

Cheong Li

# Impermanence

*for chamber choir*

2011-13



## **Impermanence**

*for chamber choir (SSAATTBB)*

*Approx. duration: 15 mins*

*Impermanence* consists of three movements written for chamber choir, with text from both Buddhist and Christian origins. The first movement was performed by *the 24* in Feb 2011. The second and the third movements are later additions to the series, which I completed in 2013.

In the first movement 'Ivit, ivit', the texts are taken from the Heart Sutra, a Buddhist text, and 'In Paradisum' from Catholic liturgy, as they show some interesting parallels about the search for the meaning of life. The second movement, 'Village Song', is like a secular response to the first movement. The movement begins with onomatopoeic syllables that mimic the sound of percussion instruments, followed by a haiku by Japanese poet Matsuo Basho. The haiku vividly depicts a frog who jumps in the pond and breaks the silence, which in a way reflects the immediacy of life. The texts of the third movement, 'Impermanence', are verses quoted from 'Story of the Faithful Mother Deer' and 'Sutra of King Surupa'. The verses talk about how impermanent life is, that everything may change over time just as morning dew vanishes into vapour. It is set in Cantonese, as the verses were made popular by a Hong Kong novelist, Louis Cha.

## Ivit, Ivit

(sing in Latin)

*Ivit, ivit, transivit,  
totum transivit,  
Illuminatio tum sit.*

(Heart Sutra, Latin translation)<sup>1</sup>

*In paradisum deducant te Angeli.*

(‘In paradisum’, from *Missale Romanum*)<sup>3</sup>

(English translation)

Gone, gone, gone beyond,  
altogether beyond,  
then it is the shore of awakening,  
fulfilled.

(Heart Sutra, English translation)<sup>2</sup>

May angels lead you into paradise.

## Village Song

Furuike ya  
Kawazu tobikomu  
Mizu no oto

The old pond  
a frog jumps in  
water's sound

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from ‘Shorter Heart Sutra’, *Wikisource*  
<[http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Shorter\\_Heart\\_Sutra\\_%28Wikisource%29](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Shorter_Heart_Sutra_%28Wikisource%29)> [accessed 25 September 2013]

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from ‘Heart Sutra’, *Heart of the Buddha*  
<<http://heartofthebuddha.wordpress.com/sutras/heart-sutra/>>

<sup>3</sup> Catholic Church, *Missale romanum*. S.I: s.n, 1962.

## Impermanence

(sing in Cantonese)

	Cantonese romanization					[IPA]				
一切恩愛會,	yat	tsai	yan	ngoi	wui	jət	ts <sup>h</sup> ɛi	jən	ɔi	wu:i
無常難得久。	mou	seung	naan	dak	gau	mou	sœ:ŋ	na:n	tek	geu
生世多畏懼,	sang	sai	do	wai	goey	sɛŋ	sɛi	tɔ:	wɛi	kœy
命危於晨露。	ming	ngai	yü	sun	lou	mɪŋ	ŋɛi	jy:	sɛn	lou
由愛故生憂,	yau	ngoi	goo	sung	yau	jɛu	ɔi	ku:	sɛŋ	jɛu
由愛故生怖。	yau	ngoi	goo	sung	bou	jɛu	ɔi	ku:	sɛŋ	pou
若離於愛者,	yeuk	lei	yu	ngoi	dze	jœ:k	lei	jy:	ɔi	tse:
無憂亦無怖。	mou	yau	yik	mou	bou	mou	jɛu	jɪk	mou	pou

(English translation)

*All love and relationships are impermanent.*

*Nothing stays and nothing lasts.*

*We fear about a lot of things in our lives,  
and our lives are as fragile as morning dew.*

*When we desire, we're worried.*

*When we're in love, we fear losing it.*

*If we detach ourselves from our desire,  
we free ourselves from fear and worries.*

- adapted from "the Story of the Faithful Mother Deer" (佛說鹿母經)<sup>4</sup>  
and "the Sutra of King Surupa" (佛說妙色王因緣經)<sup>5</sup>

(The word "愛"(oi) means love, but in buddhist texts it also means desire, attachment or reliance.  
The original poem doesn't contain any personal pronouns, as it refers to any person in general.)

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<sup>4</sup> '佛說鹿母經'. <[http://www.suttaworld.org/big5-txt/sutra/kgin/kgin03/182\\_b.htm](http://www.suttaworld.org/big5-txt/sutra/kgin/kgin03/182_b.htm)> [accessed 25 September 2013]. For complete English translation, see 'The Story of the Faithful Mother Deer', *Sacred Texts*. <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/journals/ia/sfd.htm>>

<sup>5</sup> '佛說妙色王因緣經'. <<http://www.suttaworld.org/big5-txt/sutra/kgin/kgin03/163.htm>> [accessed 25 September 2013]. English translation provided by composer.



# Impermanence

## 1. 'Ivit, ivit'

Li Cheong  
written in 2011 - 13

Two staves for Tenor 1 (T) and Tenor 2 (T). Both parts have a vocal range of 8 notes. The lyrics are: I - vit, i - vit, tran - si - vit.



**Moderato** ♩ = 72

**Soprano (S):** *mp* poco a poco dim. To - tum, tran - vi vit. To

**Alto (A):** *p* poco a poco cresc. I - vit, i - vit, I - *mp* poco a poco dim. continue for about 20 sec conductor or part leaders cue each part to stop, leaving Tenor 1 holding a long note

**Tenor 1 (T):** *p* Ivit. (vit)

**Bass 1 (B):** *p* I - vit.

**Bass 2 (B):** *p* I - vit.

*poco a poco dim.*

1

15 *p*

S *p*

Il - lu - mi - na - tio tum sit. Il -

A *p*

Il - lu - mi - na - tio

T *p*

8 (vit.) I vit.

I - vit.

B *p*

I - vit.

I - vit.

I -



23

S

lu - mi - na - tio tum sit. I - vit.

A

tum sit. Il - lu - mi - na - tio tum

tum sit. Il - lu - mi - na - tio tum

T

I - vit.

I

B

vit.





47

S pa - ra di - - - sum, De - du - cant te An - ge - li solo

A In pa - ra - di - sum. *p > pp* Om - [m] *p > pp* Om - [m]

T *p > pp* Om - [m] *p > pp* Om - [m]

B

55

S De - du - cant te An - ge - li. *poco a poco accel. --- ♩ = 170* tutti *p* I - - - vit.

A Om [m] *p > pp* I - - - vit, *p* I - - - vit.

T *p > pp* Om [m] I - - - *p* I -

B *mp* I - vit, i - vit, tran - si - vit, *mp* I - vit, i - vit, tran - si - vit, to -

62

S I - - vit. tran - - si - vit. To -

I - - vit. tran - - si - vit. To -

A I - - vit, tran - - si - vit.

I - - vit, tran - - si - vit.

T vit, I - - vit, tran - si - vit.

vit, I - vit, tran - si - vit.

B to - tum tran - si - vit. I - vit, i - vit, tran - si - vit, to - tum tran - si - vit. I - vit, i -

-tum tran - si - vit. I - vit, i - vit, tran - si - vit, To - tum tran - si - vit. I - vit, i - vit, tran - si - vit, To -

68

S - tum tran - si - vit.

tum tran - si - vit.

A

*mp* *poco a poco cresc. e accel.*

T I - vit, i - vit, tran - si - vit, to - tum tran - si - vit. I vit, tran - si -

*mp*

I - vit, i - vit, tran - si - vit, To - tum tran - si - vit. I - vit, tran - si - vit, To -

*poco a poco cresc. e accel.*

B - vit, tran - si - vit, to - tum tran - si - vit. I - vit, i - vit, tran - si - vit, to - tum tran - si - vit.

-tum tran - si - vit. I - vit, i - vit, tran - si - vit, To - tum tran - si - vit. I - vit, i - vit, tran - si - vit, To -



79

**S**

*p* il - lu - mi - na - tio tum sit. il -

*p* il - lu - mi - na - tio tum sit. il -

**A**

*p* il - lu - mi - na - tio tum sit. il -

*p* il - lu - mi - na - tio tum sit. il -

**T**

*p* I - vit.

*p* I - vit.

**B**

*p* I - vit.

*p* I - vit.

87

S

lu - - mi - - na - - tio tum sit. I - - vit,

A

lu - - mi - - na - - tio tum sit. I - - vit,

T

I - vit. I - vit.

B

I - vit. I - vit.

I - vit.

95

*poco a poco dim.*

S

I - - vit, I - - vit, I - - vit, I - - vit,

A

I - - vit, I - - vit, I - - vit,

T

I - vit. I - vit.

B

I - vit. I - vit.

103

*pp*

*p* *f* *f*

*mp* *f* *f*

*mf* *f* *f*

S I - vit, I - vit. I - vit. I - vit.

A I - vit. I - vit. I - vit. I - vit.

T I - vit. I - vit. I - vit. I - vit.

B I - vit. I - vit. I - vit. I - vit.

## 2. 'Village Song'

9

$\text{♩} = 80$ , poco a poco accel. - - - -

Imitating sounds of Chinese gongs and drums

repeat and accel. until  $\text{♩} = 180$

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

*f*

Ba - droo,

Tuk, - tuk, - tuk, - tuk, -

Chunk-chay, chay, chay, chay, chay, chay, chay, chay,

Chunk-chay, chunk-chay, chunk-chay, chunk-chay, chunk-chay, chunk-chay, chunk-chay, chunk-chay,

Chunk, chunk - chunk - chunk -

T1 solo, improvise on the rhythm (like beat-boxing)

tuk, - tik, - ke, tuk, - tik - ka - tik - ka

(All others)

Tuk, - tuk, - tuk, - tuk, -

chay, chay, chay, chay,

chunk - chay, chunk - chay, chunk - chay, chunk - chay,

chunk chunk chunk chunk -

**A** Senza misura (slow)

molto rit.

S.

A.

T.

B.

*mf*

Hey

*mf*

Hey

*mf*

Hey

tik, - ke, tuk, tuk, tik, - ke, tuk, - ke, tuk, -

Chunk-chay, chunk! Chunk chay-day, puk-duk, chay Chunk!

Chunk-chay, chunk! Chunk chay-day, puk-duk, chay Chunk!

Chunk, chunk

8

S.

A.

T.

B.

*mf* Hey Hey

*mf* Hey Hey

*mf* Hey

*mf* Hey

10

S.

A.

T.

B.

*pp* Fu - ru - i - ke - ya, fu - ru - i - ke - ya. Hey

*pp* Fu - ru - i - ke - ya, fu - ru - i - ke - ya. Hey

*mp* Hey

*mp* Hey

Hey

Hey



12

S.

A.

T.

B.

*mf*

Fu - ru, i - ke ya, ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu. Fu - ru i - ke

*mf*

Fu - ru, i - ke ya ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu. Fu - ru i -

17

**C**

S.

A.

T.

B.

*mf*

Fu - ru, i - ke ya, Fu, fu ru, i ke ya, Hey, fu ru, i

*p*

ya, ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu. Fu - ru, i - ke ya, ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu.

*p*

ke ya, ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko mu. Fu - ru, i - ke ya ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko -

**D** *mf*

S. Ka wa zu to bi ko mu, mi - zu no o to Ka

A. *mf*  
ke ya, Ka - wa - za to - bi - ko - mu Hey, fu ru, i - ke ya, Hey, fu ru, i ke ya, Hey,  
*mf*  
Hey, fu ru, i - ke ya, Hey, fu ru, i ke ya,

T. *mf*  
Fu - ru i - ke ya, ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu. Hey, fu ru, i - ke ya, ka - wa - zu  
*mf*  
- mu. Fu - ru i - ke ya, ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko mu. Hey, fu ru, i - ke ya, ka - wa - zu

B.

**E** *mf*

S. wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu, mi - zu no o to Ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu, mi - zu no o to  
*mf*  
Ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu, mi - zu no o

A. *mf*  
fu ru, i ke ya, Ka - wa - za to - bi - ko - mu, Ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu. Hey, fu ru, i - ke  
*mf*  
Hey, fu ru, i ke ya, Ka - wa - za to - bi - ko - mu, Ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu. Hey, fu ru, i - ke

T. *tutti* *mf*  
to bi ko mu, Fu - re i - ke ya, Ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu. Hey, fu ru, i - ke

B. *mf*  
Fu - ru i - ke ya, Fu - ru i - ke ya.  
*mf*  
Fu - ru i - ke ya, Fu - ru i - ke ya.

**F** Improvisation Section

32

S. Ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu, mi - zu no o - to.

to Ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu, mi - zu no o - to.

A. (tutti)  
ya, Fu - ru i - ke ya. Ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu.

T. ya, ka - wa - zu to bi ko mu, Fu - re i - ke ya,

B. Fu - ru i - ke ya, Mi - zu no o - to.  
Fu - ru i - ke ya, Mi - zu no o - to.

(see next page for materials)

**Coda**

(Soprano 1 cues everyone to end the improv section and sing the coda)

36

S. Ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu, Mi - zu no o - to.

Ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu, Mi - zu no o - to.

A. Ka - wa - za to - bi - ko - mu, to - bi - ko - mu, Mi - zu no o - to.

Ka - wa - za to - bi - ko - mu, Mi - zu no, Mi - zu no o - to.

T. Ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu, Mi - zu no o - to.

Ka - wa - zu to - bi - ko - mu, Mi - zu no o - to.

B. Fu - ru i - ke ya, Mi - zu no o - to.

Fu - ru i - ke ya, Mi - zu no o - to.

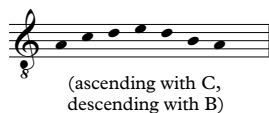


\* Soprano 1 repeats this line as a signal to end the improvisation



## Tenor

Improvise with this scale



[With meter]

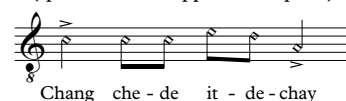
Suggested ideas:



(consonant sounds only)



(sprechstimme / approximate pitch)

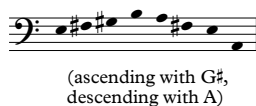


[Free, without meter]



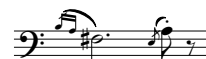
## Bass

Improvise with this scale



[With meter]

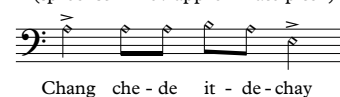
Suggested ideas:



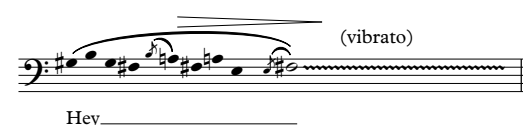
(consonant sounds only)



(sprechstimme / approximate pitch)



[Free, without meter]



(無常)

9 *mf* 1

S  
Yat tsai yan ngoi wui.  
一切恩愛會。  
*mf* Yat tsai yan ngoi wui.  
一切恩愛會。

A  
*mf* yan ngoi. Yat tsai yan ngoi, yan ngoi wui.  
恩愛。一切恩愛，恩愛會。  
*mf* yan ngoi. Yat tsai yan ngoi, yan ngoi wui.  
恩愛。一切恩愛，恩愛會。  
*p* mou  
無

T  
*mf* yan ngoi wui.  
恩愛會  
*mf* yan ngoi wui.  
恩愛會  
*p* mou  
無  
*p* mou  
無

B  
*mf* yan ngoi wui.  
恩愛會  
*mf* yan ngoi wui.  
恩愛會  
*p* mou  
無  
*p* mou  
無

15

*p* *mp*

S  
seung 常  
yat tsai 一切  
yan ngoi 恩愛

A  
seung 常  
yat tsai 一切  
yan ngoi 恩愛

T  
seung 常  
yat tsai 一切  
yan ngoi 恩愛

B  
seung 常  
yat tsai 一切  
yan ngoi 恩愛

21

*p* *mf*

S  
mou seung naan dak gau 無常難得久  
mou seung naan dak gau 無常難得久  
mou seung naan dak gau 無常難得久

A  
mou seung naan dak gau 無常難得久  
mou seung naan dak gau 無常難得久  
mou seung naan dak gau 無常難得久

T  
mou seung 無常  
mou seung 無常  
yan ngoi 恩愛  
mou seung 無常  
mou seung 無常  
yan ngoi 恩愛

B  
mou seung 無常  
mou seung 無常  
naan dak 難得  
gau 久  
mou seung 無常  
naan dak 難得  
gau 久

# Impermanence

18

29

S

*mf* 2

do wai goey  
多 畏 懼

A

*P*

sang sai  
生 世

do wai goey  
多 畏 懼

T

*P*

sang sai  
生 世

do wai  
多 畏

wai goey  
畏 懼

B

*P*

sang sai  
生 世

do wai  
多 畏

wai goey  
畏 懼

36

S

*f*

sang sai do wai goey  
生 世 多 畏 懼

*f*

yat tsai yan ngoi wui  
一 切 恩 愛 會

*mf*

sang sai do wai goey  
生 世 多 畏 懼

A

*f*

do wai goey  
多 畏 懼

*mf*

sang sai do wai goey  
生 世 多 畏 懼

*f*

yan ngoi wui  
恩 愛 會

*mf*

do wai goey  
多 畏 懼

T

*f*

do wai sang sai do wai  
多 畏 生 世 多 畏

*mf*

goey  
懼

*f*

yan ngoi wui  
恩 愛 會

*mf*

do wai goey  
多 畏 懼

B

*f*

do wai goey  
多 畏 懼

*mf*

wai goey  
畏 懼

*f*

yan ngoi wui  
恩 愛 會

*mf*

sang sai do wai goey  
生 世 多 畏 懼

*mf*

wai goey  
畏 懼

wai goey  
畏 懼

wai goey  
畏 懼

wai  
畏



## Impermanence

9

44

*poco a poco cresc. ---*

S

*P*

ming ngai yu sun lou  
命 危 於 晨 露

ming ngai yu sun lou  
命 危 於 晨 露

yan ngoi do wai  
恩 愛 多 畏

*poco a poco cresc. ---*

yan ngoi do wai  
恩 愛 多 畏

A

*P*

lou  
露

sun  
晨

lou  
露

*poco a poco cresc. ---*

sang sai ming ngai  
生 世 命 危

*poco a poco cresc. ---*

sang sai ming ngai  
生 世 命 危

T

*P*

lou  
露

sun  
晨

lou  
露

yat tsai  
一 切

ming ngai  
命 危

*poco a poco cresc. ---*

yat tsai  
一 切

ming ngai  
命 危

B

*P*

goey  
懼

ming ngai yu sun lou  
命 危 於 晨 露

ming  
命

ngai yu sun lou  
危 於 晨 露

ming ngai  
命 危

ming ngai  
命 危

53

S

ming  
命

ngai  
危

mf

ming ngai  
命 危

ming  
命

ngai  
危

ming  
命

A

ming ngai  
命 危

ming  
命

ngai  
危

wai  
畏

goey  
懼

mf

ming  
命

mf

ming ngai  
命 危

T

mf

ming  
命

ngai  
危

yu  
於

sun  
晨

lou  
露

mf

ming ngai  
命 危

ming ngai  
命 危

ming  
命

ngai  
危

B

mf

ming  
命

ngai  
危

yu  
於

sun  
晨

lou  
露

mf

ming ngai  
命 危

ming ngai  
命 危

ming  
命

ngai  
危

mf

ming ngai  
命 危

sun  
晨

lou  
露

## Impermanence

20

61

S

ngai 危

ming 命 ngai 危

sun 晨

lou 露

ming 命 ngai 危

ming 命

ngai 危

ming 命 ngai 危

ming 命 ngai 危

ming 命

A

ngai 危

yu 於

sun 晨

lou 露

ming 命 ngai, 危,

mou 無

sheung 常

ming 命 ngai, 危,

mou 無

sheung 常

T

ming 命 ngai 危

ming 命 ngai 危

ming 命

mou 無

sheung 常

ming 命 ngai 危

ming 命

mou 無

sheung 常

B

mou 無

sheung 常

mou 無

sheung 常

mou 無

sheung 常

mou 無

sheung 常



69

S

ming 命 ngai 危

Mou 無 sheung. 常.

pp

A

ming ngai yu sheng lou 命 危 於 晨 露

Mou 無 sheung 常.

pp

T

ming ngai yu sheng lou 命 危 於 晨 露

Mou 無 sheung. 常.

pp

B

Yat 切 mou 無 sheung. 常.

mou 無 sheung 常.

pp