

Israel Lai (2023)

牆內幾點鐘

coeng⁴ noi⁶ gei² dim² zung¹

for voice and piano

coeng⁴ noi⁶ gei² dim² zung¹ (*What time is it behind the wall*) is an allusion to survivor's guilt.

The song starts with an implication that the protagonist is imprisoned, but later reveals that they have, in fact, escaped imprisonment. The freedom that they once pursued has become a source of anxiety, which they cower in, as they contemplate a fast asleep, blissfully ignorant existence behind those bars.

Written for a workshop with Sarah Dacey and Adam Swayne from the Riot Ensemble.

israellai.com

Duration 6'30"

Performance Notes

x noteheads denote Sprechgesang.

Pronunciation guide

Although Cantonese is a tonal language, the linguistic tones have been integrated into pitches and glides in the melody, such that the singer does not have to worry about them.

Cantonese is generally romanised through the Jyutping romanisation system. However, this system fails to take into account subtler variations in sounds which are essential to this piece. Hence, this score will use a modified version of the system as follows:

Vowels

ə	a short, central ah sound, close to the southern English 'gut'
a	as in 'father'
e	a high eh sound, as in French 'école' or the first half of 'gate'
ɛ	e as in 'get'
o	a closed o sound, as in French 'au' or the first half of 'goat'
ɔ	an open o sound, as in British English 'got'
ö	a rounded ɛ, as in French 'veux', German 'hört', or British English 'hurt'
ü	a rounded i, as in French 'tu' or German 'Süd', close to English 'tune'
u	as in French 'vous' or German 'gut', close to English 'goose'
i	as in 'greet'

Consonants are as in English, except:

j	as in English 'year' (c.f. German or IPA 'ja')
ch	ch in 'church' but higher, similar to British English 'tune'
zh	ch but unaspirated, similar to British English 'stew'
c	as in German 'Zeit' or English 'cats'
z	c but unaspirated
b, d, g	voiceless unaspirated stops, as in French 'pour', 'ton', 'court' or English 'spoon', 'stop', 'scone'
syllable-final -p, -t, -k (e.g. maak)	unreleased stops, i.e. get ready to say the sound, but cut it off instead of saying it, not unlike colloquial English 'bit odd innit?'
syllabic m, ng	m and ng can be held in Cantonese, akin to humming 'm' in choral music.

English-based substitutions

Since Cantonese is rarely seen in art songs, minor variations are acceptable. If necessary, feel free to use the English approximations of less common sounds, such as:

b, d, g, zh, z	English b, d, g, j, ts
ö, ü	English er, oo

Text

The text in Cantonese characters, romanisation, and English approximation.

The romanisation is worth following, since the song occasionally tweaks tones and pitches in the text to produce new meaning; but bear in mind that the singer does not need an awareness of the tones in order to sing the song.

Instead of denoting the six linguistic tones in that column, this page uses a four-tone system based solely on pitch height from high to low, ignoring pitch contour — a system that has its roots in the Cantopop (Cantonese pop music) industry.

Linguistic tone	Pitch	Denoted by
1, 2	High	a
3, 5	Mid-high	<i>a</i>
6	Mid-low	a
4	Low	<u>a</u>

Cantonese	Romanisation	English translation
鐘 幾點鐘 日頭幾點鐘 日光 向雙眼 向面珠 衝 眼一擘 係 牆	cöng nòi gei dim zhong zhong gei dim zhong jät təu gei dim zhong jät gwəng <i>höng</i> söng <i>ngan</i> <i>höng</i> min zhü chong <i>ngan</i> jät mak häi chöng	What time is it bell/clock what time what time in the day daylight rushing to the eyes to the cheeks eyes open to see a wall
四捧石牆 八隻暗角 攻入一線光	<i>sei</i> bong sək chöng <i>bat zek əm gək</i> gong jəp jät sin gwəng	four stone walls eight dark corners one ray of light
牆內幾點鐘	chöng nòi gei dim zhong	what time inside the wall
牆內 窗內 牆外 窗外 光 白光 午夜白光 滲透牆罅 滲透腳下磚瓦 四方 八角 當初幾咁奔放	chöng nòi chöng nòi chöng ngòi chöng ngòi gwəng bak gwəng <i>ng jɛ</i> bak gwəng <i>səm təu</i> chöng <i>la</i> <i>səm təu</i> gök ha zhün nga <i>sei fəng bat gək</i> <i>dəng chə gei gəm bən fəng</i>	inside the walls/windows outside the walls/windows light white light the midnight moon infiltrates the walls infiltrates bricks under the feet four sides, eight corners once a carefree land
近咗 又近咗 湧緊埋嚟 眼光光 已經唔識彷徨 幾點鐘喇 醒啊	<i>kən</i> zhə, <i>jəu</i> <i>kən</i> zhə jong gən mai lei <i>ngan</i> gwəng gwəng <i>ji</i> geng m sek pəng wəng gei dim zhong <i>la</i> <i>seng a</i>	it's nearer, nearer still gushing this way wide-open eyes have forgotten how to fear what time is it already please wake up

晏喺
攞喇
瞓呀
等啦
真係好難等
等等等

an na
mən la
fən a
dəŋ la
zən həi hou nan dəŋ
dəŋ dəŋ dəŋ

is it late already
time is tight
should I sleep
should I wait
it's really hard to wait
wait wait wait

燈？
磚石灰間 白間
乜月圓呀
幾點鐘

dəŋ?
zhün sək fui gan, bak gan
mət jüt jün a
gei dim zhong?

light?
grey, white stripes on bricks
is it a full moon
what time is it

終於瞓

zhong jü fən

finally, sleep

窗外幾點鐘
醒喺？

chöŋ ŋəi gei dim zhong
səŋ na?

what time is it out there
is it time to wake up?

coeng⁴ noi⁶ gei² dim² zung¹

Text: Israel Lai

Music: Israel Lai (2023)

Steadily $\text{♩} = 60$

ppp mechanically cresc.

zhong zhong zhong zhong zhong zhong zhong

p

8va

p marcato

5

più espr.

zhong gei dim zhong? Jət təu gei dim zhong?

p

8va

simile

Red. Red.

10

mf

mp

Jət gwong hōng sōng ngan,

mf

mp

8va

p

Red. Red. Red.

14 *f*

hōng min zhū, ngan zhū chong!

(8)

(Red.)

18 *p* *p* *mp*

ng Ngan jət

(8)

(Red.)

22 *p pesante*

mak hoi chōng.

(8)

pp

8va *8va*

(Red.)

25

25

gva Sei min *gva* sek chöng, bat zek

(Red.)

28

28

cresc.

äm gök, sei, chöng, äm, ba, bak, chöng,

(Red.)

31

31

mp leggiero

gong jəp jət sin gwöng, gong

legato

f

fp

(Red.)

35 *p*

jəp jət sin gwəng. Chöng noi

mf-p *pp misterioso*

(Red.)

39 *p molto legato*

gei dim zhong? Chöng noi,

dim.

(Red.)

43

chöng noi, chöng noi, chöng noi...

gva

(Red.)

46 Very freely, roughly coordinate with piano

Strict rhythm

8va

ppp mp ppp mp ppp mp

Ped. Ped.

47 *ppp* ————— *p* always taper off

Gwo - - - - - ng,

ppp mp ppp mp

Ped. Ped.

[47] *mp dolce* *simile*

gwong, bak gwong, _____

Ped. Ped. Ped.

48

ng je bak gwong _____

Ped.

[48]

səm təu chöng la, — səm təu —

mf *cresc.*

Red. *Red.*

molto rall......

[48]

gök ha zhün a. —

Red.

In time, pesante $\text{♩} = 52$

49

f

Sei fong bat gok, sei fong

sf *f* *pp* *mf* *p*

8va

Ped.

52

mp

bat gok, dng cho, dng cho gei gam

mf *mp*

Ped.

56

ben fong.

pp sub.

mf

Red. Red. Red.

59

p anxiously

Kən zho,

mf cantabile

Red. Red.

63

mf

kən zho, jəu

mp

mf

(Red.) Red. Red.

67 *f*

kən zho, jong gən mai lei.

(*Red.*) *f* *Red.*

71 *p bell-like* *cresc.*

Ngan gwong gwong, gwong gwong,

p sub. *Red.*

74 *mf dejectedly* *dim.* *pp* *stringendo*

— ji — geng — m — sek — pong wong. —

(*Red.*) *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

78 *mp* *p*

Gei dim zhong la?

p *f*

(Red.)

82 *f* *alarmed* *Apprehensively* *d = 48* *stringendo* *mp*

Seng a! An na? Mən la!

ppp *cresc.* *mp*

(Red.)

88 *mf* *f* *Tempo I* (*d = 60*)

Fən a? Dəng la!

cresc.

(Red.)

104 *mf* *dim.*

dəng dəng - ng. Zhün sək,

pp

Red.

108 *p confusedly* *cresc.*

zhün sək fui gan, bak gan, fui gan, bak

p *mp*

112

gan, fui gan, bak gan,

mf *f* *pp* *8va*

(Red.)

116

ff

fp

mət

118

mp marcato

jüt jün a? Gei dim

p

121

p lazily

zhong? Zhong jü,

pp

Red.

rit.....a tempo

125 *pp*

zhong jü, zhong jü fən.

Red.

129 *pp*

Chöng ngoi gei dim zhong?

(*Red.*)

132 *p surprised*

Seng na?

(*Red.*)