

river song

by Sheena Phillips

based on the traditional American song *Oh Shenandoah*

for women's choir in six parts

perusal score - not for rehearsal or performance

duration c. 5:00

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river song

A piece for women's voices in six parts

river song is based on the traditional American song *Oh Shenandoah*. Each voice repeats fragments of the melody and/or other phrases that echo or riff off the tune in some way. Each voice sings independently, like a small current in the river, overlapping with other voices. And each voice gradually shifts from one phrase to another, creating changes in harmonic colour and fluctuations in dynamics. Like a real river, the 'vocal river' is constantly on the move, yet something about its composition stays constant.

river song is written as a companion piece to *wind song* (composed for and premiered at the 2016 CoMA Summer School).

Sheena Phillips

February 2017

Lyrics

Oh Shenandoah, I long to see you,
Away, you rolling river,
Oh Shenandoah, I long to see you,
Away, I'm bound away,
Across the wide Missouri.

Traditional

Notation and performance instructions

Box notation and line extensions

Repeat the material in a box until the conductor indicates a transition to the next section. (See below for more on transitions – always finish your current phrase first).

Dotted vertical lines within boxes – you can choose to repeat the entire box or any section(s) demarcated by dotted lines, in any order.

The precise alignment of the boxes is not significant: all parts are independent.

Timings and independence

The conductor should keep a gentle pulse going and indicate transitions from one section to the next. The piece is scored in 2/2 but all pulses are equal and singers can treat any pulse as a downbeat.

Transitions should be gradual: singers should finish their current phrase before unhurriedly moving on to the next box. A good signal for transitions might be rolling over / rotating the left hand for a few seconds while keeping the pulse going with the right.

Rough timings are given in minutes and seconds across the top of the score. There's considerable freedom to move more quickly or slowly than indicated. You might want to take plenty of time at the start and have voices come in very gradually.

Voicing

There's a rough progression from high (line 1) to low (line 6) but line 2 is often higher than line 1 (which carries the traditional tune).

Other notation points

Rest in brackets – a rest lasting any whole number of pulses (minims)

Fermata – hold the note for any whole number of pulses

river song

based on the traditional American song *Oh Shenandoah*

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$\text{♩} = 60$ with a very gentle pulse

[~ 0:30]

begin and repeat each box independently

p
mm,

begin and repeat each box independently

p
mm, mm,

begin and repeat each box independently

p
mm,

C

[~ 2:00]

The musical score consists of six staves, each representing a different vocal part. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The lyrics are: "Oh Shen - an - doah, oh, A - way you roll - ing riv - er, A - way, you roll - ing riv - er,". The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *p* (piano), along with crescendo and decrescendo hairpins. A large, semi-transparent watermark "ABCDEF" is overlaid diagonally across the center of the page.

1 Oh Shen - an - doah, oh,

2 Oh Shen - an - doah, oh,

3 Oh Shen - an - doah, you riv - er,

4 A - way you roll - ing riv - er,

5 A - way, you roll - ing riv - er,

6 A - way, you roll - ing riv - er,

D

poco accel.

[~ 2:30]

1 *p* Oh Shen - an - doah, *mf* I long *p* to see you,

2 *p* Oh Shen - an - doah, *mf* I long *p* to see you,

3 *p* Oh Shen - an - doah, *mf* I long to see you,

4 *p* I long *mf* to see you, *p*

5 *p* A - way, *mf* you roll - ing riv - er, *p*

6 *p* I long *mf* to see you,

E più mosso $\text{♩} = c.72$

F tempo primo

[~ 3:00]

[~ 3:30]

The musical score is divided into two sections, E and F, with six vocal parts (1-6) in each. Section E is marked 'più mosso' with a tempo of $\text{♩} = c.72$ and a duration of approximately 3:00. Section F is marked 'tempo primo' and a duration of approximately 3:30. The lyrics are: 'A - way, I'm bound a - way, A - cross the wide Mis - sou-ri...'. Dynamic markings include *f* (forte), *p* (piano), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The score is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature.

G

[~ 4:00]

[~ 4:30]

[~ 5:00]

60

1 *mp*
Oh Shen-an-doah,

2 *p* *mp* *p*
I'm bound a - way, Oh Shen - an - doah,

3 *p* *mp* *p*
O Shen-an-doah,

4 *p* *mp* *p*
Oh Shen-an-doah,

5 *p* *mp* *p*
A - way, Shen - an-doah,

6 *p* *mp* *p*
A - way, Shen - an-doah,

p
Oh Shen-an-doah...

pp
Oh Shen - an-doah...

p
Shen - an-doah...

p
Oh Shen-an-doah...

p
Shen - an-doah...

pp
Oh Shen-an-doah...

morendo