
Shulamit Ran

Moon Songs

A Song Cycle in Four Acts

*for Soprano, Flute (doubling Piccolo),
Cello, and Piano*

Commissioned by Dolce Suono Ensemble
with funding from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage
through the Philadelphia Music Project.

CONTENTS

Act I: Creation	3
Act II: Li Bai and the Vacant Moon	5
Entr'acte I	10
Act III: Star-Crossed	10
Entr'acte II: Prayer to Pierrot	12
Act IV: Medley	12

FIRST PERFORMANCES

February 3, 2012, Marshall Auditorium,
Roberts Hall, Haverford College, Haverford, PA

February 5, 2012, Trinity Center for Urban Life,
Philadelphia, PA

February 6, 2012, Thalia Theatre,
Symphony Space, New York City

Lucy Shelton, soprano
Dolce Suono Trio:
Mimi Stillman, flute
Yumi Kendall, cello
Charles Abramovic, piano

Program Note

The invitation from flute virtuoso Mimi Stillman to compose a work for her Dolce Suono Ensemble's Mahler/Schoenberg 2012 concert series that could serve as an homage as well as a companion piece to Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, one of the 20th-century's seminal compositions, was as challenging as it was intriguing. It would seem almost natural to make the work's critical position in music history a central focus in tackling such a task. And yet, the real homage to this masterpiece lies in the fact that nearly every one of its once revolutionary, genre-defining innovations has been absorbed into the mainstream of much of the music of the hundred years that has followed its creation.

Thus, I opted to make this work a nod in the direction of *Pierrot* – a work that has profoundly influenced my music in so many ways–yet without necessarily forcing myself into a deliberate *a priori* attempt to comment on it musically, except for the important fact that *Moon Songs* uses as its point of departure and inspiration a selection of texts (in some cases just fragments of poems), all of which, in various ways, refer to the moon. The texts set are in Hebrew and English, the two languages that have been dominant in my life. The Hebrew texts span the gamut from the Bible, to medieval Hebrew poetry, to modern Israeli poetry. The English-language texts go from English Renaissance to contemporary American. As in many other works that use voice, including of course *Pierrot Lunaire*, the choice of texts and the way in which these texts are organized turned out to be a significant determining agent for the work that has ensued.

Moon Songs is organized in four "acts", with two entr'actes following Acts II and III. Each "act" uses different devices, both textually and musically, to create coherence and continuity. With the full blessing of the three living poets whose poetry I chose to set – Haim Gouri and Almog Behar (both Israeli poets), and Samuel Menashe of New York (Mr. Menashe sadly passed away in the summer of 2011, after the work was already completed) – I have taken some unusual liberties with their texts. Their poems act as the foundation as well as the glue that hold together the larger entities I have aimed to create (what I call the "Acts"), and in the case of Behar and Menashe, the selected poetry also becomes the "shell" or larger structure, into which fragments from other poems are interjected.

Act I, titled "Creation", starts off with Haim Gouri's volatile and passionate opening fragment of a larger poem in Hebrew. This passage, ending as it does on the words "creating a moon for you", suggested to me a seamless transition to a reference in Psalms to the creation of the moon, and from this statuesque, almost incantational music to a medieval Hebrew poem by Shlomo Ibn Gabirol praising the Lord for having created the moon, first in defining days, years, seasons, and holidays.

In Act II I translated into English some passages from Behar's poem "Li Bai and the Vacant Moon", and took these passages through two different presentations. The first is fairly brief and straightforward, almost in a folksy style (though not associated with a specific locale, or people). The second is a much more extended, fantastical elaboration of both the storyline and the music, with passages from "Dover Beach", the classic poem by Matthew Arnold interjected, as well as a line from Li Bai's own poem on drinking alone under the shining moon. These interjections, with their own moon-inspired images, are intended to serve as stream-of-consciousness elaborations and enhancements of the "mother poem", by Behar, also expanding the expressive palette of the music.

The first of two single-instrument entr'actes is a contemplative solo cello interlude, setting the stage for Act III, titled "Star-Crossed". Here, poetry by Menashe is framed by some celebrated moon-referenced passages by Sir Philip Sidney and William Wordsworth, all creating, in my mind, a larger entity, a kind of "super-poem". Its tone is much more dark, pained, and mysterious than any of the previous music.

To segue into the last act, the second entr'acte, a mournful piccolo solo, has an added vocal line – the sole direct reference to *Pierrot Lunaire* in the piece. It is a stylized recitation (in English translation) of the ninth poem of *Pierrot*, the one poem in Schoenberg's cycle that begins by calling out, repeatedly, the name "Pierrot".

Hebrew medieval poetry returns in Act IV, titled "Medley". Selected passages from poems by Yehuda Halevi, Shmuel Hanagid, and a recap of the Ibn Gabirol poem and its music from Act I, are strung together medley-style, blending a more popular strain of music into the framework of this composition, and allowing me to invent some tunes for the jubilant climactic ending with which *Moon Songs* finishes.

The singer, flutist (who also plays piccolo), and pianist, are the principal protagonists throughout much of the work, and are given especially challenging, significant parts. The cello is deliberately absent in some parts, thus its appearance, when it is not blended with the other instruments, often allows for a notably contrasting color – perhaps a metaphor for the other side of the moon.

Demanding as her sung part is, the singer in *Moon Songs* needs to be as much an actress as a singer. Indeed, the choice of the magnificent Lucy Shelton, with whom I have collaborated on numerous prior occasions, for the work's premiere, along with *Pierrot Lunaire* – a signature role of

hers – was made early in the process and was wonderfully inspiring. She mostly sings, but also speaks, shouts, intones, and acts out – embodying some of the myriad ways in which, through poetry, myth, and fantasy, we as people have been struck by that gleaming, fantastical, mysterious vision we call the moon.

— Shulamit Ran

In concert programs the following credit should be included:

**Commissioned by Dolce Suono Ensemble with funding from The Pew Center
for the Arts & Heritage through the Philadelphia Music Project.**

Please list the movements in all concert programs as follows:


Moon Songs
A Song Cycle in Four Acts
for Soprano, Flute, Cello and Piano

Act I: Creation
Act II: Li Bai and the Vacant Moon
Entr'acte I
Act III: Star-Crossed
Entr'acte II: Prayer to Pierrot
Act IV: Medley

PERFORMANCE NOTES

General Instructions

- 1) Accidentals carry through the measure, and are not transferable at the octave. The above notwithstanding, many courtesy accidentals have been inserted as a precaution.
- 2) Unmetered free sections are often divided into measures, but unlike metered sections, such measures are separated with dotted bar lines.

In these free measures, the symbol  over a note value or a rest indicates an inexact value, the length of which is to be determined by following and coordinating with whomever has the leading voice or line at that point.

Occasionally arrows connect two parts. ↓ = together; ↘ = one follows the other.

- 3) Unless otherwise specifically indicated, trills are always to the note half a step up.

Voice

- 1) In its totality this work was conceived for a singer who is also an actress, leaving the door open to many possible dramatic/theatrical approaches.
- 2) Please note the optional use of a tambourine in the final section of Act IV, beginning in measure 408.

Flute

- 1) The word “percussion,” and occasional “+” symbol, should be interpreted freely as special effects of clicks and pizzicato-like pops to be produced with the tongue and keys in the manner that will result in the strongest, most explosive, projection.
- 2) In the latter portion of Act I, the flutist is to walk over to the piano and play inside the piano, scraping the lower strings with a percussion mallet (or a guitar pick or similar object) that will create sonorous resonance, while the pianist holds down the pedal.

Piano

- 1) The middle pedal, used in Act I, is marked as Sost. Ped., and should not be confused with the right pedal (damper pedal), marked simply as Ped.
- 2) Although pedal notations have been frequently inserted throughout, pedaling is to be used liberally also where not marked, determined by the pianist as one normally would, taking factors such as harmony and desired sound quality into consideration.
- 3) In Act IV the pianist is instructed to tap on the body of the piano in various repeated patterns. Select a few easily accessible spots on the instrument that resonate well, and tap as one would a tambourine. As the notation suggests, aim to find spots where a sense of higher and lower sounding taps can be simulated.

Important, for all:
Throughout *Moon Songs*, after the music has been carefully learned by everyone, the kind of expressive freedom and fluctuation of tempo and dynamics that are taken for granted in the performance of so-called standard music are encouraged here as well.

Texts and Translations

Act I: Creation

Lu lo haya lo laila mi'leylot ka-ele L'lo ulai v'alelai. Al harekhovot. Al megilot ha'esh ha'ele. V'khol ha'khalomot hayu v'nivre-u. Ata holekh mimena v'eleyha. Mosif gshamim azim, Bore l'ma-ankha yareyakh... 1)	If he hadn't had a night like this one out of his nights Without maybe and woe is me. About the streets. About those scrolls of fire. And all the dreams were and were created. You go from her and to her. Adding mighty rain, creating for yourself a moon...
Asa yare-akh l'mo-adim Shemesh yada mevo-o 2)	[The Lord] made the moon to mark the holidays. The sun knows its way.
Mi yazkir tehilatekha Ba'asotkha ha'yareyakh Rishon l'khashbon mo-adim u'zmanim U'tkufot v'otot l'yamim v'shanim 3)	Who will recite your praises Your having made the moon? First in calculating holidays and times, And seasons and signs for the days and the years.

1) Haim Gouri (b. 1923) from *Liheyot Akher II (To Be Different II)*
Translation by David Stillman
2) Psalms, 104:19
3) Shlomo Ibn Gabirol (1021-1058?) from *Keter Malkhut (A Crown for the King XII)*
Translation by Shulamit Ran

Act II: Li Bai and the Vacant Moon

Li Bai tried to embrace the full moon and fell into the river, and he died...
...The world spoke to him, intoxicated, he drank to understand.
He knew there's no time for philosophy.
I, too, like him, the full moon I love, but I have no courage
to encircle it. I embrace the vacant moon, and my heart —
so it won't fall, so we won't fall!
Sh'lo yipol, sh'lo nipol.

Almog Behar (b. 1978) from *Li Bai V'Hayare'akh Hareik (Li Bai and the Vacant Moon)*
Excerpts chosen and translated by Shulamit Ran

Li Bai [an eighth-century Chinese poet] tried to embrace [encircle, surround, hug] the full moon.
[He was known as a drunk!] He fell into the river and he died. [He died at the age of sixty-one.]
Li Bai tried to embrace the full moon
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
The sea is calm tonight.
The world spoke to him, intoxicated, he drank to understand.
Listen!
Begin, and cease, and then again begin
...and he knew there is no time for philosophy.
I, too, like him, the full moon love, but I have no courage to encircle it.
Upon the straits... glimmering and vast...
I embrace the vacant moon, and my heart,
...The eternal note of sadness bring.
"I drink alone beneath the bright moonshine."
Sh'lo yipol, sh'lo nipol.

Ran's expansion of Behar's text interjects footnotes and elaborations (in brackets), excerpts (in italics) from *Dover Beach* by Matthew Arnold (1822–1888), and one line (in quotes) from *Drinking Alone Under the Moon* by Li Bai (701–762).

Entr'acte I (cello solo)

Act III: Star-Crossed

With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the skies,
How silently, and how wan a face! 1)
This lunar air
Draws me to you,
The moon's magnet
Aligns that pair
Whom dragons slew,
Whose course was set
Before they knew 2)

She who saw the moon last night
She who swayed with the chant
Died in her sleep or dreams —
To say she is dead seems scant. 3)

I see her now, denied to lay her head,
On cold blue nights, in hut or straw-built shed,
Turn to a silent smile their sleepy cry,
By pointing to the gliding moon on high...
...all light is mute amid the gloom
The interlunar Cavern of the Tomb. 4)

1) Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), from *Astrophil and Stella*
2) Samuel Menashe (1925-2011), *Star-Crossed*
3) Samuel Menashe, *She who saw the moon last night*
4) William Wordsworth (1770-1850), from *An Evening Walk*

Entr'acte II: Prayer to Pierrot [In homage to Arnold Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire (No. 9)]

Pierrot! My laughter —
I have forgotten how to laugh.
The image of splendor
has melted away, melted away.
Black on the pole
the flag now waves to me.
Pierrot! My laughter —
I have forgotten how to laugh.
Oh, give it back to me,
you medic of the soul,
you snowman of verse,
Your Serene Highness Moon,
Pierrot, my laughter!

Albert Giraud (1860-1929) *Supplique* (from *Pierrot lunaire*)
Translation by David Stillman

Act IV: Medley

Ya-alat khen v'khetem Ophir
Bi'm-orah m'or yom takhpir
U'levana k'livnat safir
U'khe'etzem ha'shamayim 1)

Shemesh v'yare-akh l'olam shertu 2)

Ehi kofer l'ofer
Kam ba'leil l'kol kinor v'ugavim meitivim
Asher ra-ah kos b'yadi v'amar:
"Shte mi'bein sfatai dam anavim"
V'yare-akh kmo yod
Nikhteva al ksut shakhar
Bi'meimy ha'zehavim 3)

[Ya-alat khen...
[Mi yazkir tehilatekha...
[Shemesh v'yare-akh l'olam...

A graceful doe, like gold of Ophir,
With her light, she shameth the light of day;
Like the moon, like paved work of sapphire,
As it were the very heaven.

Sun and moon forever serve.

I would be ransom for the fawn who, awakening at night
to the melodious sound of strings and pipes,
and seeing the cup in my hand says:
"Drink from between my lips the blood of grapes."
And the crescent-shaped moon
was inscribed upon the garments of dawn
in golden water.

A graceful doe...] (repeat of first stanza)
Who will recite your praises...] (reprise from Act I)
Sun and moon forever!!] (repeat of 2nd "stanza")

1) Yehuda Halevi (1075–1141) from *Yona al Afikei Maim - Dove Beside The Water Brooks*
Adapted from *Selected Poems of Yehuda Halevi*, edited by Heinrich Brody, and translated by Nina Salaman.
Copyright 1925 by the Jewish Publication Society of America. Copyright renewed 1952 by the Jewish
Publication Society of America.
2) Yehuda Halevi from *Ad Yom Va'leil Yishbetu - Until Day and Night Shall Cease*
Translation by Shulamit Ran
3) Shmu'el Hanagid (993-1056) *Ehi Kofer l'Ofer - I would be ransom for the fawn*
Translation by Shulamit Ran

Note for the Singer on the Hebrew Texts

To facilitate the process of learning, a literal translation is provided below under each word, and all stressed syllables are shown in **bold**.
[Due to the differences in grammar and syntax structure between the Hebrew and English languages, the translations here do not always add up to proper sentences in English, and differ from the more poetic translations provided in the full text.]

Act I: Creation

Lu **lo** haya lo **laila** mi'le**ylot** ka-**ele**
If not had he a night out of nights like these
L'**lo** **ulai** v'ale**lai**.
without maybe and woe to me
Al ha'rekh**ovot**.
About the streets
Al megil**ot** ha'**esh** ha'**ele**.
About the scrolls of fire those
V'**khol** ha'khalom**ot** hayu v'niv**re-u**.
And all the dreams were and were created.
Ata hole**kh** mimena v'e**leyha**.
You go from her and to her
Mosif gshamim **azim**,
Adding rains mighty
Bore l'ma-ank**ha** ya**reyakh***...
creating for yourself a moon

Asa ya**re-akh*** l'mo-**adim**
Made a moon for the holidays
Shemesh ya**da** mevo-**o**
The sun knows its way

Mi yaz**kir** tehila**tekha**
Who will declare your praises
Ba'asot**kha** ha'ya**reyakh**
you having made the moon
Rishon l'khes**hon** mo-**adim** u'zmanim
first to calculate holidays and times
U'tku**fo**t v'o**tot** l'ya**mim** v'sha**nim**
and seasons and signs for the days and the years

*Two spellings of the Hebrew word for "moon" are deliberately used in order to play with the gliding vowels in the 2nd syllable of "ya-**re(y)**-akh". (When spelled with the "y", the diphthong is more pronounced.)

Act II: Li Bai and the Vacant Moon

Sh'**lo** yip**ol**, sh'**lo** nip**ol**.
That won't he fall, that won't we fall

Act IV: Medley

Ya-alat **khen** v'khetem **Ophir**
A graceful doe and gold of Ophir
Bi'm-**orah** m'**or yom** takh**pir**
With her light the light of day she shames
U'levana k'liv**nat** sa**fir**
And the moon like whiteness of sapphire
U'**khe'et**zem ha'shamayim
As the essence of the heaven

Shemesh v'ya**re-akh** l'olam shertu
Sun and moon forever serve

Ehi **kofer** l'ofer
I would be ransom for the fawn
Kam ba'leil l'**kol** kinor v'ugavim meitivim
Awakening at night to the sound of strings and pipes pleasing
Asher ra-**ah kos** b'yadi v'**amar**:
Upon seeing a cup in my hand and says:
"Shte mi'**bein** sfatai **dam** anavim"
"Drink from between my lips blood of grapes"

V'yare-akh kmo **yod**
And the moon like a crescent
Nikhte**va** al **ksut** **shakhar**
Was inscribed upon the garments of dawn
Bi'mei**me**y ha'zeha**vim**
In the water of gold

[All the text that follows is a repeat from above and Act I]

Pronunciation Table for Hebrew

a - as in art; jar	
e - as in end; deft	
i - as in lilt; in	*kh - as in chutzpah
o - as in off	s - as in spot
u - as in put	tz – as in klutz
ai - as in my; by	z - as in zero; raise
ey - as in ate; grey	

*Because both Hebrew and English are set in the cycle, this guttural sound is always spelled ‘kh’ instead of the more commonly used ‘ch’, in order to avoid any possible confusion with the ‘ch’ used in the English language.

All prepositions are followed by an apostrophe, and if the vowel is missing, it is always an "e" pronounced as in "let; vet; met". The common prepositions are translated below:

ba'; bi' = in	m'; mi' = from
ha' = the	sh' = that
k'; kh' = as	v'; va'; u' = and
l' = to	

MOON SONGS is recorded by soprano Lucy Shelton and Dolce Suono Trio (Mimi Stillman, flute, Alexis Pia Gerlach, cello, Charles Abramovic, piano) on “American Canvas,” Innova Recordings 991.

Moon Songs

A Song Cycle in Four Acts

for Soprano, Flute, Cello and Piano

SHULAMIT RAN

(2011)

Act I: Creation

Excitedly, fantastical, each performer independent in tempo
as though improvising ♩ = c. 96

Soprano

Lu lo ha-ya lo lai-la mi'-ley-lo t ka-e-le L'-lo u-lai v'-a-le-lai.

(in lower speaking range)

Flute
(doubling Piccolo)

Cello

(tacet until m. 57)

Piano

(depress keys silently; hold with
sostenuto pedal until canceled.)

8ba

Sost. Ped. →
(hold until m. 13)

Sop.

♩ = c. 76

Lu lo ha-ya lo lai-la mi'-ley-lo t ka-e-le

Fl.

mf with abandon and ecstasy

decisive

Pno.

♩ = c. 76

8ba

(Sost. Ped.) →

2

Sop.

♩ = c. 69

Langorous

L'-lo u-lai

Fl.

f

Pno.

♩ = c. 69

Langorous

mp secco

8ba

(Sost. Ped.) →

3

Fantastical

Sop. *v' - a - le - lai.*

Fl. *mp with an air of mystery and mischief*

Fantastical

Pno. *8ba (Sost. Ped.)*

Sop. *A - - l ha' - re - kho - vot. Al - me-gi-lot ha'esh ha'e - le.*

Fl. *mp f*

Pno. *p*

(Sost. Ped.)

5/4 In time (♩ = 76)

Sop.

Fl. *poco accel. mp warm mf spitty*

Pno. *p sfz secco sfz p ff ringing*

(Sost. Ped.)

4/4 Freer **5/4** *legato, warm* *rall.* **3/4 Faster ♩ = 88** **4/4**

Sop. *Me - gi - lot ha'e - - - le, me - gi - lot ha'esh.*

Fl. *p mp f with passion, quite free*

4/4 Freer **5/4** *rall.* **3/4 Faster ♩ = 88** **4/4**

Pno. *f p tenderly sfz*

(Sost. Ped.)

4/4 **rall.** ♩ = 69

Sop.

Fl.

Pno.

10 (Sost. Ped.)→

11

12

mp *f*

rall. ♩ = 69

fantasia-like

ff *f*

emphatic

Sop.

Fl.

Pno.

13 (Sost. Ped.) Ped.

14 Sost. Ped.

mf *f* *ff brittle*

6

8va.

3/4

3/4 **More relaxed** ♩ = c. 58 *p dreamy*

4/4 **More flowing, yet dream-like** ♩ = 69

Sop.

Fl.

Pno.

15 (Sost. Ped.)

16

17

18

mf *p* *pp delicate, echo-like*

3

6

Ped.

3/4 **Faster** ♩ = 76

3/4 **Faster** ♩ = 76

Sop.

Fl.

Pno.

19 (Ped.)

20

21

anguished *poco f fantastical* *very free, as though improvising*

3 3 3

5

4/4 *soaring, passionate*

Sop. *mi-me - - na* *A - ta ho-lekh* *mi-me-na v' - e-ley - ha.*

Fl. *6* *6* *3* *7*

Pno. *f brittle* *mp*

22 23 24

Sop. *Mo - sif ge-sha - mim* *a - zim,*

Fl. *mf*

Pno. *mp tenderly* *f* *p*

25 26 27

3/4 6/8

8va.....

8ba.....

Sop. *A - ta ho-lekh mi - me - na* *v' - e-ley - ha.*

Fl.

Pno. *mp* *mf*

28 29 30 31

6/8 7/8 (2+3+2) *with growing anguish* 5/8 (2+3) (3+2) 2/4

Sost. Ped. →

Sop. *A - ta - ho - lekh mi - me - na* *v' - e-ley - - ha.*

Fl. *mp*

Pno. *mp* *f*

32 33 34

2/4 5/8 (3+2) (2+3) 7/8

(Sost. Ped.) →

7/8 (2+3+2) *mf* 6/8

Sop. Mo - sif ge - sha - mim a - - zim,

Fl. *mp* 6/8

Pno. 7/8 (2+3+2) *mp* 6/8 *l.h.*

35 (Sost. Ped.) 36 37

A bit more restrained 4/8 7/8 4/8

Sop. Mo - sif gsha - mim a - zim, gsha - mim - a - zim,

Fl. *mf* 4/8

Pno. **A bit more restrained** 4/8 7/8 4/8

38 39 40

4/8 Gradually more intense 5/8 *anguished again* 4/8 6/8

Sop. ho - lekh mi - me - na v' - e - ley - ha...

Fl. *mf* *f* 4/8 6/8

Pno. **4/8 Gradually more intense** 5/8 *mp* *mf* 4/8 6/8

41 42 43 44

Sop. Mo - sif gsha - mim a - zim,

Fl. 4/8 6/8

Pno. *f* *emphatic* 4/8 6/8

45 46 47