

river song

by Sheena Phillips

based on the traditional American song *Oh Shenandoah*

for mixed a cappella choir in six parts (SSAATB)

perusal score - not for rehearsal or performance

duration c. 5:00

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river song

A piece for mixed (or upper) 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. Especially at the start, the entries should be very gradual.

Voicing

There's a rough progression from high (line 1) to low (line 4) upper voices, with tenors on line 5 and basses on line 6. Contact me for a slightly different version of the score for female voices in six parts.

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

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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,

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,

begin and repeat each box independently

p
mm,

A

[~ 1:00]

B

[~ 1:30]

The musical score is arranged for six voices, numbered 1 through 6. It is divided into two sections, A and B. Section A, marked with a box 'A' and a duration of [~ 1:00], features lyrics: "Oh Shen-an-doah," for voices 1, 3, and 5; "Shen - an-doah," for voices 2, 4, and 6. Section B, marked with a box 'B' and a duration of [~ 1:30], features lyrics: "Oh Shen-an-doah, I long to see you," for voices 1, 3, and 5; "Shen - an-doah, I long to see you," for voices 2, 4, and 6. Dynamic markings include *mp* (mezzo-piano), *p* (piano), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). Crescendos and decrescendos are indicated by hairpins. A large watermark "SAM" is visible across the center of the page.

D

poco accel.

[~ 2:30]

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

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

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

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

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

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

E più mosso $\text{♩} = c.72$

F tempo primo

[~ 3:00]

[~ 3:30]

The musical score consists of six vocal parts (numbered 1 to 6) and piano accompaniment. The score is divided into two sections: Section E (più mosso) and Section F (tempo primo). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). Section E is marked with a tempo of $\text{♩} = c.72$ and a duration of approximately 3:00. Section F is marked with a tempo of tempo primo and a duration of approximately 3:30. The lyrics for each part are as follows:

- Part 1:** A - way, I'm bound a - way, A - cross the wide Mis - sou-ri...
- Part 2:** A - way, I'm bound a - way, A - way, I'm bound a - way,
- Part 3:** A - way, I'm bound a - way, A - cross the wide Mis - sou-ri...
- Part 4:** A - way, I'm bound a - way, A - way, I'm bound a - way,
- Part 5:** A - way, I'm bound a - way, A - cross the wide Mis - sou - ri...
- Part 6:** A - way, I'm bound a - way, A - cross the wide Mis - sou - ri...

The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support for the vocal lines. Dynamics include *f* (forte), *p* (piano), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The score includes various musical notations such as rests, slurs, and dynamic markings.

G
[~ 4:00]

[~ 4:30]

[~ 5:00]

1 *mp* *p*
Oh Shen-an-doah, Oh Shen-an-doah... *morendo*

2 *p mp p* *p*
A - way, Shen - an-doah, Shen - an-doah... *morendo*

3 *mp p* *p*
Oh Shen-an-doah, Oh Shen-an-doah... *morendo*

4 *p mp p* *p*
A - way, Shen - an-doah, Shen - an-doah... *morendo*

5 *p mp p* *pp*
I'm bound a - way, Oh Shen - an-doah, Oh Shen - an-doah... *morendo*

6 *p mp p* *pp*
Oh Shen-an-doah, Oh Shen-an... *morendo*