologists Han and Gong,<sup>50</sup> lists the first generation of twentieth-century Chinese composers who studied in the USA or Germany and later returned to China.

**Table 3.1: Selected Chinese Musicians Who Studied in America and Europe**

Chinese Name/ English Name	Years Studied Abroad	Country Abbreviation and Name of College or University	Achievements
Shaoying Xie/ Ruby Sia (1884–1955)	1900–04 1908–10	USA, Cornell College, Goucher College, Columbia University	No information found
Qinglian Yan/ Julia Yen (1882–1966)	1901–04	USA, Stuart Hall	No information found
Xiuzhen Lu/ Sieu Tsung Lok (N/A)	1906–11	USA, Randolph–Macon Woman’s College	The first Chinese to successfully publish a collection of songs in English
Fengzhu Shi/ Vong-tsu Sze (N/A)	1907–10	USA, The Juilliard School	The teacher of Huangzi; the first Chinese who studied at The Juilliard School
Yuzhen Li/ Nyui-Tsung Lee (1890–1966)	1908–11	USA, LaGrange College	Published “Nursery Rhymes”; one of the first Chinese to introduce a collection of Western songs.
Fengzhu Sun/ Vong-Tsung Sung (1893–N/A)	1910–14	USA, Athens State University, George Peabody College	No information found
Zhuosheng Wu/ Yoeh Ngoo Wu (1888–1966)	1910–15 1918–20	USA, LaGrange College, Columbia University	No information found

*(table continues)*

<sup>50</sup> Kuo-Huang Han, “20 世纪初的留美音乐家” [Musicians who studied in the USA at the beginning of the twentieth century]. 自西徂东(第二集) [From West to East II] (Taipei, China Times Publishing Company, 1985), 42; Hongyu Gong, “清华学校首批庚款留美女学人中的音乐人” [The female musicians who studied in the USA supported by Boxer Indemnities], 音乐艺术 [The Art of Music] 1 (2021): 66–79.

Chinese Name/ English Name	Years Studied Abroad	Country Abbreviation and Name of College or University	Achievements
Yuanren Zhao/ Yuen Ren Chao (1892–1982)	1910–19	USA, Cornell University, Harvard University	A Chinese-American linguist, educator, scholar, poet, and composer
Shang Guo Liao or Ching-chu/ Schang Kuo Liao (1893–1959)	1912–20	GER, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin	Composer and Poet
Ruixian Wang/ Zoen-Yien Wong (1893–1971)	1914–19 1922–23	USA, Wellesley College, Boston Conservatory	Professor at four universities; pioneer composer of children’s songs
Ailing Tang/ E-ling Tong (1894–1980)	1914–19	USA, Bradford Academy, Wellesley College	Piano teacher Later immigrated to USA in 1960s
Yuying Yang/ Lucy Yuoh Yung Yang (N/A)	1914–19	USA, Vassar College	Piano teacher in a middle school
Shu-An Zhou/ Siok-An Chiu (1894–1974)	1914–20, 1927–28 USA 1920–21 France	USA, Radcliffe Institute, New England, Connell University The Peabody Institute France, lived in Strasbourg for two months	The first person to bring <i>bel canto</i> to China. The first professional vocal educator, female choral conductor, and female composer
Youmei Xiao (1884– 1940)	1912–20	GER, Hochschule für Musik und Theater, Universität Leipzig, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin	Music Educator and Composer

Many musicians studied abroad at that time, such as composer Zi Huang, who went to the USA, and the violinist and composer Sicong Ma, who went to France. According to an article by Zhang, the expression “modern Chinese musical trends of thought refers to the historical period from the Opium War to the May Fourth Movement” (1840–1920).<sup>51</sup> The present dissertation addresses only selected musicians who had returned to China by 1920.

<sup>51</sup> Zhang, “Modern Chinese musical trends of thought,” 77.

With changes in social structure, ideas, language, and the unremitting efforts of the first-generation musicians, CAS then enters the world of the original composition. Now we return to the beginnings and how our Western female composer wrote Chinese art songs and contributed to the genre.

## CHAPTER 4

### UNCOVERING VALESBY'S APPROACH TO SETTING CHINESE POETRY

#### 4.1 Poetic Choice

After a discussion of the general training Valesby received and the cultural atmosphere in which she lived, this chapter focuses on a discussion of her nine songs in *Music Infinity*. Her love for Chinese poetry comes from her husband Ching-chu.

Valesby's art songs encompass a wide range of topics, in which the only constant is her choice of Chinese poetry. Valesby's variety of choice and comprehension of Chinese poetry were inspired by her husband. Naixiong states in *Memoirs*, "the main achievements of my father's [Ching-chu's] life, first of all, are his poetry, songwriting, and musical aesthetics publications.... his poetry was composed continuously from his early childhood until his death."<sup>52</sup> This chapter discusses Valesby's style in relation to poetic setting and translation, mode and tonality, word choices, musical texture, and fusion elements. The research also deals with her concept of composition based on a lecture she gave in Shanghai in 1936.

First, Valesby advocated writing Chinese songs like a Chinese native. In other words, jumping out of the grid of being German and thinking in a Chinese manner. Second, she stood for being free of the rhythmic restrictions of Chinese poetry. Last, she recommended creating Chinese tunes by combining the pentatonic mode and polyphony.<sup>53</sup>

As Valesby herself stated, she stepped into a different position when she set Chinese poems to music. Ching-chu reported that she picked up Chinese sounds purely intuitively to use them in the songs. As for the musical elements, Valesby observed: "There have also been

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<sup>52</sup> Naixiong Liao, *Memoirs*, 4.

<sup>53</sup> Valesby, "Über chinesische Poesie und Musik." 17–20.

settings of Chinese poems by German composers.... but all these compositions ... lack the basic element of Chinese music.... they simply form what the Westerner imagines the East to be musically.”<sup>54</sup> Living in China, she could get to know true Chinese music intimately. Regarding the second point, in other words, the composer should focus on depicting the poem’s mood. In Valesby’s view, with poetry at its heart, the innovation of the Chinese pentatonic mode is a collaborative and participative process, seeking to address the overall effect rather than its separate parts. Valesby explained that every country’s music has a unique character. Chinese music can also have its personality through fusion with the Western sound world.<sup>55</sup> In her compositions, she put these compositional concepts into practice, as the next section explores.

## 4.2 Approaches to Composing Chinese Art Songs

### 4.2.1 Overview of the Nine Songs by Valesby from the Collection *Music Infinity*

In the *Music Infinity* collection, Valesby spans four major themes (see Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1: Valesby’s Songs from *Music Infinity* and Their Themes**

Themes	Songs
Love and longing	“To My Joy Is This Very Night”
	“Sharp Knives Bingzhou Did Yield”
Landscape and nature	“The Peach-lined Path,”
	“West Lake,”
	“Thoughts in a Tranquil Night”
Melancholy and despair	“Touring North Pond Today”
	“Outside of the Curtain Is the Rain’s Pattering Trill”
Fate and destiny	“A Fine Dish of Beans”
	“Farewell to Yi River”

<sup>54</sup> “Natürlich wurden auch Nachdichtungen chinesischer Gedichte vertont, so von deutschen Komponisten.... Aber all diese Kompositionen ... sind ja durchaus keine Nachahmung chinesischer Musik, wollen es letzten Endes auch nicht sein, da ihnen das Grundlegende der chinesischen Musik fehlt, nämlich das Homophone.... Sie bilden einfach das, was sich der Abendländer musikalisch unter dem Fernen Osten vorstellt.” Valesby-Heinrich, “Über chinesische Poesie und Musik,” 17. My translation.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 20.



“To My Joy Is This Very Night” is taken from *White Snow Music*, a collection of folk songs from the middle of the Chinese Qing Dynasty, edited in 1804 and published in 1828. The book has 220,000 characters and 839 folk songs, divided into four volumes,<sup>56</sup> edited by Guangsheng Hua.<sup>57</sup> The collection contains a wide range of lyrics and songs, including narratives, poems, and scenery. Some are based on opera stories, some are beautiful love songs passed down in the streets and alleys, and others describe the four seasons. In terms of language, they are primarily simple and straightforward texts but also leave some traces of literary embellishment; in subject matter, they are primarily about love stories, but there are also songs about historical events or stories from novels and operas, or descriptions of rural scenery. These works generally reflect sympathy for the disadvantaged, the affirmation of desire, and the criticism of power in Qing dynasty society. The texts express the fear of parting at dawn for those who love each other. The texts are so beautiful with shyness. The first half of the song describes a quiet night scene, and the second half raises hopes to leap night.<sup>58</sup> The protagonist looks forward to retaining the moon tonight, expressing his or her desire to spend a longer time with the lover. The lyrics portray people’s expectations of long-lasting love rather than the splendor of a moment. The feelings depicted in the lyrics are natural and innocent, but also honest and firm.

Valesby also set a poem, “Sharp Knives Bingzhou Did Yield,” written by Bangyan Zhou,

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<sup>56</sup> Likun Huang, “明清民歌视域下的社会民俗文化” [Social folk culture in the perspective of Ming and Qing Folk Songs], *文化学刊* [Culture Journal] 2 (2010): 116.

<sup>57</sup> Hua, was a native of Licheng (now in Shandong Province). He lived in the Qianlong and Jiaqing periods of Qing Dynasty, but his life is unknown.

<sup>58</sup> A leap year is a calendar year that includes an extra day to keep the calendar year in sync with the astronomical year or seasonal year. A leap year contains 366 days instead of 365. “Leap night” is a metaphorical way to express the protagonist’s wish for a double night.

a representative lyricist of the The Style of Delicate Restraint<sup>59</sup> of Song Ci.<sup>60</sup> The poet depicts the characters' nuanced interactions through subtle acts and brief discussions. The second part of the poem is more subtle. The woman asks the man, "Where are you going to stay tonight?" She sounds calm but seems to be expectant. Both the horse slipping and frosty weather hint at implicit suggestions to the man to stay. There is a turning point after each attempt. As the woman tries to persuade him, she is also observing the man's expression and reaction. The poet has portrayed the wit and cunning of a woman in this position and environment, as well as the activities of her mind that fit her position and character, all in a realistic way. Professor Shao claims the poem is not a romantic or sad love story, but rather, a reminiscence of an old time. The poet sends his love to the old time, thus adding warming up his memories.<sup>61</sup>

"The Peach-lined Path," "West Lake," and "Thoughts in a Tranquil Night" are songs describing Nature. "The Peach-lined Path" is a Song Ci by Lian Gao,<sup>62</sup> about the natural scenery and the first encounter of two lovers in the peach forest. The poem lies in the lyric way of expressing emotions and has a simple and natural nature. It was written in spring at Willow Ferry, and the poet meets a lady for the first time in the peach forest; he falls in love with her at first sight. Her bright eyes make her hard to forget for the poet. Since they parted, he has been

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<sup>59</sup> The Style of Delicate Restraint is a genre of Song Ci. The contents of the lyrics are mainly feminine and lovesick, the style is pure and soft, and the rhetoric is mainly subtle and vague. The representative lyricists of the style include Liu Yong, Li Qingzhao, and Li Yu. The term was translated by Professor Mingdong Gu at the University of Texas at Dallas, August 2022.

<sup>60</sup> Song Ci is a new style of poetry, a popular Han literary genre in the Song Dynasty, marking the highest achievement of Song literature. Song Ci has both long and short sentences and is generally easy to sing. Song Ci began in the Han Dynasty, was formed in the Tang and Five Dynasties, and flourished in the Song Dynasty (960–1279). During the conflict-filled transitional period of the Five Dynasties, Ci emerged as a significant platform for poetic expression. Yu Li, the final ruler of the Southern Tang, was the finest Ci poet of this time.

<sup>61</sup> Jie Shao, "《少年游·并刀如水》的文化情境与风物时俗" [The cultural context of the youth's travels· "Sharp Knives Bingzhou Did Yield" and conventions], *湖北文理学院学报* [Journal of Hubei University of Arts and Science] 4 (2021): 51.

<sup>62</sup> Lian Gao, was a famous opera writer of the Ming Dynasty.

sad every day with a lovelorn face. By describing the peach blossoms and spring, the poet makes explicit his emotions about the landscape, highlighting his loneliness and lamenting that good scenery does not last long.

“West Lake” is a Song Ci by Xiu Ouyang about West Lake in spring. Xiu Ouyang (1007–1072), was a writer, politician, and historian of the Song Dynasty. He was a well-known author among his contemporaries and is regarded as the principal figure of the Tang and Song Eight Masters. In 1049, Ouyang moved to Yingzhou (now in the southeast of Taihe County, Anhui Province). He lived in Yingzhou after retirement in his later years and wrote ten poems, *The Tune of Collecting Mulberries*. The beautiful scenery of West Lake reflects Ouyang’s leisurely and relaxed mentality after his retirement.

As a Western composer, also the wife of a Chinese man in China, Valesby would have known that Chinese people have always had a special feeling for the moon, which has become typical imagery and an eternal theme in literature, having been internalized as part of the emotions. Therefore, Valesby chose the poem “Thoughts in a Tranquil Night” by Bai Li (701–762), who was a great romantic poet of the Tang Dynasty, known as “The Immortal of Poetry.” Bai Li was a bright and generous man who loved drinking, writing poems, and social activities. This poem is about the homesickness of a distant traveler. The poet uses refined language to carve out the mood of a bright, quiet, and intoxicating autumn night. The verse does not pursue the novelty of imagination or avoid elaborate and flamboyant rhetoric. It expresses rich and deep content with fresh and simple strokes. Chinese literature entered a peak in the Tang Dynasty, namely the representative literature of the Tang Dynasty, 唐诗 (Tang poetry). The Tang Dynasty was a golden age in the history of Chinese poetry, with glorious achievements. This period produced a wide variety of genres and many distinguished poets with different characteristics,

carrying forward the poetic traditions of romanticism and realism. It can be divided into four stages: the early Tang, the flourishing Tang, the middle Tang, and the late Tang. The term “flourishing Tang” refers to the Kaiyuan and Tianbao period when the country was strong and society was stable. Many excellent poets were produced, the most outstanding being the great romantic poet Bai Li. Li’s poem is given fresh impetus through Valesby’s music. The brief poem functions as a strikingly artistic conception: the moon carries the distant radiance to the poet; the poet responds with melancholy nostalgia. Valesby used English for the text instead of Chinese. It is the only song of the nine set in English. The peach flower and moon have rich symbolic meaning in Chinese culture and create a beautiful aesthetic moon.

“Touring North Pond Today” and “Outside of the Curtain Is the Rain’s Pattering Trill” are categorized in the theme of melancholy and despair, in which the former tells how the poet Ouyang was relegated to the county of Chuzhou because of political rivalries in 1045. The text is about a spring tour of the poet and his friends. The first half of the poem speaks about the beautiful spring day in the north pond. The poet is paddling the boat, the water is rippling, the breeze is blowing, and the willows are swaying. However, such a beautiful spring light makes him sad and sorrowful. The poet laments that spring comes and goes, the beautiful time has passed away and his “hair is turning gray.” In this sigh of youth, the poet’s sorrow for the failure of his ideal is implied. The poet’s political disillusionment makes it difficult for him to let go, even in the face of the beautiful spring. The second part is about a banquet. Ouyang invites friends to drink a cup of wine again. He says, “Since traveling can’t make the mood better, let’s drink to drown our sorrows.” Therefore, in the next verse, the poet urges the friend to face the beautiful view and song, fill up the wine cup, and drink freely. The poet was full of enthusiasm but had nowhere to display his ambition for the country. He was suppressed and ostracized by

the government. Therefore, the seemingly bold and liberal words are full of heartache and bitterness, which are heavy and sad to read. Ouyang was still faced with his life of exile, still adhering to his ideals and realities, while brief self-expression through landscape gardening did not allow him to overcome his problems.

“Outside of the Curtain Is the Rain’s Pattering Trill” expresses the poet’s bitterness as a slave of the nation. It is a Song Ci by Yu Li (937–978), the King of the Southern Tang Dynasty during the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms.<sup>63</sup> The poem is clear and natural, sincere and touching, profoundly expressing Li’s pain of losing his country and the sorrow of a prisoner, as well as vividly portraying the artistic image of a fallen king, a kind of lamentation. Song Ci is a treasure in the classical literature of China, a poetic genre prevalent in the Song Dynasty. A common feeling for Chinese people, the traditional literary theme of “grieving over spring” and “mourning for autumn,” is expressed intensely and strongly in Song Ci.

“A Fine Dish of Beans” presents a story about the struggle for royal power between Cao Pi and Cao Zhi. Cao Zhi (192–232), was a native of Qiao County, Pei State (present-day Bozhou, Anhui Province). He was a literary scholar during the Three Kingdoms period (220–280), the fourth son of the statesman Cao Cao (155–220) and the brother of Cao Pi, and crowned king. Because of Zhi’s talent, he was favored by Cao Cao in his early years and was once made heir to the throne. When Cao Pi became emperor, Zhi was jealous and died of depression. Cao Pi could not let go of the experience of fighting to be heir to the throne, and after he became emperor, he still held a grudge against Cao Zhi. He feared that his knowledgeable and politically ambitious brother would threaten his throne and try to kill him. Cao Zhi knew that his brother was intent on killing him, but he could not excuse himself, so he responded to the “A Poem Composed Within

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<sup>63</sup> Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms was a period between the Tang and Song Dynasties.

Seven Steps” in his extreme grief and anger. This poem was first recorded in *A New Account of the Tales of the World*,<sup>64</sup> but only four lines were later circulated. This poem uses the metaphor of beanstalks and beans frying each other as an indictment of Cao Pi’s cruel persecution of him and his brothers. The tone of the poem is metaphorical and deep, with reminders and advice in the midst of sarcasm. On the one hand, it reflects Cao Zhi’s intelligence and wisdom; on the other hand, it reflects Cao Pi’s cruelty in persecuting his siblings. The beauty of this poem lies in the clever metaphor and the clear meaning. The beans and bean stalks grow from the same root, just like siblings, but the bean stalks burn up and cook the beans in the pot to turn over and “cry,” which is an apt and touching metaphor for the brothers’ treatment.

The song “Farewell to Yi River” is an exceptional Chinese art song with an impressionist style. Valesby builds C minor mingling with the whole-tone scale and pentatonic modes throughout. The diversity of subject matter and emotion in art-song composers’ selection of poetry has a subtle impact on their songs. From these aspects, it is clear that Valesby has an in-depth knowledge of Chinese culture and applies it skillfully.

#### 4.2.2 Concept of Mood-Based Priority

Valesby advocated “poetry-based” songs in her presentation, giving priority to the atmosphere of the poetry, although the rhythm and words were still considered.

##### 4.2.2.1 Poem

The Tune of Waves Washing Sand<sup>65</sup>—Outside of the Curtain Is the Rain’s Pattering Trill  
by Yu Li (Southern Tang Dynasty)

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<sup>64</sup> *A New Account of the Tales of the World* is a representative work of the notebook-style novels from the Six Dynasties period (a major period in Chinese history between the Han and Sui Dynasties, 220–589), mainly containing the words and anecdotes of celebrities from the Eastern Han to the Eastern Jin Dynasties.

<sup>65</sup> The name of a type of Song Ci.

Outside of the curtain is the rain's pattering trill, with spring to go,  
The silk quilt can't keep out dawn's chill.  
I'm a guest, in the dream I do not know,  
There's joy at will.

I stand alone by the rail from the pen, my land to mind,  
Easy to part with 'n' hard to see again.  
Old times like the gone spring are left behind;  
We won't meet then.<sup>66</sup>

### 帘外雨潺潺

南唐 李煜

帘外雨潺潺，春意阑珊。

罗衾不耐五更寒。

梦里不知身是客，一晌贪欢。

独自莫凭栏，无限江山。

别时容易见时难。

流水落花春去也，天上人间。

#### 4.2.2.2 Text Setting

It is a poignant, heartfelt, and moving poem that profoundly expresses the pain of the fallen kingdom and the sorrow of a prisoner, and vividly portraying the artistic image of a fallen king. As Li Yu's late poem reflects his critical feelings during his imprisonment after the fall of his kingdom, they are true to the depth of his emotions. It creates a unique artistic charm that shakes the people's hearts as it speaks of his extreme inner pain.

Ching-chu praised the song as "a formal art song with the most artistic value" in the introduction to *Music Infinity*. Valesby's music envelops the disillusioned fate and feeling of trembling in a bright tune but also arouses deep sadness. She opens the song with a polyphonic progression in the piano part in a slow tempo. In mm. 1–6 (see Ex. 4.1), using flashbacks, the

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<sup>66</sup> Professor Hong Huo, private translation, July 2022.

poet writes first about waking and then dreaming. In the beginning, it is said that in the chilly night of the dream, the thin silk quilt cannot stop the morning cold. Outside the curtain is the incessant spring rain, the lonely and scattered remnants of spring, and raindrops tapping on the windows; this situation makes the poet feel more miserable. Valesby sets the mood as a priority to use the melody of the right hand's little finger in the high voice to resemble the sound of dripping rain, with the hidden eighth notes below appearing as central duplets or triplets throughout the first part. This accompaniment pattern shows the captive life of the poet, who sits trapped in a city of sorrow and misery. The key of D minor matches the dreamy mood of the poem. In 1739, Johann Mattheson wrote that “D minor contains something humble, calm ... not particularly jumping but rather flowing.”<sup>67</sup> The polyphonic progression is similar to Hugo Wolf’s “Verborgenheit” from *Mörike Lieder* (see Ex. 4.2).

**Example 4.1: Ellinor Valesby, “Outside of the Curtain Is the Rain’s Pattering Trill”,<sup>68</sup> mm. 1–3.<sup>69</sup>**

1 *Lento* *p* 華麗絲作曲

Polyphonic Progression 簾外雨潺潺，春意  
Outside the curtain comes the sound of the rippling rain, with spring fading;

*Sempre legato* *p* Tritone

D minor

<sup>67</sup> Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg, 1739), 60–68; trans. Hendrik Schulze (private translation).

<sup>68</sup> Ellinor Valesby and Qing-chu, 音境 [Music Infinity] (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1931); all musical examples are reproduced by permission of Professor Naixiong Liao, son of Ching-chu.

<sup>69</sup> All of Valesby’s songs were composed in 1929–1931, but no specific dates of composition for individual works are available.



**Example 4.2: Hugo Wolf, “Verborgenheit,” Mörike Lieder, No. 12, mm. 1–3**

Mässig und sehr innig

Lass, o Welt, o  
Tempt me not, o

*p* *pp*

The poet recalls his past “in dreams” in mm. 7–12 (see Ex. 4.3). In his sleep, he seems to forget that he is a prisoner and appears to be in the gorgeous palace of his homeland, craving a moment of pleasure. But when the poet wakes up, his heart is overflowing with bitterness. The spring scene is a metaphor for his emotions. The piano part flows as a backdrop to the text, moving from D minor to E major, which acts as a secondary dominant of A major in m. 10, then goes to Db major in m. 13.

**Example 4.3: Valesby, “Outside of the Curtain Is the Rain’s Pattering Trill,” mm. 7–12**

7 *dim.*

夢 In my dream, 裏不知身是客, can I forget that I am a guest

*dim.*

A major: ii *V*

10 *più mosso*

一瞬貪歡獨自莫 and can I enjoy a momentary joy. When you are alone. do 1

*cresc.* *più mosso*

I (29) C#=Db Db major: I

What draws attention is that Valesby is also aware of the rhyme of traditional Chinese poems. She understands which word should be highlighted and placed on the downbeat, sustained note, or higher register. Words that need to be emphasized are placed on the strong beat; conversely, texts without accents are placed on the weak beat. An example of a literal translation is “which is easy to part with, but hard to see again” in mm. 17–20 (see Ex. 4.4). In contrast, Valesby sustains “easy” and “hard” on four beats with different notes. The descending melodic line from B $\flat$  to A $\flat$  in m. 18 conveys the sense of loss and matches the Chinese fourth tone of “易” (easy), *yì*. The mark of *cresc.* in m. 18 and ascending Eb to E in m. 20 also portrays the emotion of despair and captures the rising tone of “难” (hard), *nán*.

Example 4.4: Valesby, “Outside of the Curtain Is the Rain’s Pattering Trill,” mm. 14–20

The musical score for Example 4.4 consists of two systems of staves. The first system (mm. 14-17) shows a vocal line with Chinese lyrics: 凭欄，無限江山，別時容. Below the lyrics is the English translation: lean on the railings and look far away, this infinite land is no longer my country. Which is easy to part with. The piano accompaniment features a trill in the right hand and a steady bass line. The key signature is Db major.

The second system (mm. 18-20) continues the vocal line with Chinese lyrics: 易見時難. The English translation is: but hard to see again. The piano accompaniment includes a descending melodic line from B $\flat$  to A $\flat$  in m. 18, marked with *cresc.* and *rit.*. Annotations in blue highlight these features: "Descending" with a blue arrow pointing to the B $\flat$ -A $\flat$  line, "Ascending" with a blue arrow pointing to the Eb-E line in m. 20, and "Suppose to bar 20 on F. Make the music more chromaticized" pointing to the piano accompaniment in m. 20. Other annotations include "Db = C#" and "G# = Ab". The score ends with the instruction *tempo primo* and a dynamic marking *p*.

Valesby explains, “The poet, looking over the rail not only fails to rejoice but gets a sad memory. This is from a state of extreme excitement.... returning to the beginning of the scene (the chilly night of the dream) where there is no comfort.”<sup>70</sup> The song closely combines scene and harmony, with a high degree of artistic integration.

The last verse goes back to D minor in m. 21 with constant eighth notes. The music sets a darker mood: the desire for a moment of pleasure for those who will die soon. A long sigh voiced implies the spirit of the song’s beginning, which echoes the end (see Ex. 4.5). While the text has “passing river and the withered red flowers,” the melody goes down F–E–D–C#. In contrast, Valesby indicates the register of the vocal line from D5 to D4 to seize the picture of “heaven” and “earth.”

**Example 4.5: Valesby, “Outside of the Curtain Is the Rain’s Pattering Trill,” mm. 21–28**

The musical score for Example 4.5 consists of two systems of vocal and piano parts. The first system (measures 21-24) is marked *tempo primo* and *p*. The vocal line begins with a long note on D5, which then descends chromatically to C#4. This descent is annotated with blue arrows and the word "chromaticized". The lyrics are "流水落花春去" (Old times are like the passing river and the withered red flowers, leaving with spring). The piano accompaniment features a constant eighth-note pattern in the left hand. The second system (measures 24-28) is marked *molto rit.*. The vocal line continues with a long note on D4, annotated with blue arrows and "v 3". The lyrics are "也, 天上人間!" (One is heaven and one is earth.). The piano accompaniment continues with the eighth-note pattern, which becomes more sparse and expressive in the final measures.

<sup>70</sup> Yan Li, “对而未决——面对并解析华丽丝、青主于易韦斋的历史公案” [Confront and unresolved—to face and analyze the complicated historical legal case between Ellinor Valesby, Qing-Zhu, and Yi Wei-Zhai], *中国音乐学* [Musicology in China] (2009): 80.

### 4.2.3 Composing Chinese Art Songs by Merging with Western Sounds

Valesby imitates Chinese drums in the lower register on the piano in the song “Sharp Knives Bingzhou Did Yield.” The piano part brings out the placid mood. The only sound that rattles is the gentle plucking of the Chinese zither now and then in the left hand on note D (see Ex. 4.6). The movement repeats this manner in the following verse from “bed curtain” until “it is late” in m. 25. It sounds like a watchman in ancient China who beats a drum coming from far away in the evening. The way she also uses it in the song “To My Joy Is This Very Night.” Just as Ching-chu said, the most noteworthy part of the song is the imitation of drums in the lower register.<sup>71</sup>

**Example 4.6: Valesby, “Sharp Knives Bingzhou Did Yield,” mm. 7–10**



In the song “The Peach-lined Path,” Valesby has designed the three-beat rhythm to convey the poet’s cheerful and joyful mood and the vibrant spring scene. The dance-like rhythm also perfectly paces the Chinese syllables. She also uses the Chinese traditional compositional method “Fish biting its tail” to create melodic contours to move up, move down, or step by step (see Ex. 4.7).

<sup>71</sup> Ching-chu and Ellinor Valesby, *Music Infinity* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1931), Introduction.

Example 4.7: Valesby, “The Peach-lined Path,” mm. 7–10

“Fish biting its tail” is a form of traditional Chinese music structure in which the ending note of the previous slur or melody is the same as the first note of the next melody, creating a dynamic succession. It is a musical composition technique embodied in many of China’s folk songs, such as the Shandong folk song “The Canzonet of Yimeng Mountain” (see Ex. 4.8).

Example 4.8: Shandong Folk Song, “The Canzonet of Yimeng Mountain,” mm. 1–8

The ostinato in the piano introduction of “My Joy Is This Very Night” is formed by G#–C#–F#–E (see Ex. 4.9). The intervals of the perfect fourth and fifth are also one of signature intervals in Chinese folk music. For example, the tune of the folk song in Northern Shanxi Province 《兰花花》 (*Lán Hua-Hua*) keeps intertwining the four tones of A–D–E–G (see Ex. 4.10).

Example 4.9: Valesby, “To My Joy Is This Very Night,” mm. 1–3

1 Allegro moderato 華麗絲作曲



Example 4.10: Chinese Northern Shanxi Province 《兰》 (Lan Hua-Hua), mm. 12–16

赞美地



青 线 线 那 个 蓝 线 线 儿， 蓝 格 英 英 的 彩，  
五 谷 里 那 个 田 苗 子 儿， 惟 有 高 梁 高，

In addition, 琵琶 (*pípá*) is a plucked traditional Chinese *instrument*, the four open strings of which are tuned to A–D–E–G. The sonority of the perfect fourth interval showcases the qualities of pentatonic modulation effectively. The sound effect is airy, often used to portray light, distant places, or to characterize specific traditional Chinese instruments. The character continues throughout the song.

In Chinese folk music, the strongest beat in each measure is called the “Bǎn” and the rest are called the “Yǎn.” When people speak, regardless of the speed of their speech, the natural inflection of the language highlights the stressed and unstressed syllables in various ways.

Valesby understands which Chinese word should be stressed, placing it appropriately on the downbeat or sustained note. In her song “Farewell to Yi River, ” the impressionist use of the whole-tone scale combines with the “Bǎn” and “Yǎn” stress patterns of Chinese folk music to deliver a rich sonority of Peking Opera.

The structure of “Farewell to Yi River” is through-composed. The song has 67 measures, divided into five parts: Prelude + A + Interlude + B + C. Valesby creates a tragic beginning to the plot. Valesby uses C tonality mingled with the whole-tone scale and pentatonic modes. The rhythm of the last thirty-second note A in m. 2 and the dotted half note C in m. 3 are to be played by the performer like a striking pose: *Liàng Xiàng*<sup>72</sup> in Chinese dance is a unique action not found in musical theater, opera, or other performing arts (see Ex. 4.11).

**Example 4.11: Valesby, “The Farewell to Yi River,” mm. 1–7**

The musical score consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system (measures 1-3) is marked *Largo* and *mf* with the instruction *con gran espressione*. The bass line features a whole-tone scale starting on C. A blue bracket under the first system's bass line is labeled "WT0 (Whole tone zero)". The right hand plays a C major triad in measure 3, circled in blue and labeled "C major triad". The second system (measures 4-7) continues the bass line. The right hand plays the C major triad again in measure 5, circled in blue and labeled "C major triad again, adds". A blue bracket under the bass line in the second system is labeled "G as bells of a pagoda".

<sup>72</sup> “Liàng Xiàng”: the lead players in Peking Opera are expected to strike a statue-like attitude before entering or exiting the stage, to demonstrate their spirit.

### 4.3 Piano Accompaniment

Youmei Xiao affirmed that Valesby's music is very much in tune with the essence of the poems of the Song and Yuan Dynasties.<sup>73</sup> These are strong indications that she composed the piano accompaniment for Chinese art songs with great devotion and seriousness.

Valesby advocated that the CAS must have piano accompaniment.<sup>74</sup> She pointed out: "I have always been very fond of Chinese poetry. I can feel the emotions and the picturesque lines of Chinese poetry." Therefore, "If you want to convey the poetic and sensuous qualities of Chinese poems, you have to come up with a special piano accompaniment rather than just compose a singable tune, as in the past."<sup>75</sup>

Ching-chu says about Valesby, "without her, I would not have been able to achieve the kind of compositional achievements, especially in writing piano accompaniment, for which she gave me much help."<sup>76</sup> Naixiong Liao also has mentioned more than once that Ching-chu's compositions required the help of Valesby, especially in the piano accompaniment.<sup>77</sup> As a result, Ching-chu has composed 32 highly artistic Chinese art songs. Among them, "The River Flows Eastwards" and "The End of Yangtze River" are two of them that have become the opening pieces of Chinese art songs and are collected in the classic performance repertoire.

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<sup>73</sup> Liang, "New musical sounds," 64.

<sup>74</sup> Li, "Confront and unresolved," 79.

<sup>75</sup> Liang, "New musical sounds," 64.

<sup>76</sup> Naixiong Liao, *Memoirs*. 197.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 68.



## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION OF VALESBY'S SONGS FROM *MUSIC INFINITY* ORGANIZED BY POETIC THEME

As an illustration of Valesby's compositional methods, her nine songs from *Music Infinity* are discussed below organized by the four general poetic moods found in her songs in the collection. Those moods are: love and longing, landscape and nature, melancholy and despair, fate and destiny.

#### 5.1 Love and Longing

##### 5.1.1 "To My Joy Is This Very Night"

###### 5.1.1.1 Poem

To My Joy Is This Very Night  
Taken from *White Snow Music*,<sup>78</sup> edited by Guangsheng Hua

To my joy is this very night;  
To my fear is to part goodbye.  
After that, when to meet not comes to light;  
I listen and hear the drum sound night to die.  
Shadows west, on th' screen th' moonlight does alight.  
I wish I could hold the moon in the sky;  
Heaven, why set leap month but no leap night?<sup>79</sup>

**喜只喜的今宵夜 选自《白雪遗音》**

喜只喜的今宵夜，怕只怕的明日离别。

离别后，相逢不知那一夜？

听了听，鼓打三更交半夜。

月照纱窗，影儿西斜。

恨不能，双手托住天边月。

怨老天，为何闰月不闰夜？

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<sup>78</sup> *White Snow Music* is a collection of folk songs from the mid-Qing Dynasty of China, edited in 1804 and published in 1828.

<sup>79</sup> Professor Hong Huo, private translation, July 2022.

### 5.1.1.2 Text Setting

The music builds on the key of C-sharp minor, with the introduction having only a left-hand part. The left-hand cascades downward over four notes, G $\sharp$ -F $\sharp$ -E-C $\sharp$  in the lower middle register. The motive occurs throughout the song. The second bar repeats and emphasizes F $\sharp$ -E-C $\sharp$  twice, establishing the mood of a sigh, eventually dropping to C sharp (see Ex. 5.1).

#### Example 5.1: Valesby, “To My Joy Is This Very Night,” mm. 1-3

1 *Allegro moderato* 華麗絲作曲

The vocal part enters in mm. 4-13. The left-hand doubles the melody, alternating with the right hand on the offbeats, like a calm description of the joy of being together tonight (see Ex. 5.2).

#### Example 5.2: Valesby, “To My Joy Is This Very Night,” mm. 4-6

4

喜 只 喜 的 今... 宵... 夜, 怕 只 怕... 的  
I am only happy tonight I am only afraid of

However, the mood drops in a moment as the sound of the drums beating in the late night is heard. Drumming is a night-time timer in ancient China. The night watchman beats a drum in

the evening. It is late in the night, indicating the coming of dawn. Valesby responds with a low C<sub>1</sub># and C<sub>2</sub>#, the bass register of the piano, in mm. 11–13, on the last beat of each measure, like a late-night drum beat on the heart of a lover. Just as Ching-chu said, the most noteworthy part of the song is the imitation of drums in the lower register.<sup>80</sup> In addition, she also creates minor-second intervals D#–E and G#–A between both hands to carry the anxious and conflicted feelings. Once again, the tiny motive F#–E–C# occurs in m. 13 (see Ex. 5.3).

**Example 5.3: Valesby, “To My Joy Is This Very Night,” mm. 10–13**

10

那 -- -- 夜? 聽了聽, 鼓打三更交--半夜,  
 When I can meet you again. Listen, the drum sound comes to mean the entering of tomorrow

rit. a tempo

After repeating the motive F#–E–C# in mm. 14–15, the music moves into softness in E major at m. 16 (see Ex. 5.4). Valesby changes the texture from alternating the hands to a smooth rhythmic progression.

**Example 5.4: Valesby, “To My Joy Is This Very Night,” mm. 14–16**

14

月 照  
 Outside the moon shines on,

rit. p a tempo

<sup>80</sup> Ching-chu and Valesby Heinrich, *Music Infinity*, Introduction.

The dynamic suddenly shifts from *f* in m. 20 to only *p* in mm. 21–22, as if the protagonist is humbly begging God to hold the moon for more time (see Ex. 5.5).

**Example 5.5: Valesby, “To My Joy Is This Very Night,” mm. 17–23**

17 *f*  
 紗窗，影兒西斜。恨不能  
 the screen window, with its shadow slanting to the west. I am vexed at not being able

21 *p* *rit.*  
 雙手--托--住--天--邊--月。怨老天，  
 to using my hands to prevent the moon from moving. I also blame heaven,

Ching-chu writes in the introduction of *Music Infinity*, “This is a song of sorrow and joy, and its charm is expressed in the last line,” that is, “Heaven, why set leap month but no leap night?” He continues, “This song contains many Chinese tunes, but some special harmonies created the accompaniment.” For the special harmonies, Valesby used the secondary dominant V4–3/V in m. 23, V/V in m. 24, and V at m. 25 to reach the tonic (see Ex. 5.6). This is the only place in the song where Valesby uses Western harmony.

Valesby and Ching-chu lived when the Qing Dynasty was coming to an end, and the Republic of China was dawning. Qing Dynasty folk songs are the records and inheritance of history, like a mirror reflecting many aspects of social life. Their importance is not only in reflecting history, but more importantly, it is closely related to our present life. Her love of folk

songs might be the reason Valesby selected to compose art songs. Folk songs depict a beautiful picture of folk culture, from clothing, food, housing, marriage, and funerals to daily rituals and folk beliefs, full of rich social folklore and customs. *To My Joy Is This Very Night* not only has significant literary value, such as the expectations of men and women for love, but can also be rare historical material for studying social life.

Example 5.6: Valesby, “To My Joy Is This Very Night,” mm. 24–26

24

爲何 -- 閏 --- 月 -- 不 -- 閏 -- 夜?  
why set leap month but no leap night?

ritard. ---

a tempo

27

5.1.2 “Sharp Knives Bingzhou Did Yield”

5.1.2.1 Poem

The Tune of *Youth’s Travels*, Sharp Knives Bingzhou Did Yield  
by Bangyan Zhou (Song Dynasty)

Sharp knives Bingzhou did yield;  
Wu’s salt has th’ snow-white hue;  
Th’ new orange slim hands peeled.  
In th’ bed curtain warmth just grew;  
Out th’ Beast, th’ smoke speeled;  
Across the flute sit the two.

A low voice says, where tonight are you bound?  
The night has deepened so;  
The horse’d slip on th’ frosty ground;  
Better not go;  
In the street few are found.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Professor Hong Huo, private translation, July 2022.

### 《少年游·并刀如水》

宋 周邦彦

并刀如水，吴盐胜雪，纤手破新橙。  
锦幄初温，兽香不断，相对坐调笙。  
低声问：向谁行宿？城上已三更。  
马滑霜浓，不如休去，只是少人行！

#### 5.1.2.2 Text Setting

Bangyan Zhou (1056–1121 or 1058–1123), was a scholar and musician of the Song Dynasty, one of the representative lyricists of “The Style of Delicate Restraint” of Song Ci. He writes about the subtle psychological state of his subject in a subtle way, and even this woman’s unique tone is portrayed subtly, with the impression that she wants to be seen. It shows that ancient Chinese poetry is excellent at imitating people’s characteristics. “Sharp knives,” “snow-white salt,” and “slim hands” are evocative close-ups. What appears in front of the audience are just two simple props, a knife from Bingzhou and salt from Wu. Still, the woman’s subtle psychology of deliberately pleasing the man is already perceived by the audience. The bed curtains grow warm, and the incense burner carved with animal heads gently raises smoke. Only two people sit opposite to play the flute. The poet uses a mere three verses to indicate this relationship to the audience.

Valesby marks the *Lento* and *dolce* with the dynamic *pp* at the beginning of the song. She uses a D-minor triad and retains the right hand for as much as five measures. While remaining in this situation, she allows the vocal part to flow over the accompaniment. The D melodic minor scale depicts the atmosphere in mm. 1–5: a peaceful, gentle, and ambiguous snowing night (see Ex. 5.7).

Ching-chu comments that the song “is not from Chinese music, but it has a strong

Oriental flavor.”<sup>82</sup> In the last verse, the woman directs “Better not go” to the man. However, we do not know how the man answered. Therefore, the music by Valesby does not return to the home key. The open ending, questions without answers, is also a unique case among these nine songs (see Ex. 5.8).

Example 5.7: Valesby, “Sharp Knives Bingzhou Did Yield,” mm. 1–6

1 Lento dolce 華麗絲作曲  
井刀如水，----- 吳鹽勝雪，-----  
The knives made in Bingzhou were very sharp, the salt manufactured in Wu area were as white as snow,  
Sempre pp  
5 riten. pp  
纖手破新橙。---  
the slim hands of the beauty  
peeled off the fresh orange.  
molo tranquillo

Example 5.8: Valesby, “Sharp Knives Bingzhou Did Yield,” mm. 30–38

30 a tempo  
馬滑霜濃，----- 不如休去，-----  
The horse will slip on the frost ground, do not go away.  
a tempo  
34 rit.  
直是少人---行。-----  
and there are few people outside.  
rit. ppp

<sup>82</sup> Ching-chu and Valesby Heinrich, *Music Infinity*, Introduction.

## 5.2 Landscape and Nature

### 5.2.1 “Thoughts in A Tranquil Night”

#### 5.2.1.1 Poem

Thoughts in A Tranquil Night<sup>83</sup>  
by Bai Li (Tang Dynasty)

Athwart the bed I watch the moonbeams cast a trail,  
So bright, so cold, so frail.  
That for a space it gleams  
Like hoarfrost on the margin of my dreams.

I raise my head,  
The splendid moon I see.  
Then droop my head,  
And sink to dreams of thee—  
My fatherland, of thee!<sup>84</sup>

床前明月光  
唐 李白  
床前明月光，  
疑似地上霜。  
举头望明月，  
低头思故乡。

#### 5.2.1.2 Text Setting

Unlike *The Farewell to Yi River*, this is a peaceful, nostalgic tune. The music starts in G minor with arpeggio groups in a very quiet dynamic. The music flows slowly, just like a person far away from home who feels the emotion of homesickness. The mood inevitably ripples through his heart, not to mention the frosty moonlight of autumn night.

The music starts in G minor. Valesby creates a cool tone with a series of arpeggiated passing tones at the beginning (see Ex. 5.9). When the texts describe the moonlight as “so

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<sup>83</sup> Ching-chu and Valesby Heinrich, *Music Infinity*, 31–33.

<sup>84</sup> Translation from *Music Infinity*, anonymous.



bright,” she employs arpeggios of an F-minor chord and retains three beats; when mentioning the “cold” moonlight, her music does not stop but lets the music continue gently to the word “fragile” in m. 7 (see Ex. 5.10)

**Example 5.9: Valesby, “Thought in A Tranquil Night,” mm. 1–2**

Molto tranquillo

華麗絲作曲

*p*

Ath-wart --- the

*pp*

**Example 5.10: Valesby, “Thought in A Tranquil Night,” mm. 5–8**

5

trail, So --- bright, --- so cold, so

7

frail. That for a space it

9

When the music “gleams” in the poet’s dream, Valesby shifts the signature from 4/4 to 3/4 in an interlude for the piano only (see Ex. 5.11). It is evidence of her understanding of the

poem's text. With the change of tempo, the music seems to travel at a slower pace through the dreamy world, which matches the mood of the poem and eventually goes to B flat major.

**Example 5.11: Valesby, "Thought in A Tranquil Night," mm. 9–13**

9  
gleams Like hoar-frost on the margin of my  
11  
dreams. -----  
14

The first two stanzas depict nature, while the last two verses reflect the mood. After the interlude, the tempo returns to 4/4 (see Ex. 5.12). The texture of the music transforms from slow arpeggiated clusters to a succession of chords.

**Example 5.12: Valesby, "Thoughts in A Tranquil Night," mm. 14–16**

14  
Sempre tranquillo  
pp  
16

Ching-chu also specifically mentioned that the B flat in m. 19 (see Ex. 5.13) with the word "moon" in the high register should be sung "very softly to express the emotion of looking up at the moon."<sup>85</sup> After six measures, mm. 15–20, with successive chords, Valesby uses three chords to take the key back to B-flat major: D minor, F-sharp major, and B-flat major.

<sup>85</sup> Ching-chu and Valesby Heinrich, *Music Infinity*, Introduction.

Example 5.13: Valesby, “Thoughts in A Tranquil Night,” mm. 17–20

17  
I raise my head, — The — splen did moon I see.  
cresc.

The third verse is the turning point of the poem: “I raised my head, the splendid moon I see”; therefore, progress is made in the consecutive major triads, which represent the tension of the song. When the music returns to the fourth verse, “Then droop my head, and sink to dreams of thee my fatherland,” the key suddenly changes from major to B-flat minor (see Ex. 5.14). The major to minor is so heartrending. The gentle, delicate, and melancholy tune at the end is used to express the feeling of looking down and thinking of home.

Example 5.14: Valesby, “Thoughts in A Tranquil Night,” mm. 21–27

21  
8va  
e accel.  
f  
8va  
24  
Then -- droop my head, And sink to dreams of thee — My  
ritard. e dim.  
p  
cresc.

Ching-chu wrote: “This song places a high demand on the singer, both in terms of technique and expression. The song’s accompaniment describes the forlorn look of someone who is tired of wandering under the moonlit night and cannot fall asleep, so it must be sung in a very soft and delicate silver-like color.”<sup>86</sup> Valesby exploits crisp tone, deep emotion, symmetry of rhythm, and graceful texture to create an aesthetic mood of stillness and beauty, which triggers empathy for travelers in a faraway land. In addition, such tension is eventually released in the last six measures through D–F–Bb (see Ex .5.15). Valesby’s music used temp painting to enhance the meaning of the verses.

Example 5.15: Valesby, “Thoughts in A Tranquil Night,” mm. 28–32

This is another piece of evidence that Valesby is entirely concerned with the poem’s rhyme scheme. It can be proved by her brother-in-law. Valesby used to teach Fushu German by reciting it first, paying attention to the rhythm and expression.<sup>87</sup> Valesby had an in-depth knowledge of classical Chinese literature. Fushu mentioned he used to write Chinese folk tales in German and took them to Valesby for editing. Once when she was revising Fushu’s writing in

<sup>86</sup> Ching-chu and Valesby Heinrich, *Music Infinity*, Introduction.

<sup>87</sup> Liao and Huang, ed., *Musical life of Fushu Liao*, 44.

German, she said the novel *The Tale of Li Wa*<sup>88</sup> should be adapted into an opera and that it would certainly appeal to a broad audience., but *The Romance of the Western Bower*<sup>89</sup> was far less dramatic.<sup>90</sup>

## 5.2.2 “The Peach-lined Path”

### 5.2.2.1 Poem

To the Tune of Pity on Lovers’ Parting—The Peach-lined Path  
by Lian Gao (Ming Dynasty)

The peach-lined path,  
The willow ferry,  
Startled at the two, sometimes I turned back.  
Both my eyes black,  
My face looks blue.  
I will smile to rejoice,  
To lose my voice,  
So low,  
So low.

He’s gone away,  
While love does stay.  
Sickness of love is brought about by spring.  
My pillow’s lone,  
Th’ quilt’s thinly sewn.  
It’s hard to shrug off woe,  
Now ill I go.  
You see.  
You see.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *The Tale of Li Wa* is a legend (novel) written by Xingjian Bai, a writer of the Tang Dynasty. The novel tells the story of a courtesan, Li Wa, and a young scholar, Zheng-sheng, who go through trials and tribulations and finally come to a successful union. The story is similar to that of *La Traviata* by Verdi, except that it has a happy ending. The novel expresses the author’s sympathy for and praise of the character of the woman who advocates excellence, with strong idealistic overtones.

<sup>89</sup> A masterwork of Chinese literature and classical theatre by Shifu Wang in the Yuan Dynasty. The love story between two young people, Yingying Cui, the former prime minister’s 19-year-old daughter, and a young scholar, serves as the play’s central premise. There are twenty scenes and five acts in the drama.

<sup>90</sup> Liao and Huang, ed., *Musical life of Fushu Liao*, 45.

<sup>91</sup> Professor Hong Huo, private translation, July 2022.

桃花路

明朝 高濂

桃花路，杨柳渡，一见魂惊几回顾。

眼青青，脸盈盈，口边欲笑，齿上吞声，轻，轻。

人去也，情难舍，无限芳心春引惹。

枕儿单，被儿寒，愁难摆脱，病害今番，看，看。

Lian Gao, was a famous opera writer of the Ming Dynasty. The Peach-lined Path is a Song Ci, describing the natural scenery and the first encounter of the lovers in the peach forest, when two persons fell in love with each other at first sight. The essence of the poem lies in its lyrical way of expressing emotions and its simple and natural nature. It was written in spring at the willow ferry. The lover's bright eyes are hard for the poet to forget. Since the lovers parted, the protagonist has been sad every day with a lovelorn face. The poet implies a hazy beauty. By describing the peach blossoms and spring, the poet highlights his loneliness and laments that good scenery does not last long.

#### 5.2.2.2 Text Setting

As described above in Chapter 4, Valesby also uses “Fish biting its tail” to create melodic contours to move up, move down, or jump (see Ex. 5.16). Combined with the statement by Mattheson that the tone of A minor “is rather moderate ... and sweet beyond measure,”<sup>92</sup> we can see how skillfully Valesby draws together the different threads of the poem and the composition.

Up to m. 19, the music remains in the key of A minor. Valesby takes the G sharp in mm. 17–18 to function as a pivot pitch of C minor and eventually modulates to that key in m. 19 (see Ex. 5.17).

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<sup>92</sup> Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg, 1739), 60–68; trans. Hendrik Schulze (private translation).

Example 5.16: Valesby, “The Peach-lined Path,” mm. 1–10

華麗絲作曲

Moderato

1

挑--花--路,-----  
Peach blossoms flourished in the path

揚--柳--渡,-----  
The ferry was covered by willows.

一見魂--驚--幾--回--顧。-----  
She kept turning back to see him

7

Example 5.17: Valesby, “The Peach-lined Path,” mm. 15–19

15

臉--盈--盈,-----  
and a smiling face,

口邊欲--笑,--齒上吞--聲,--輕  
then laughed softly and silently with teeth shown, softly,

pp

In the interlude par, mm.21–28, Valesby makes full use of frequent tempo changes to respond to the poet’s shifting moods. She puts *tenuto* in mm. 21–22, immediately changes to *più vivo* in m. 23, then returns to *tenuto* in m. 28. The interlude shows the poet’s mood changing from calm, to excited, to slightly sad, step by step (see Ex. 5.18).

After the interlude, the music returns to the key of A minor. Valesby uses a diminished chord to make the words “lone” and “thin” prominent in mm. 45–46. To “give the ending a

greater sense of finality,”<sup>93</sup> as a type of resolution, she produces a major triad (Picardy chord) by elevating the third of the minor triad in the last measure (see Ex. 5.19).

**Example 5.18: Valesby, “The Peach-lined Path,” mm. 20–29**

20  
輕, softly.  
mf ten.  
più vivo  
25  
p  
mf  
ten.  
He is gone  
30

**Example 5.19: Valesby, “The Peach-lined Path,” mm. 53–58**

53  
pp  
啊, 看, 看.  
ah, look, look.  
(24)

<sup>93</sup> Grove Music Online, s.v. “Tierce de Picardie,” by Julian Rushton; <https://doi-org.libproxy.library.unt.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.27946>; accessed August 26, 2022.



### 5.2.3 West Lake

#### 5.2.3.1 Poem

To the Tune of Collecting Mulberries  
No. 1 Boat and Oar on West Lake—A Fine Scene  
by Xiu Ouyang (Song Dynasty)

Boat 'nd oar on West Lake---a fine scene,  
The waves wind, green.  
Grassy banks long,  
Off and on all around me comes a song.

Windless, the surface as smooth as glass shows,  
Th' boat rarely goes.  
Ripples expand,  
Startling water birds to rise from the sand.

采桑子（一）•轻舟短棹西湖好

宋朝 欧阳修

轻舟短棹西湖好，绿水逶迤。芳草长堤，隐隐笙歌处处随。  
无风水面琉璃滑，不觉船移。微动涟漪，惊起沙禽掠岸飞。

To the Tune of Collecting Mulberries  
No. 10 All My Long Life in Love of the West Lake

All my long life in love of the West Lake;  
Gov'rnor I make.  
Th' rank's cloud in th' sky;  
Before I know, twenty springs have gone by.  
Just like the Liaodong Crane I come back in,  
Town 'nd folks have been,  
New through and through,  
Th' then governor, anyone still knows you?

采桑子（十）•平生为爱西湖好

平生为爱西湖好，来拥朱轮。富贵浮云，俯仰流年二十春。  
归来恰似辽东鹤，城郭人民。触目皆新，谁识当年旧主人？

#### 5.2.3.2 Text Setting

The two poems are idyllic, fresh, and delightful to read. The simple pairing of boat and

water represents power and elegance; the dynamic and the static combine to create a succession of lyrical notes and images with flowing lines. The color tone of the pair is clear and graceful.

“Boat and Oar on West Lake—A Fine Scene” is the first. The entire words are written in a light and elegant tone, describing the beautiful scenery seen while rafting on the West Lake of Yingzhou, using the “light boat” as the base for observing the scenery. This poem focuses on the scenery of the bank, reflected in the relaxed and elegant tone. “A fine scene on the West Lake” is the core of the poem. While the oars are paddled, the boat floats on the lake slowly and leisurely. The visitors have enough time to enjoy the spring on the shore of both sides of the lake. “Grass” and “long banks” zoom out to the dynamic view of the lake. The phrase “[off and on all around me comes a song]” portrays the joyful mood of West Lake from an aural perspective (see Ex. 5.20).

**Example 5.20: Valesby, “West Lake,” mm. 4–7**

The strophic song is a *barcarolle*<sup>94</sup> in G major, swaying in the time signature 6/8 throughout. “The West Lake—A Fine Scene” is the only duet of *Music Infinity*. The tessitura goes from B<sub>3</sub> to E<sub>5</sub>. Ching-chu reminds singers to sing the song carefully, noticing the tempo,

<sup>94</sup> The term used to describe compositions that mimic the songs sung by Venetian gondoliers as they move their boats through the water. These songs were well-known in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

dynamic, and the direction of music's contour, especially the last phrase.<sup>95</sup> In the score I received from the daughter of Fushu Liao, Professor Chongxiang Liao, the music contains only the first and tenth poems in the lyrics. Ching-chu placed No.2 to No. 9 of the group of poems in the appendix of *Music Infinity*. Valesby sets Ouyang's first to ninth poems of *Collecting Mulberries Tunes* in mm. 1–26 with the same melody, using repeat signs to have the duet sing nine times but with different texts, and the tenth poem, “All My Long Life in Love of the West Lake,” in mm. 27–52 (see Ex. 5.21).

**Example 5.21: Valesby, “West Lake,” mm. 23–26**

The tenth poem, “All My Long Life in Love of the West Lake,” is extended from near to far, static background to dynamic, then to the ripples and shore, presenting the reader with a three-dimensional and dynamic West Lake. The poet takes the movement of the boat and gradually writes down the scenic features of the embankment. The small ripples brought about by the light boat are enough to startle the sand birds, who fly over the shore. Ouyang introduces the environment by combining the static background and dynamic flying birds to express his long-standing ambition of being indifferent to fame and fortune and to love the landscape. The fine scene of West Lake is best interpreted in this poem. The music ends with a slight memory and a relaxed atmosphere.

<sup>95</sup> Ching-chu and Valesby Heinrich, *Music Realm*, Introduction.

### 5.3 Melancholy and Despair

#### 5.3.1 “Outside of the Curtain Is the Rain’s Pattering Trill”

##### 5.3.1.1 Poem

To the Tune of Waves Washing Sand<sup>96</sup>—Outside of the Curtain Is the Rain’s Pattering Trill  
by Yu Li (Southern Tang Dynasty)

Outside of the curtain is the rain’s pattering trill;  
With spring to go,  
The silk quilt can’t keep out dawn’s chill.  
I’m a guest, in the dream I do not know,  
There’s joy at will.

I stand alone by the rail from the pen,  
My land to mind,  
Easy to part with ’n’ hard to see again.  
Old times like the gone spring are left behind;  
We won’t meet then.<sup>97</sup>

**浪淘沙·帘外雨潺潺**  
**南唐 李煜**

帘外雨潺潺，春意阑珊。  
罗衾不耐五更寒。  
梦里不知身是客，一晌贪欢。  
  
独自莫凭栏，无限江山。  
别时容易见时难。  
流水落花春去也，天上人间。

##### 5.3.1.2 Text Setting

The poem “Outside of the Curtain Is the Rain’s Pattering Trill” is a Song Ci by Yu Li (937–978), the King of the Southern Tang Dynasty during the Five Dynasties and Ten

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<sup>96</sup> The name of a type of Song Ci.

<sup>97</sup> Professor Hong Huo, private translation, July 2022.

Kingdoms, a period between the Tang and Song Dynasties. It was written during Yu Li's imprisonment in Bianjing, expressing his grief and intense love for his homeland and the Southern Tang Dynasty capital. The poem is clear and natural, sincere and touching, profoundly expressing Li's pain of losing his country and the sorrow of a prisoner as well as vividly portraying the artistic image of a fallen king, a kind of lament.

As Li Yu's late-period lyrics reflect his critical feelings during his imprisonment after the fall of his kingdom, they are true to "the beginning of his vision and the depth of his emotions." It is a unique artistic charm that shakes the reader's heart as it speaks of his extreme inner pain in the description.

Valesby again uses a modulation scheme typical of the Romantic era to introduce the second part of the poem. The C sharp of m. 12 is enharmonically spelled as D flat at the beginning of the second section in m. 13, which means that the music modulates to its chromatic mediant, D-flat major (see Ex.5.22).

**Example 5.22: Valesby, "Outside of the Curtain Is the Rain's Pattering Trill," mm. 7–13**

The musical score for Example 5.22 consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line starting at measure 10, with lyrics in Chinese and English. The middle staff is the right hand of a piano accompaniment, featuring a trill that begins in measure 12. The bottom staff is the left hand of the piano accompaniment, featuring a continuous eighth-note pattern. The score is annotated with 'C major' above measure 11, 'C#=#Db' and 'Db major: I' below measure 13, and 'più mosso' above measure 13. A circled note in the piano right hand at measure 13 is highlighted. The score also includes a 'cresc.' marking and a measure number '(29)'.

The texture transforms from continuous eighth notes to off beats alternating between left and right hands. It changes the scene from "that heaven" to "this earth" with a corresponding change in texture (see Ex. 5.23). In addition, harmonically, Valesby uses the diminished-seventh

chord in D major to cadential 6–4 and then to V5–3, leaving the music unresolved and the listeners waiting for more.

**Example 5.23: Valesby, “Outside of the Curtain Is the Rain’s Pattering Trill,” mm. 13–19**

14  
凭 欄， 無 限 江 山， 別 時 容  
lean on the railings and look far away, this infinite land is no longer my country. Which is easy to part with.

18  
易 見 時 難  
but hard to see again.

21n *tempo primo*  
p

Annotations: Db major, i°7, V<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>, Descending, Ascending, Db=C#, G#=Ab, V<sub>3</sub><sup>5</sup>, Unresolved combines with the texts to D minor, Suppose to bar 20 on F. Make the music more chromaticized.

The song closely combines scene and harmony, with a high degree of artistic integration.

5.3.2 “Touring North Pond Today”

5.3.2.1 Poem

Waves Washing Sand - Touring North Pond Today  
by Ouyang Xiu (Song Dynasty)

We tour North Pond today.  
Mid waves boats flow.  
The ripples shimmer, and soft wickers grow.  
Like this, spring again does come and then go.  
One’s hair turn gray.

At th' singing girl 'nd her voice,  
Let's drink up.  
My dear friend, fill and refill your gold cup.  
Though mid blooms we have too many a sup,  
It's to rejoice.<sup>98</sup>

浪淘沙·今日北池游  
宋 欧阳修

今日北池游。漾漾轻舟。波光潋滟柳条柔。  
如此春来春又去，白了人头。  
好妓好歌喉，不醉难休。劝君满满酌金瓯。  
纵使花时常病酒，也是风流。

Ouyang was exiled to Chuzhou (now Anhui Province) because of political rivalries in March 1045. The text is about a spring outing and picnic of the poet and friends. The first half of the poem speaks of the beautiful spring day in the north pond. The boat is paddling by, the water is rippling, the waves are brimming, the breeze is blowing, and the willows are swaying. However, such a beautiful spring light makes him sad and sorrowful. The poet laments that spring comes and goes, the beautiful time has passed away and his “hair turns gray.” In this sigh of youth, the lyricist’s sorrow for the failure of his ideals is implied. The lyricist’s political disillusionment makes it difficult for him to let go, even in the face of the beautiful spring.

The second part is about a banquet. Ouyang invites friends to drink a cup of wine again. He says, “since traveling can’t make the mood better, let’s drink to drown our sorrows.” Therefore, in the next stanza, the poet urges the friend to face the beautiful view and song, fill up the wine cup, and drink freely. The poet is full of enthusiasm but has nowhere to display his ambition for the country. He was suppressed and ostracized by the government. Therefore, the

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<sup>98</sup> Professor Hong Huo, private translation, July 2022.

seemingly bold and liberal words are full of heartache and bitterness, which is heavy and sad to read. Even in exile, and despite the therapeutic effect of landscape gardening, Ouyang encounters a conflict between ideals and reality.

### 5.3.2.2 Text Setting

Valesby uses the 6/8 time signature throughout, laying the fundamental mood of the song, giving a slightly lively emotion against the pulse of the water rippling (see Ex. 5.24).

**Example 5.24: Valesby, “Touring North Pond Today,” mm. 1–2**

The first half of the piece follows the key of B flat major, and at the beginning of the interlude in m. 19 the key switches to C major. In the place of “drink up” in m. 30, the music modulates from C major to A flat major, A shift was prevalent during the Romantic era and became even more important in post-Romantic and Impressionistic music (see Ex. 5.25).

**Example 5.25: Valesby, “Touring North Pond Today,” mm. 28–30**



In the last verse in m. 37, the song briefly shifts from A flat major to G flat major. Two measures later, it finally returns to B-flat major (see Ex. 5.26). Valesby uses the B-flat major to reveal “the soul to [do] heavy/difficult things” (Mattheson).<sup>99</sup>

**Example 5.26: Valesby, “Touring North Pond Today,” mm. 37–43**

37  
前 常 病 酒, in the flowers

40  
也 是 風 流, 風 流. that is a different kind of romantic. romantic.

(28)

## 5.4 Fate and Destiny

### 5.4.1 “A Poem Composed Within Seven Steps”

#### 5.4.1.1 Poem

A Poem Composed Within Seven Steps  
by Zhi Cao (Three Kingdoms)

To boil beans beanstalks flame;  
In the wok the beans cry.  
From the same root they came;  
Why so hurry to fry?<sup>100</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, 60–68; trans. Hendrik Schulze (private translation).

<sup>100</sup> Professor Hong Huo, private translation, July 2022.

## 七步诗

三国 曹植

煮豆燃豆箕，豆在釜中泣。

本是同根生，相煎何太急？

### 5.4.1.2 Text Setting

The song, in E-flat major, has only twenty-seven measures. After ten measures, when the music flows to the text of “beans cry” in mm. 11–12, the texture becomes thicker in intensive octaves, tightening the tempo (see Ex. 5.27).

#### Example 5.27: Valesby, “A Poem Composed Within Seven Steps,” mm. 8–13

8  
升, 其 在 釜 下 燃, 豆 在 --- 釜 中  
hot. The bean- stalks, a flame, a fierce heat were be-

12  
泣 --- 其 在 釜 下 燃, 豆 --- 在 釜 中  
get- ting. The beans in the pot were all fu ming and

*cresc.*  
*cresc.*  
*molto cresc. e string.*  
*molto cresc. e string.*  
*accel. ad lib.*

m

When singing about being “born from the same root,” Valesby uses A<sub>5</sub> in the high register, going all the way down to D<sub>4</sub> in m. 18 then climbing to C<sub>5</sub> in m. 19 in vocal line to express Cao Zhi’s anger and grief. The composer also writes *accel. ad lib.* above the voice and a four-beat B-flat triad in the piano part to encourage singers to perform freely (see Ex. 5.28).

Example 5.28: Valesby, “A Poem Composed Within Seven Steps,” mm. 16–18

Valesby understands the essence of the poem. The structure of the song starts with a simple ballad-like beginning, gradually reaching an ardent, dramatic climax, and then ending with an exclamatory plea (see Ex. 5.29) in what Valesby marks as *perdendosi*.

Example 5.29: Valesby, “A Poem Composed Within Seven Steps,” mm. 24–27

In addition to the English lyrics, this song also has texts in Chinese, creating the earliest attempt at bilingual composition in Chinese art songs.

## 5.4.2 “The Farewell of Yi River”

### 5.4.2.1 Poem

The Farewell to Yi River  
 by Ching-chu  
 As dry brown leaves fell from the trees,  
 Cups upon cups of farewell wine

besotted Prince Dan's heart  
 Ke Jing's song snapped Jianli Gao's Zhu<sup>101</sup>  
 while the wind messed up the surge of the river.  
 From the white front of their clothes  
 hung icicles of tears.  
 General Fan's head seemed to  
 jump out of the dead silence.  
 The hero sang out a lament  
 that has lasted for over a thousand years.  
 "The wind roars 'nd chill is Yi River.  
 The warrior leaves 'nd back he won't be."<sup>102</sup>

### 易水的送别 青主

红树纷纷堕泪，  
 源源的别酒  
 灌透太子丹的心花；  
 荆轲唱裂高渐离的筑，  
 风碎了易水的波澜。  
 雪白的衣襟  
 悬满结了冰的泪条，  
 樊将军的头  
 跳出死的沉默。  
 豪侠的好生  
 唱出千秋的悲愤：  
 “风萧萧兮易水寒，  
 壮士一去兮不复还。”

#### 5.4.2.2 Text Setting

“The Farewell of Yi River” is a unique art song. Valesby composed the music and Ching-chu wrote the text. The poetry was first published in *Music Arts*, Vol. 1, No. 1 in April 1930, and the music was first published in the same journal in October that year and subsequently featured in their collection of art songs, *Music Infinity*. This is the only surviving art song written by the

<sup>101</sup> Zhu is an ancient 13-string instrument.

<sup>102</sup> Translated by Hong Huo. From the ancient poem “Song of Yi River” in the Pre-Qin Dynasty.

poet Ching-chu and composer Valesby together. In the introduction to *Music Infinity*, Ching-chu says: “I had composed the poem, but when I saw Valesby’s work, I threw my manuscript [of his setting] into the fireplace.” The heroic spirit of death and immortality depicted in Valesby’s compositions reflects the same complex cultural and philosophical ideas that characterize Chinese civilization through its rich poetic structure, imagery, and language.

The two verses in quotation marks are from the “Song to Yi River,” a Chinese ancient song. In the late Warring States period, in 227 BC, Ke Jing, a native of the Wei Kingdom who had lost his homeland, served Prince Dan in the State of Yan Kingdom. To stop the attack on the Qin Kingdom, Prince Dan asked Ke Jing to assassinate King Yingzheng of Qin. Ke Jing was keen to repay the faith Prince Dan had shown in him; he took the mission to approach the King of Qin with the head of the Qin rebel General Yu-Qi Fan and a map of the Yan governor. Before departing, Prince Dan sent Ke Jing to the bank of the Yi River, where Ke Jing’s friend Jianli Gao struck a chord and sang a short song. The text expresses Ke Jing’s sadness and ambition to assassinate the King of Qin and his determination not to return until the mission was completed.

As Lorraine Gorrell states, “a composer’s affinity for a particular poet reveals a subtle view of that composer’s psyche.”<sup>103</sup> In other words, the personality of a composer’s music is frequently linked to the one’s inspiration from a specific poet. Valesby’s poetic setting to ancient Chinese poetry as her lyrics reflects her perseverance and generosity of character, which can be seen in the help she gave to Fushu after her divorce from Qing-Chu. The diversity of subject matter and emotion in art song composers’ poetry selections has a subtle impact on their songs. Schubert and Wolf are more individual and selected a more emotional range of subject matter

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<sup>103</sup> Lorraine Gorrell, *The Nineteenth-Century German Lied* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1993), 26.

and emotion in their creations. Valesby is more sensual in this regard. Her spiritual world is more in tune with Schubert and Wolf.

“The Farewell to Yi River” is through-composed. The tessitura from A3 to G5 reaches almost two octaves. The song has sixty-seven measures and is divided into five parts: Prelude + A + Interlude + B + C. As we can see in Table 5.1, Valesby used C minor mingled with the whole tone scale and pentatonic modes. As Mattheson says, “C minor is a very lovely but also sad key.”<sup>104</sup> Valesby’s real intention is to choose the song’s tonality based on the text. The falling leaves, tears, shattering *Zhu*, the river surge, and a lament all describe a lamenting emotion and gloomy mood. Schubert also used C minor in *The Maiden’s Lament*, based on a poem by Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805), to portray the darkened sky, smashing storm, flowing tears, and loneliness. Similarly, Valesby chose C minor to draw a more vivid picture of the farewell of “solemnity and dignified earnestness.”<sup>105</sup>

**Table 5.1: Structure of “The Farewell to Yi River”**

	<b>Prelude</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Interlude</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
Measures	1–11	12–21	22–27	28–38	39–67
Mode & Tonality	Whole tone & Pentatonic	Pentatonic & C minor	Whole tone	Whole tone & Pentatonic	Pentatonic & C minor
Tempo	Largo	Andante Maestoso	Allegro con fuoco	Allegro con fuoco	Maestoso e passionate

There are only two unique whole-tone scales: WT<sub>0</sub> and WT<sub>1</sub>. In the prelude, the piano’s left-hand plays a diatonic melody in the lower register in Ex. 5.28, mm. 1–3 as C–B<sub>b</sub>–A<sub>b</sub>–G<sub>b</sub>–A<sub>b</sub>–B<sub>b</sub>–A<sub>b</sub>–C in WT<sub>0</sub>. Valesby emphasizes the emotion with great expression, as she indicates

<sup>104</sup> Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Kapellmeister*, 60–68, trans. Schulze.

<sup>105</sup> Maho A. Ishiguro, “The Affective Properties of Keys in Instrumental Music from the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries” (master’s thesis, University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2014).

*Con gran espressione* in the first measure (see Ex. 5.30). In conjunction with the open and vast atmosphere of the left hand, the right-hand plays a C-major triad in m. 3 at the dynamic *pp*. At the beginning of the song, Valesby shows the particular artistic conception produced by combining the whole-tone scale and the pentatonic tones. After this lasts three and a half beats across mm. 2–3, the diatonic scale appears for the second scale, and the right hand strikes the C-major triad again; the difference is that this time the major triad has been slightly changed, adding a lower octave G, and it sounds that the more full-bodied bells of a pagoda are coming from far away in mm. 4–6.

**Example 5.30: Valesby, “The Farewell to Yi River,” mm. 1–6**

The musical score for Example 5.30 consists of two systems of three staves each. The first system covers measures 1-3, and the second system covers measures 4-6. The tempo is marked 'Largo'. In measure 1, the right hand has a whole rest, and the left hand begins a descending scale starting on G4. In measure 2, the right hand has a whole rest, and the left hand continues the scale. In measure 3, the right hand plays a C-major triad (C4, E4, G4) marked *pp*, while the left hand continues the scale. In measure 4, the right hand plays a C-major triad with an added lower octave G (C3, G3, C4, E4, G4) marked *pp*, and the left hand continues the scale. In measure 5, the right hand has a whole rest, and the left hand continues the scale. In measure 6, the right hand has a whole rest, and the left hand continues the scale. The instruction *con gran espressione* is written above the left hand in measure 2.

Valesby uses WT<sub>1</sub> in m. 9, reflected later in m. 24. After two consecutive descending whole-tone scales, the left-hand part of the piano changes its descending mode. The ascent progresses to C and then descends back to G; the chord added in the right hand is no longer a major triad. Still, a G augmented triad, G–B–D#, is the early preparation for the modal mixture later in m. 24. So far, the prelude has set up the development of the next section (see Ex. 5.31).

Example 5.31: Valesby, “The Farewell to Yi River,” mm. 8–11

Musical score for Example 5.31, measures 8–11. The score consists of three staves: a vocal line (top), a piano right-hand part (middle), and a piano left-hand part (bottom). The piano part begins with a *pp* dynamic marking and includes a *rit.* marking towards the end of the section. The vocal line is mostly silent in these measures.

At section A, the tempo shifts from *Largo* to *Andante maestoso*, and the piano introduces the lyrics in the dynamic *f*. The first two lines of text are entirely in the pentatonic mode (see Ex. 5.32), depicting mangroves, wine, and people drinking. The texture has similarities to Liszt’s *12 Lieder von Franz Schubert*, No. 5, “Meeres Stille” (see Ex. 5.33).

Example 5.32: Valesby, “The Farewell to Yi River,” mm. 12–15

Musical score for Example 5.32, measures 12–15. The score consists of three staves: a vocal line (top), a piano right-hand part (middle), and a piano left-hand part (bottom). The tempo is marked *Andante maestoso*. The piano part has a dynamic marking of *f*. The vocal line includes Chinese and English lyrics.

12 *Andante maestoso*

红

14

树 一 纷 纷 堕 泪 源

Dry brown leaves fell from the trees,



Example 5.33: Liszt, 12 Lieder von Franz Schubert, No. 5, “Meeres Stille,” mm. 1–8

26

**Meeresstille**

**Molto lento angoscioso**

5. *pesante*

Tie - fe Stil - le herrsch'im Was - ser,  
oh - nè Re - gung ruht das Meer,

However, the music suddenly changes to C minor in m. 19 and the dynamic changes from *f* to *p*. Between m. 12 and 20, the texts vary from depicting the scenery to Ke Jing’s desolate singing, almost making Jianli Gao snap the Zhu. Tears of anguish blur their eyes. Those three measures in C minor represent the choking up when the three know they will part and never meet again. The transition from major to minor is so heartrending. Valesby uses music to describe the fate of Ke Jing with a heavy heart. She is sensitive to the emotions in the lyrics. The “*pesante*” (heavy) in m. 20 supports the text (see Ex. 5.34). In this section, the voice uses a Chinese five-tone mode tune with Western rhythms, while the piano plays in what sounds like a Western minor scale but is actually in a Chinese pentatonic scale with modified fifth note.<sup>106</sup>

The interlude begins at m. 22 with the piano part only. The piano part is a finely formed undercurrent of arpeggios in whole tones with impressionistic rippling effects. The music deftly switches between WT<sub>0</sub> and WT<sub>1</sub> until m. 26. The one measure with rolling chords before the B section is preparation for the singer. It builds on the half-diminished seventh chords and augmented seventh chords of C minor, which foreshadows a storm (see Ex. 5.35).

<sup>106</sup> It is called 变徵 (Bianzhi tone).

**Example 5.34: Valesby, “The Farewell to Yi River,” mm. 19–21**

19 *p*

荆——柯唱裂高——渐离——的筑。

Jing Ke's song snapped Gao Jianli's Zhu\*

*p* *pesante*

**Example 5.35: Valesby, “The Farewell to Yi River,” mm. 26–27**

26 *p* *pesante*

The text portrays “the surge” in mm. 28–29 (see Ex. 5.36). In response, the piano part continues in the same vein as the previous measure. It starts on a rapid descending whole-tone arpeggio in two-beat units with a half-diminished triads then augmented triads. The last note of every beat doubles the vocal line, F–E–G–F♯–B♭–A♭.

**Example 5.36: Valesby, “The Farewell to Yi River,” mm. 28–29**

28 *p* *pesante*

风 碎 了 易 水 的 的

While the wind messed up the surge of the river

29

波 澜。

From m. 30 onwards, the musical texture changes (see Ex. 5.37). Valesby’s objective is for the music to shift in time with the text, which changes the mood from “the surge of the river” to “white clothes” and “icicles of tears.” The left hand of the piano part accordingly becomes frozen on an F-minor triad and continues in mm. 30–33. The right hand’s melody revolves around F–A $\flat$ –B $\flat$ –C to present the calamitous emotion.

**Example 5.37: Valesby, “The Farewell to Yi River,” mm. 30–33**

Example 5.37 shows the musical score for measures 30–33. The score is in F minor and 3/4 time. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has Chinese lyrics and English translations. The piano part features a frozen F-minor triad in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand with triplets.

Measure 30: *string.* 雪 白 的 衣 襟  
From the white front of their clothes

Measure 32: 悬 满 结 了 冰 的 泪 条,  
hung icicles of tears

General Fan’s head seems to jump out of the dead silence. The hero sang a lament that lasted for over a thousand years. Valesby uses the F-minor predominant chord to accentuate the “jump” and finally stops on the dominant in m. 35 (see Ex. 5.38).

**Example 5.38: Valesby, “The Farewell to Yi River,” mm. 35–38**

Example 5.38 shows the musical score for measures 35–38. The score is in F minor and 3/4 time. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has Chinese lyrics and English translations. The piano part features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

Measure 35: 跳 出 死 的 沉 默。 豪 侠 的 好 生 唱 出 千 秋 的 悲 愤:  
jump out of the dead silence. > The hero sang out a lament that lasted for over a thousand years:

After the fermata on a dominant chord in m. 38, the song moves to section C (see Ex. 5.39). With the majestic and passionate piano part, the famous poem “The wind roars ’nd chill is Yi River. The warrior leaves ’nd back he won’t be” rings out in dense chords and arpeggios. The right-hand slurred chords and arpeggios start from the weak beat and across bars into two-beat units rhythmically performed as hemiola.

**Example 5.39: Valesby, “The Farewell to Yi River,” mm. 41–54**

41  
 “风 萧 萧 兮  
 The strong wind whistled  
 易 水 寒,  
 and chilled Yi River's banks,

46  
 壮 士 一 去 兮  
 The warrior leaves  
 不 复 还,  
 and never come back,

50  
 风 萧 萧 兮  
 The strong wind whistled  
 易 水 寒,  
 and chilled Yi River's banks  
 壮 士 一  
 The warrior

The lament lasting over a thousand years of “he will not be back” is repeated five times at the end of the song (see Ex. 5.40). In the original poem the line was repeated only twice. Valesby adds three more times, each with a lower dynamic than the last, which depicts Ke Jing’s leaving and Jianli Gao’s singing.

Example 5.40: Valesby, “The Farewell to Yi River,” mm. 55–67

55  
去 leaves, 今 1 and never come back, 还, 2 never come back,

59  
还, 3 never come back, 4 never come back, dim.

63  
还, 5 never come back! perdendosi rit.

Overall, the song is delicately composed and always has the emotive transmission of poetry at its core. “The Farewell to Yi River” expertly transitions between whole-tone scales and a distinct Eastern flavor. It exemplifies how Valesby effectively integrates traditional Chinese idioms and Western musical elements into her creations.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

Music's interconnection with society can be seen throughout history. As Naixiong Liao, wrote in his memoir, "my father [Ching-chu] knew how to inherit the thousands of years of Chinese culture and took the essence of the West, especially Germany, in a true and unadulterated way. He never confined these heritages to one nationality but regarded them as the common wealth of all mankind; he never treated and studied them in isolation, but always regarded them as parts of an organic whole, and traced their connection and common origin and destination by analogy and from one to another; the ancient and the modern were indistinguishable from each other to him."<sup>107</sup> Artistically, Valesby and Ching-chu were unified, as we have seen in the discussion of her works: she drew on the essence of Chinese literature and blended it with Western compositional techniques to create Chinese art songs of artistic refinement. Moreover, she unselfishly dedicated her musical works to the Chinese people, and the resulting debates and academic discussions together contributed to the development of Chinese art songs.

The discussion of poems and music in this dissertation reveals that Valesby's creative process culminated in an effective fusion of music and Chinese poetry. She was the quintessential poet-musician, believing in the power of music to illustrate poetry. The process of studying her musical compositions is not simply theoretical, but includes reminiscence, reflection, history, and the exploration of language. Her style is more easily attributed to broad cultural influences than to purely musical ones. Her fantasy and inspiration waved the wings of

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<sup>107</sup> Liao, *Memoirs*, 16.

the clear spirit, soaring over thousands of mountains and rivers, shuttling through the past and the present.

We have examined Valesby’s cross-cultural influences, which bridged her cultural distinctiveness and musical innovation. Table 6.1 summarizes various cultural and stylistic elements in her work. As Table 6.1 demonstrates, Valesby writes Chinese art songs using a variety of compositional methods. Her contributions lie not only in her being a female Western composer setting texts in Chinese, but also fusing authentic Chinese elements with Western compositional textures and units. Examining Valesby’s cross-cultural invention supports the connection between her cultural distinctiveness and her musical innovation.

**Table 6.1: Elements of Compositional Style**

Feature		Elements
Structure		Through-composed, strophic, and binary form
Melody	Melodic contour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tuneful melody</li> <li>• Long/short phrases</li> <li>• Ascending, descending, interweaving with piano part</li> </ul>
	Range and Tessitura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide range, sometimes reaching two octaves</li> <li>• Most songs for mezzo-soprano or soprano</li> </ul>
	Text painting	Extremely expressive response to texts; that is, the music attempts to imitate the text’s descriptions of scene, emotion, perception, and natural sounds.
Motives		Frequent use of motives to produce a fresh leading phrase or concept throughout the music
Harmony	Texture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perfect fourth/fifth, major second, and third intervals</li> <li>• Rich harmony</li> <li>• Polyphony progression</li> <li>• Contrapuntal lines between piano and voice</li> </ul>
	Key Scheme and Use of Harmony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major/minor mode</li> <li>• Whole tone and pentatonic mode</li> <li>• Pivot chord for modulation</li> <li>• Picardy third</li> <li>• Enharmonic spelling</li> <li>• Impressionist style</li> <li>• Chromatic line to poetry the texts</li> <li>• Unresolved harmony to echo the question of texts</li> </ul>

*(table continues)*

Feature		Elements
Rhythms	Tempo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stick with interpretive words</li> <li>• Rhythmic patterns are varied</li> <li>• Various tempi used in each song, from <i>Largo</i> to <i>Giusto</i></li> <li>• Ostinato is used very often</li> </ul>
Accompaniment	Components without voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arpeggio and rolled chords used widely</li> <li>• Prelude, interlude, and postlude in most songs</li> </ul>
	Components with voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates the mood/atmosphere</li> <li>• Colors texts</li> <li>• Piano anticipates singing</li> <li>• Unison and contrapuntal</li> <li>• Use of pedal point or sustained bass</li> <li>• Deeply sensitive; Lieder-like responsiveness to text</li> </ul>
Poets & Text Setting	Choice of Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional Chinese poems</li> <li>• Texts from Chinese folk music</li> </ul>
	Treatment of Prosody	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music follows the rhyme and inflection of reciting poetry</li> <li>• Using various themes</li> <li>• Infrequent recitative section</li> </ul>
	Language	All Chinese except for one in English and one bilingual (English and Chinese)

The goal of this study was to promote Valesby's Chinese art songs and also to inspire female composers' musical creativity. It is hoped that professional singers and voice teachers will consider including her art songs in their repertoire, thereby making significant contributions to the art song tradition through their teaching and performing practices.

Arguably, a best way to honor and commemorate any scholar, is to have an honest discussion of their scholarship and influence. Whether it can be said that Valesby was the first German composer to create CAS with traditional Chinese poems and academically trained piano accompaniment is not yet directly proved. Nevertheless, the role she and her husband Ching-chu played in promoting the development of CAS is significant and worthy of further exploration.

The polishing of the years and the precipitation of time gave Valesby an extraordinary temperament. She was the goose that flies resolutely in the storm to war-torn China, never



bowing her head. If she had not been born during the time between wars, if she had not been in political exile, if she had not had a turbulent life, and if her works had been properly preserved and organized, what people see today might have been a true poetess, a composer, a female master in the history of music.

As I consider the importance Valesby's works and her connection with Ching-chu, I feel poetically inspired:

Love may fade, but arts never die——当爱已成往事，唯有艺术永恒。

APPENDIX

LITERAL TRANSLATIONS OF THE NINE POEMS FROM THE JOINT COLLECTION

*MUSIC INFINITY*

Translations courtesy of Ni An and Hong Huo, private translation, October 2022.

1. 喜只喜的今宵夜 选自《白雪遗音》

“To My Joy Is This Very Night,” Taken from *White Snow Music*

喜只喜的今宵夜，怕只怕的明日离别。

I am only happy tonight; I am only afraid of tomorrow's separation.

离别后·相逢不知那一夜？

After tomorrow, I do not know when I can meet you again.

听了听，鼓打三更交半夜。月照纱窗，影儿西斜。

Outside the moon shines on the screen window with its shadow slanting to the west, and the drum sound comes to mean the entering of tomorrow.

恨不能，双手托住天边月。

I am vexed at not being able to use my hands to prevent the moon from moving.

怨老天，为何闰月不闰夜？

I also blame heaven, why set leap month but no leap night?

2. 《少年游·并刀如水》周邦彦

To the Tune of *Youth's Travels*, “Sharp Knives Bingzhou Did Yield” by Bangyan Zhou

并刀如水，吴盐胜雪·纤手破新橙。

The knives made in Bingzhou were very sharp, the salt manufactured in Wu area were as white as snow, and the slim hands of the beauty peeled off the new orange.

锦幄初温，兽香不断·相对坐调笙。

There was smoke forth from the beast-liked censer, and the bed curtain was just getting warm. The two were playing the flute alternately.

低声问：向谁行宿？城上已三更。

The beauty asked in a low voice: “Where are you going to stay tonight? It is late.”

马滑霜浓，不如休去·只是少人行！

The horse will slip on the frosted ground, and there are few people outside, so don't go away.”

3. 七步诗 曹植

“A Poem Composed Within Seven Steps” by Zhi Cao

煮豆燃豆箕，

The beans are boiling in the wok,

豆在釜中泣。

While the beanstalks are burning under the wok.

本是同根生，

The beans cry about that they came from the same root,

相煎何太急？

How can beanstalks torment beans so urgently?

4. 《桃花路》高濂

To the Tune of *Pity on Lovers' Parting*, “The Peach-lined Path” by Lian Gao

桃花路，杨柳渡，一见魂惊几回顾。

Peach blossoms flourished in the path, the ferry was covered by willows, and the two were startled by each other.

眼青青，脸盈盈，口边欲笑，齿上吞声，轻，轻。

She kept turning back to see him with bright eyes and a smiling face, then laughed softly and silently with teeth shown.

人去也，情难舍，无限芳心春引惹。

He's gone away, but she couldn't give up her love for him. The spring reminds her of infinite missing.

枕儿单，被儿寒，愁难摆脱，病害今番，看，看。

She could not get rid of this melancholy of lonely pillow and cold quilt, so see, now she is lovesick.

5. 《浪淘沙·今日北池游》欧阳修

To the Tune of *Waves Washing Sand*, “Touring North Pond Today” by Xiu Ouyang

今日北池游，漾漾轻舟，波光潋滟柳条柔。

Today, I tour the North Pond with my friends. The boat ripples water, with shimmering waves, and the wickers on the banks are also soft.

如此春来春又去，白了人头。

In this way spring comes and goes, and our hair turns gray.

好妓好歌喉，不醉难休·劝君满满酌金瓯。

My dear friends! Look at the singing girl, listen to her wonderful voice, and let's stop filling our gold cups over and over again until getting drunk.

纵使花时常病酒，也是风流。

Though we drink too much wine in the flowers, that is a different kind of romantic.

6. 《浪淘沙令·帘外雨潺潺》唐 李煜

To the Tune of *Waves Washing Sand*, "Outside of the Curtain Is the Rain's Pattering Trill"  
by Yu Li

帘外雨潺潺，春意阑珊，罗衾不耐五更寒。

Outside the curtain comes the sound of the rippling rain, with spring fading. Even the body cover brocade quilt cannot stand the cold of three or five in the morning.

梦里不知身是客，一晌贪欢。

Only in my dream, can I forget that I am a guest and can I enjoy a momentary joy.

独自莫凭栏，无限江山，别时容易见时难。

When you are alone, don't lean on the railings and look far away. This infinite land is no longer my country, which is easy to part with, but hard to see again.

流水落花春去也，天上人间。

Old times are like the passing river and the withered red flowers, leaving together with spring. The contrast between the present and the past, one is heaven and one is earth.

7. 《易水的送别》青主

"The Farewell to Yi River" by Ching-chu

红树纷纷堕泪，源源的别酒灌透太子丹的心花；

Cups upon cups of farewell wine besotted Prince Dan's heart as dry brown leaves fell from the trees.

荆轲唱裂高渐离的筑，风碎了易水的波澜。

Jing Ke's song snapped Gao Jianli's Zhu while the wind messed up the surge of the river.

雪白的衣襟悬满结了冰的泪条；樊将军的头跳出死的沉默。

From the white front of their clothes hung icicles of tears. General Fan's head seemed to jump out of the dead silence.

豪侠的好生唱出千秋的悲愤：

The hero sang out a lament that has lasted for over a thousand years.

“风萧萧兮易水寒，壮士一去兮不复还，不复还，不复还。”

“The strong wind whistled and chilled Yi River's banks. The warrior to go never come back.”

8. 《采桑子·轻舟短棹西湖好》 欧阳修

To the Tune of *Gathering Mulberries*, “Boat and Oar on West Lake—A Fine Scene” by Xiu Ouyang

轻舟短棹西湖好，绿水逶迤，芳草长堤，隐隐笙歌处处随。

The scenery of the West Lake is pretty. Rowing light boat by a short oar, how free and easy I am. The green water twists and turns, and the grass on the causeway is long. The ethereal music sound seems to drift with my boat.

无风水面琉璃滑，不觉船移，微动涟漪，惊起沙禽掠岸飞。

The windless lake surface is as smooth as glass. I do not feel the boat moving, but ripples beside the boat expands. Look! The waterbirds, startled by my boat, are flying across the land from the sand.

9. 《采桑子·平生为爱西湖好》 欧阳修

To the Tune of *Gathering Mulberries*, “All My Long Life in Love of the West Lake” by Xiu Ouyang

平生为爱西湖好，来拥朱轮，富贵浮云，俯仰流年二十春。

Because of my lifetime love of the West Lake's scenery, I took a carriage with vermilion wheels here.<sup>108</sup> When I know that riches and honor are all like floating cloud, twenty springs have fleeting away.

归来恰似辽东鹤，城郭人民，触目皆新，谁识当年旧主人？

This time I came back here, just like Liaodong crane, the deity who had been away from Liao Dong, his home, for a thousand years and come back in the form of a crane.

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<sup>108</sup> In ancient times, aristocrats and governors always took carriages with vermilion wheels, so the meaning of this verse is to be a governor.

He found that he had never seen the town nor the people before. Now who could recognize me as the former governor?

10. 《静夜思》 李白

“The Thoughts in Tranquil Night” by Bai Li

床前明月光,  
The bright moonbeams cast a trail before my bed,

疑似地上霜。  
Which look like hoarfrost on the ground.

举头望明月·  
I could not help looking up to see the glorious moon,

低头思故乡。  
And drooping head to miss my distant hometown.

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