

Songs of Love and Protest

While the title *Songs of Love and Protest* may call to mind a mixed assortment—love songs and protest songs—it implies rather a synthesis. A lover makes “protestations” of faithfulness, or rebels against infidelity, inconstancy, and death; while in the protest songs, beneath irony and anger, lies the sorrow of a disappointed patriot. The political is personal.

Though often pointedly relevant, the texts are all traditional, culled word-for-word from centuries-old sources.

The songs may be performed by full chorus or a small group. Solo indications (in “Jack Hall” and “The Young Man”) apply if a larger group is used; in “Jack Hall” additional phrases may be sung by solo choir at the director’s discretion.

Long Night 2

One of the oldest English lyrics with surviving music. Ignorant of this fact and of the music, I wrote an entirely new setting in a distorted pseudo-Mediaeval style.

Floating Stanzas (The True Lover’s Farewell I) 4

A “floating stanza” denotes generic lines—not tied to a specific storyline—that “float” from song to song in an oral tradition. In the United States, these two verses have “spun off” to become a familiar stand-alone text.

Jack Hall 8

This song survives in many versions, often as “Sam Hall.” I imagine the proud defiance of a man unjustly convicted of murder (“I killed a man, they *said*...”) though the historical Jack Hall was executed in 1701 for burglary. The old-fashioned curse “damn your eyes” here provides an interesting twist on the moral concept of bearing witness.

The setting traverses many styles, from modernist tone-clusters to Renaissance polyphony, but the only actual musical quotation—of a well-known doo-wop tune—is at the very end.

Floating Stanzas (The True Lover’s Farewell II) 17

These two verses are often identified as part of “Lord Randall” because they are found there in Child no. 73, but are more aptly classified as floating. This song also “floats” within the set, a moment of calm between the angry songs before and after.

The Young Man Who Travelled Up and Down 21

This setting is full of musical quotations, from the “Sailor’s Hornpipe” and U.S. Marine Hymn to Handel and Rossini. However, the familiar tunes are distorted to fit the prevailing octatonic scale, lending them an eerie and fatalistic edge.

As with all the songs in the set, the venerable text is unaltered from the original source. The dedicatee is author of U.S. HR 2459, calling for the creation of a cabinet-level Department of Peace.

1. Long Night

Mirrie it is while sumer ilast
with fugheles song.
Oc nu necheth windes blast
and weder strong.
Ei, ei! What this night is long
and ich with well michel wrong
soregh and murne and fast.

mirjə it is wilə su:məθ ilæst
wid fugeləs sɒŋ
ɔk nu neɪtʃeə wɪndəs blæst
ænd wɛðə strɒŋ
eɪ eɪ wʌt ðɪs niçt ɪz lɒŋ
ænd ɪç wɪd wɛl mɪtʃəl rɒŋ
sɔðrɛx ænd mu:rnə ænd fæst

It is merry while summer lasts,
with the song of birds.
But now the wind's blast approaches,
and strong weather.
Ay, ay! How long this night is,
and I, most unjustly,
sorrow and mourn and fast.

2. Floating Stanzas (The True Lover's Farewell I)

O fare thee well my own true love,
O fare thee well a while.
I'm going away, but I'm coming back
If I go ten thousand mile.

Ten thousand mile, my own true love,
Ten thousand mile or more,
The sea may freeze, and earth will burn,
If I never more return.

3. Jack Hall

Oh my name it is Jack Hall, Jack Hall
Oh my name it is Jack Hall.
And I killed a man they said
And I smashed his bloody head
And I left him going dead
Damn your eyes!

And this shall be my knell, my knell
And this shall be my knell:
God damn you all to hell
And I hope you sizzle well
Damn your eyes!

4. Floating Stanzas (The True Lover's Farewell II)

Who will shoe your little feet,
Who will glove your little white hand
And who will kiss your red rosy cheeks
When I am in some foreign land?

Papa will shoe my little feet,
Mama will glove my little white hand,
Nobody will kiss my red rosy cheeks
When you are in some foreign land.

5. The Young Man Who Travelled Up and Down

When I was a little boy I travelled up and down
And I chanced to stop in a seaport town.
The drums they beat and the cannon did roar
And the people there told me the wars weren't o'er.

In come the soldier, so very neat and fine,
"Come landlady, draw me a pint of good wine,
And we'll charge it to the borrow along with the old score,
And I'll pay you for your liquors, when the wars are o'er."

In come the barber, a-wishing little harm
With a great long beard as long as your arm.
Saying, "If I don't get a kiss from the girl I adore,
I'll be hanged if I shave till the wars are o'er."

In come the blacksmith, greatest trade of all,
Sold his bed and blankets for some iron and coal.
Now he has to sleep upon the cold frozen floor,
He may lay there and freeze till the wars are o'er.

Along come the tailor, and loud did he say,
"The way I make my living is by four and six a day,
Mending up old clothes all ragged and torn,
And they never will get new ones till the wars are o'er."

Along come the teacher, with his cunning looks,
He said he made his living by the teaching of his books.
He has got a list of scholars and he can't get no more,
And he can't get the school till the wars are o'er."

In come the devil with a Yankee on his back,
He picked up the soldier to balance his pack.
The Yankee rode behind and the soldier rode before,
And away they went a-jogging till the wars are o'er.