

Igor Stravinsky
Le Rossignol

Sung libretto in English

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Quatre poèmes hindous
Berceuse hindoue

Sung texts in English



TESTAMENT

STRAVINSKY: THE NIGHTINGALE

FIRST ACT

INTRODUCTION

[1] *The curtain rises, revealing a landscape at night near to the sea. The borders of a forest. At the back of the stage there is a fisherman in his boat. In the theatre the Fisherman's part is mimed on the stage: his "voice" comes from the orchestra pit.*

THE FISHERMAN

[2] Heavenly spirit, catching fish,
Heavenly spirit, what do you wish?
Winds cast your nets, winds pull,
winds bring them back,
always bring them back full.
Pale, how pale is the young moon,
morning light will break too soon.
The waves are murmuring,
where is the nightingale?
I wait to hear the nightingale, it is his time to sing,
oh come, pure voice, and fill the night
with your sweet song!
Ah, I have listened to him long,
forgetting fishing nets,
forgetting all my worries,
Heavenly spirit, in your sea
are all the fish you have caught and made free
changed into birds, birds singing heavenly,
fish changed to birds singing to me.
Pale, how pale is the young moon.
Morning light will break too soon.
The voice of the Nightingale comes from the orchestra pit

THE NIGHTINGALE

[3] Ah! Ah! Ah!
From the sky a star

in diamond dew fell scattered,
fell on the garden roses, fell in diamond dew
the gardens of the palace,
the gardens of the rose.

THE FISHERMAN

Oh God above,
how beautiful it is!

THE NIGHTINGALE

Ah, do you hear my voice?
Oh roses, do you hear?
Your heads bowed low with glittering dew,
bowed down with diamond dew?
Oh weep your diamond tears,
in diamond tears your weeping.
Ah, ah ...
The Chamberlain, the Bonze, the courtiers and the Lady Cook enter

THE COOK

[4] This forest clearing is the place I mentioned,
where every night I hear the nightingale
Ah, God above
how he does sing!
His voice brings tears,
his voice brings tears but tears of happiness
which make me feel
which make me feel as from my mother's kisses.
Oh, listen, hear how he will sing,
now he will sing!
A strange sound is heard

THE COURTESANS

Oh listen!
(with others)
Oh listen!

THE CHAMBERLAIN

What power, oh what strength!

THE BONZE

Tsing-pay, what force he has for such a small bird.

THE COURTESANS

Who would believe it?
How marvellous it is!

ALL

Fantastic!

THE COOK

That was not the nightingale;

THE CHAMBERLAIN

Pff!!

THE COOK

it was a forest cow;
I know its bellowing.
The nightingale is not here. Believe me now:
I recognise it,
the fisherman's old cow,
the nightingale is not yet here.
Again a strange sound is heard

THE COURTIER

At last, it is he!

THE CHAMBERLAIN

Without a doubt

THE COURTIER

surely this time it is the nightingale?
How beautiful his singing!

THE BONZE

Tsing-pay! It sounds just like the bells that ring
in our pagoda.

THE CHAMBERLAIN

Ah yes, it has a golden voice,

THE COOK

My goodness.

THE CHAMBERLAIN

it is the bird.

THE COOK

no, oh no, this is not he.

THE COURTIER

What is it then?

THE COOK

The frogs were croaking
and you thought you heard the bird,

THE COURTIER

The frog? Oh no, it's not so!

THE COOK

the nightingale.

THE COURTIER

Be quiet!

THE CHAMBERLAIN

Will we have to wait much longer?
The courtiers plead with the cook

THE COURTIER

Oh little cook, please find the nightingale.
Oh little cook, please find the nightingale.

THE CHAMBERLAIN

Oh cook, dear cook,
we will appoint you Emperor's Chief High Cook.

THE BONZE

Tsing-pay, you will be able
then to see the Emperor when he's at table.

THE COOK

Listen, he's there, I hear him now.

THE OTHERS

Where, where?

THE COOK

Is that the Bird? He's in the tree.

THE OTHERS

How dark his colour!

THE BONZE

Tsing-Pe!

THE CHAMBERLAIN

He is most simple in appearance.

THE COURTESANS

The Nightingale!

THE BONZE

Tsing-pay! He is an artist

THE CHAMBERLAIN

But he will have a big success at court.

THE COOK

Dear nightingale, these nobles here before you
have come to tell the Emperor's desire to hear
you, our ruler's wish to hear you sing.

THE NIGHTINGALE

What great joy!
Shall I start now, oh nobles?

THE CHAMBERLAIN

o dearest nightingale, oh matchless bird,
his royal majesty, ruler of China,

THE BONZE

Tsing-Pe!

THE CHAMBERLAIN

has heard such wonders of your glorious singing,

THE BONZE

Tsing-Pe!

THE CHAMBERLAIN

he now invites you to a palace feast.

THE NIGHTINGALE

Ah, in a forest wild
before the break of day,
oh then a nightingale
will always sing most sweetly.
But if the Emperor is pleased to hear me,
I will with pleasure go with you to sing
so take me now with you, oh nobles.
The Nightingale flies to the Cook

THE COURTESANS

Did you see that?

THE BONZE

Ah, look at that!

THE CHAMBERLAIN

He lights upon the hand of little she-cook.
And now, good cook, take him straight away,
and we will follow you directly to the palace.

THE BONZE

Tsing-Pe! Tsing-Pe!
Oh cook, what would have been our fate
without you? Tsing-pay! Tsing-pay!

THE COURTESANS (tenors)

without you? Tsing-pay! Tsing-pay!
Alone what would have been our fate
The Bonze and the Chamberlain leave (basses)
Oh awful,
(tenors)
we would be beaten at the Emperor's bidding
on the belly with bamboo!
they leave

THE FISHERMAN

Heavenly spirit, you gave them song to win
earth's rulers from the wrong,
the songs of birds bring tears to the wise,
and tears are stars in the skies!

SECOND ACT

ENTR' ACTE - Draught Winds

*During the entr'acte all the action on the stage
takes place behind a light transparent silk curtain,
which blows gently, representing the wind*

FIRST CHORUS

Bring light, bring light, bring light,
oh quickly bring us light.

SECOND CHORUS

Come, light the lanterns here,

FIRST CHORUS

Bring lanterns here, bring lanterns

quickly here Bring light, bring light, bring light!

(soprano solo)

Who saw the nightingale?

FIRST CHORUS

No one has seen him.

Bring quickly here the tiny silver bells.

SECOND CHORUS

The cook alone knows where the nightingale is.

FIRST CHORUS

Bring lanterns quick

SECOND CHORUS

and light their faces.

Yes, quickly, quickly, bring lanterns

FIRST & SECOND CHORUSES

Bring lanterns quick and fire to light their faces.
quick and light their faces, light their faces.

Bring lanterns quick and fire to light their faces.
(tenor solo)

We'll tie a silver bell to every flower,
a tiny silver bell.

SECOND CHORUS

That will be charming!

(soprano and alto solo)

How truly Chinese and how truly charming.

SECOND CHORUS (dancing)

How the light of lanterns gleam

like gold in the night!

-bring lantern light!

FIRST CHORUS (altos, dancing)

How the light of lanterns gleam

(with second chorus)

like gold in the night!

Listen to the bells,

do you hear the silver bells?

SECOND CHORUS

The golden lanterns now are here (tenor solo)

Where's little cook? Where is she hiding?

(alto solo)

The little she-cook is now called Chief High Cook

SECOND CHORUS

(sopranos near, altos afar)

Oh look-Oh, look, the cook is coming here.

(all to the front)

Oh, may we ask you, Chief High Cook, to listen.

(tenor solo)

Those lanterns there, be quick! (soprano solo)

Who wants the golden ones? (with tenor)

The golden lanterns?

FIRST CHORUS (altos)

More silver bells, bring here more silver bells.

SECOND CHORUS (distant)

The flowers in the wind make bell-like music.

(tenor solo)

Bring lanterns, bring more lanterns here.

SECOND CHORUS

Oh little cook, oh little cook, please tell us
if you have seen the nightingale,
please tell us. Does he shine
like diamonds in the sun?

FIRST CHORUS (afar)

We need more golden lanterns, more, and more ..

THE COOK

No, he is very small and grey in colour.
You would not see him in a forest thicket,
but when he sings you are possessed,
you cannot keep, you cannot keep back
the flowing tears, though you are happy.

FIRST CHORUS

Listen to the bells;

(with Second Chorus)

do you hear the silver bells?

Ah! All the lights are gleaming

golden in the night. (in fear)
Ah!

THE CHAMBERLAIN
Make way at once. The Emperor approaches.
The transparent curtains part slowly

8 CHINESE MARCH
When the curtains have parted the porcelain palace of the Emperor of China is seen. The architecture is fantastic. There are decorations for a feast and lights are everywhere. The nobles make a solemn entry. At the front of the stage, with back to the audience, stands a servant holding a perch on which is the Nightingale. Servants carry in the Emperor on his canopied chair, which is deposited on a podium in the centre of the stage

THE CHAMBERLAIN
Oh Emperor almighty,
the Nightingale is here,
awaiting your command to start his singing.
the Emperor makes a sign to the Nightingale to begin

9 SONG OF THE NIGHTINGALE
Ah!
Oh joy that fills my heart;
oh gardens full of fragrance;
the flowers now in bloom;
the gardens in the sun!
But oh, my heart is sad,
a morning mist surrounds it,
my tears shine crystal clear
at night time, with the moon.
Oh weep, my tender heart,
Oh weep for your beloved
in dreams, beloved dreams,
in dreams, beloved dreams ... Ah!

THE EMPEROR
Your Song is beautiful!
I will reward you now .. Tell me.
Around your neck I'll hang
the Order of the Golden Slipper.

THE NIGHTINGALE
The tear drops shining in your grateful eyes,
o Emperor almighty,
I wish for nothing else, I am rewarded,
Ah, great is my reward!
the ladies of the court try to imitate the
Nightingale by filling their mouths with water
and gargling with their heads thrown back
THE COURTESANS
How well he sings his song!
How unrehearsed and yet how perfect.

THE CHAMBERLAIN
Oh Emperor almighty,
Here are the envoys from the Ruler of Japan.
two Japanese envoys enter, followed by a third carrying a golden box in which is a large mechanical bird

10 THE TWO ENVOYS
Oh with the evening sun,
the Japanese Sovereign himself commanded us
to journey to his highness, the ruler of China,
with greetings and with a gift.
the two envoys withdraw: the third advances towards the Emperor and presents him with the mechanical nightingale

THE THIRD ENVOY (almost shouting)
From the Lord of Japan I bring this Nightingale,
poor rival to the Nightingale of the
Emperor of China.

11 THE PERFORMANCE OF THE
MECHANICAL NIGHTINGALE
During the performance the real Nightingale disappears. With a gesture the Emperor orders

the mechanical nightingale to be stopped

THE CHORUS
Psst, psst, psst, psst ...

THE COURTESANS
Tui, tu i...
Klu, klu ...

THE CHORUS
psst, psst, psst ...

THE COURTESANS
tui, tui, tui ...
klu, klu, klu ...
the Emperor, who wants to hear the real Nightingale again turns his head and points in the direction of the Nightingale's perch. When he sees that the bird is no longer there he turns perplexed to the Chamberlain

THE EMPEROR
Where is he?

THE CHAMBERLAIN
He flew away, great Emperor almighty.

THE EMPEROR
I declare for ever banished from the states of our
empire the bird who rudely flew away.
And I name the Japanese Emperor's Nightingale
first singer, to be installed at once on our bed
table from the left side,
the bed table of our royal self.
The Emperor gives the sign to start the procession. He is carried off and everyone follows him. Slow curtain

12 THE FISHERMAN'S VOICE
Death hides the stars in darkness and gloom.
Death holds the stars in its eternal tomb.
But in the bird the spirit's voice, heavenly,
will conquer death and set the stars free.

THIRD ACT

Curtain. A room in the palace. It is night with a moon. At the rear of the stage is a huge bed where lies the sick Emperor. Death, seated at the bedside, wears the Imperial Crown and holds the Imperial Sword and Standard. The curtain separating the bedroom from the antechambers is open.

13 CHORUS OF SPECTRES
Before you we stand to serve you with your past,
o you must remember us,
must remember us? Hear us? ..

THE EMPEROR (afraid)
Who is it! What are you?

CHORUS OF SPECTRES
We are all your past deeds,

THE EMPEROR
I do not understand.

CHORUS OF SPECTRES
we will not go away.

THE EMPEROR
I do not want ... I will not listen to you!
Play music now, musicians, quickly

CHORUS OF SPECTRES
You must remember us,

THE EMPEROR
play to me Chinese drums and gongs and
Cymbals .
Start the music!

CHORUS OF SPECTRES
You must remember us,

THE EMPEROR
O where are

CHORUS OF SPECTRES
hear us!

THE EMPEROR
my musicians?

[14] THE NIGHTINGALE
Ah, I am here,
oh Emperor almighty.
I come to tell how beautiful
your garden is tonight.
A ...
The night is blue
soon the morning will come.
The stars above, glowing,
unfold the flowers below, and fragrant breaths
of flowers, starlight and flowers, charm the night.
The roses pure and white are all weeping! Ah!

THE EMPEROR
How beautiful!

THE NIGHTINGALE
The flowers waken, ah – the stars ...
and there another garden lies beyond
another wall.

DEATH
I like to hear your songs. Why do you Stop?
I want to hear more. Sing again.

THE NIGHTINGALE
Ah, give the Crown back to the Emperor,
give it back and I will sing once more.

DEATH
Return it? Return it? I will agree.
I will return the Crown, you see!
But sing more, sing once more.

THE NIGHTINGALE
Give back also the precious Sword and Standard.
Give them back and I will sing until daybreak.

DEATH
Yes, I will give them back
to hear again such singing.

THE NIGHTINGALE
The moon is shining sadly.
Ah, graves buried in silence,
graves, green with moss, dripping dewdrops,
how sad death's garden!
How cold and sad death's garden!
The moon is shining sadly
on graveyards lost in silence.
Ah-now the stars are fading.
White wreaths of fog
floating and weaving, surround the tombstones,
and glowworms put out their light.
The moon is shining sadly on graveyards
lost in silence. Death disappears

THE EMPEROR
How sweetly sung, oh little bird,
I feel my strength returning.
Please do not flyaway now,
in my court you will become the first
and highest person.

THE NIGHTINGALE
O no, O no,
the gift you gave is better,
the tears that fill your eyes are my reward.
Oh Emperor almighty. Ah!
I will not forget those tears, my ruler;
each night I will return to you
and sing until the daybreak.
Goodbye, goodbye, great Emperor.
I will return and sing 'til daybreak,
Oh Emperor, Oh Emperor almighty.

[15] SOLEMN PROCESSION
*The Courtiers approach the Emperor's bed.
Two pages open the bed curtains.
The Emperor is in full regalia in bright sunlight in
the centre. The courtiers prostrate themselves.*

THE EMPEROR
Be welcome here!

[16] THE FISHERMAN'S VOICE
The night is ended with the new sun;
now birds are singing the day begun.
Listen to them, with them rejoice.
They are the spirit's heavenly voice.

THE END

DELAGE: FOUR HINDU POEMS

[17] MADRAS (*Bhartrihari à Maurice Ravel*)
A slender-waisted beauty
Walks beneath the forest trees
resting from time to time.
With her hand she lifts the three
Gold veils that cover her breasts,
and sends back to the moon
the rays which bathed her.

[18] LAHORE (*Heine*)
A lone pine tree stands
upon an arid mountain of the North.
It slumbers.
Ice and snow engulf it in a mantle of white.
It dreams of a palm tree, far away
in the distant Orient, that pines,
alone and silent, on the slopes of its burning rock.

[19] BÉNARÈS (*Delage à Florent Schmitt*)
In those days the arrival on earth
of Buddha was announced.
There was a great noise of clouds in the sky.
The Gods, waving their fans and their attire,
scattered countless wondrous flowers.

Mysterious, sweet perfumes
intertwined like creepers
on the balmy air of that spring night.
The divine pearl of the moon
came to rest over the marble Palace
guarded by the twenty thousand elephants
like grey hills the colour of the clouds.

[20] JEYPUR (*Bhartrihari à Stravinsky*)
If you think of her
you suffer a grievous torment.
If you see her
your mind is perturbed.
If you touch her
you lose your reason.
How can she be called beloved

Translations: Mark Valencia

[21] THE WHITE SEAL (*Kipling*)
Oh! hush thee, my baby,
the night is behind us,
And black are the waters
that sparkled so green.
The moon, o'er the combers,
looks forward to find us
At rest in the hollows
that rustle between.
Where billow meets billow,
there soft be thy pillow;
Ah, weary wee flipperling,
curl at thy ease!
The storm shall not wake thee,
nor shark overtake thee,
Asleep in the arms
of the slow-swinging seas.