SHULAMIT RAN
MOON SONGS
A Song Cycle in Four Acts

Act I: Creation

Lu lo haya lo laila mi'leylot ka-ele		If he hadn't had a night like this one out of his nights
L'lo ulai v'alelai.		Without maybe and woe is me.
Al harekhovot.		About the streets.
Al megilot ha'esh ha'ele.		About those scrolls of fire.
V'khol ha'khalomot hayu v'nivre-u.		And all the dreams were and were created.
Ata holekh mimena v'eleyha.		You go from her and to her.
Mosif gshamim azim,		Adding mighty rain,
Bore l'ma-ankha yareyakh…	1)	creating for yourself a moon…
Asa yare-akh l'mo-adim		
Shemesh yada mevo-o	2)	[The Lord] made the moon to mark the holidays. The sun knows its way.
Mi yazkir tehilatekha		Who will recite your praises
Ba'asotkha ha'yareyakh		Your having made the moon?
Rishon l'kheshbon mo-adim u'zmanim		First in calculating holidays and times,
U'tkufot v'otot l'yamim v'shanim	3)	And seasons and signs for the days and the years.

1) Haim Gouri (b. 1923) from *Liheyot Akher II (To Be Different II)*
   Translation by David Stillman
2) Psalms, 104:19
3) Shlomo Ibn Gabirol (1021-1058?) from *Keter Malkhut (A Crown for the King XII)*
   Translation by the composer

Act II: Li Bai and the Vacant Moon

Li Bai tried to embrace the full moon and fell into the river, and he died…
…The world spoke to him, intoxicated, he drank to understand.
He knew there's no time for philosophy.
I, too, like him, the full moon I love, but I have no courage
to encircle it. I embrace the vacant moon, and my heart —
so it won't fall, so we won't fall!
Sh'lo yipol, sh'lo nipol.   (a)

Li Bai [an eighth-century Chinese poet] tried to embrace [encircle, surround, hug] the full moon. [He was known as a drunk!] He fell into the river and he died. [He died at the age of sixty-one.] Li Bai tried to embrace the full moon
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
The sea is calm tonight.

The world spoke to him, intoxicated, he drank to understand.
Listen!
Begin, and cease, and then again begin
...and he knew there is no time for philosophy.
I, too, like him, the full moon love, but I have no courage to encircle it.
Upon the straits... glimmering and vast...
I embrace the vacant moon, and my heart,
...The eternal note of sadness bring.
"I drink alone beneath the bright moonshine."
Sh'lo yipol, sh'lo nipol.   (b)

(a) Almog Behar (b. 1978) from *Li Bai V'Hayare'akh Hareik* (*Li Bai and the Vacant Moon*)
     Excerpts chosen and translated by the composer
(b) The composer's expansion of Behar's text interjects footnotes and elaborations (in brackets), excerpts (in
     italics) from *Dover Beach* by Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) and one line (in quotes) from *Drinking Alone
     Under the Moon* by Li Bai (701–762).

Entr'acte I (cello solo)

Act III: Star-Crossed

With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the skies,
How silently, and how wan a face!   1)
This lunar air
Draws me to you,
The moon's magnet
Aligns that pair
Whom dragons slew,
Whose course was set
Before they knew   2)

She who saw the moon last night
She who swayed with the chant
Died in her sleep or dreams—
To say she is dead seems scant.   3)

I see her now, denied to lay her head,
On cold blue nights, in hut or straw-built shed,
Turn to a silent smile their sleepy cry,
By pointing to the gliding moon on high...
...all light is mute amid the gloom
The interlunar Cavern of the Tomb.   4)

1) Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), from *Astrophil and Stella*
2) Samuel Menashe (1925-2011), *Star-Crossed*

3) Samuel Menashe, *She who saw the moon last night*
4) William Wordsworth (1770-1850), from *An Evening Walk*

Entr'acte II: Prayer to Pierrot [In homage to Arnold Schoenberg's Pierrot Lunaire (No. 9)]

Pierrot! My laughter —
I have forgotten how to laugh.
The image of splendor
has melted away, melted away.
Black on the pole
the flag now waves to me.
Pierrot! My laughter —
I have forgotten how to laugh.
Oh, give it back to me,
you medic of the soul,
you snowman of verse,
Your Serene Highness Moon,
Pierrot, my laughter!

Albert Giraud (1860-1929) Supplique (from *Pierrot Lunaire*)
Translation by David Stillman

Act IV: Medley

Ya-alat khen v'khetem Ophir
Bi'm-orah m'or yom takhpir
U'levana k'livnat safir
U'khe'etzem ha'shamayim   1)

Shemesh v'yare-akh l'olam shertu   2)

Ehi kofer l'ofer
Kam ba'leil l'kol kinor v'ugavim meitivim
Asher ra-ah kos b'yadi v'amar:
    "Shte mi'bein sfatai dam anavim"
V'yare-akh kmo yod
Nikhteva al ksut shakhar
Bi'meimey ha'zehavim   3)

A graceful doe, like gold of Ophir,
With her light, she shameth the light of day;
Like the moon, like paved work of sapphire,
As it were the very heaven.

Sun and moon forever serve.

I would be ransom for the fawn who, awakening
at nightto the melodious sound of strings and pipes,
    and seeing the cup in my hand says:
"Drink from between my lips the blood of grapes."
And the crescent-shaped moon
was inscribed upon the garments of dawn
in golden water.

[Ya-alat khen...	A graceful doe...]	(repeat of first stanza)
[Mi yazkir tehilatekha...	Who will recite your praises...]	(reprise from Act I)
[Shemesh v'yare-akh l'olam...	Sun and moon forever!!]	(repeat of 2nd "stanza")

1) Yehuda Halevi (1075–1141) from *Yona al Afikei Maim - Dove Beside The Water Brooks*
   Adapted from *Selected Poems of Yehuda Halevi,* edited by Heinrich Brody, and translated by Nina Salaman
2) Yehuda Halevi from *Ad Yom Va'leil Yishbetu - Until Day and Night Shall Cease*
   Translation by the composer
3) Shmu'el Hanagid (993-1056) *Ehi Kofer l'Ofer - I would be ransom for the fawn*
   Translation by the composer

The invitation from flute virtuoso Mimi Stillman to compose a work for her Dolce Suono Ensemble's Mahler/Schoenberg 2012 concert series that could serve as an homage as well as a companion piece to Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, one of the 20th-century's seminal compositions, was as challenging as it was intriguing. It would seem almost natural to make the work's critical position in music history a central focus in tackling such a task. And yet, the real homage to this masterpiece lies in the fact that nearly every one of its once revolutionary, genre-defining innovations has been absorbed into the mainstream of much of the music of the hundred years that has followed its creation.

Thus, I opted to make this work a nod in the direction of *Pierrot*—a work that has profoundly influenced my music in so many ways—yet without necessarily forcing myself into a deliberate *a priori* attempt to comment on it musically, except for the important fact that *Moon Songs* uses as its point of departure and inspiration a selection of texts (in some cases just fragments of poems), all of which, in various ways, refer to the moon. The texts set are in Hebrew and English, the two languages that have been dominant in my life.

The Hebrew texts span the gamut from the Bible, to medieval Hebrew poetry, to modern Israeli poetry. The English-language texts go from English Renaissance to contemporary American. As in many other works that use voice, including of course *Pierrot Lunaire*, the choice of texts and the way in which these texts are organized turned out to be a significant determining agent for the work that has ensued.

Shulamit Ran