

CHEN ZHANGYI  
**Three Nansi Songs**  
*for mixed choir*

MUZIKSEA

Commissioned by The Graduate Singers for its 5<sup>th</sup> year as an ensemble, it was premiered on 10 November 2015 on their anniversary concert FIVE. The set of three songs are inspired by the poetry of Singaporean poet Pooja Nansi. The evocative and urgent nature of her poetry had created new possibilities for me in this work. “*Harping on what should be*” is recorded on TGS’s debut EP.

- I. **Harping on what should be** (*like a broken record*) <sup>3’30</sup>
- II. **It will never be the same**  
(*new-age phenomenon with a soft tabla soundscape*) <sup>2’30</sup>
- III. **Listening to Mukesh** <sup>3’00</sup>

**Duration:** ca. 9’ 00”

## Programme Notes

**Harping on what should be** (*like a broken record*), is an excerpt of 'A rant' from Pooja Nansi's debut poetry collection *Stiletto Scars*. My approach to setting her text is based on the line "like a broken record", where the opening music (and words) are cast upon repetitive loops that at one point playfully refers to the then-current popular TV tune – hokkien-styled "Un-un-un....believable." Of course, the gist of the text urges the reader to break out of the mold:

Why are there no poems telling us to  
think think think dream dream dream  
in crazy unpredictable free verse,  
not in strict sonnets with rules or structure,  
harping on what should be  
like a broken record.

**It will never be the same** (language) is inspired Pooja's "The Inadequate vocabulary I learnt from Enid Blyton, Ted Hughes and Jane Austen". The idea 'of being exotic' is ironically taken to create *the 'new-age phenomenon with a soft tabla soundscape'*. I have not taken to setting the exact words, but 'soundscapes,' as the above line has suggested. However, the powerful opening lines had to be included:

You are expecting  
A rainbow of a poem  
That deals with Kamasutra linguistics.

## **Listening to Mukesh**

Phrases such as 'in that deliciously punctuated rhythm', "into the stone thud bass of the latest film song" and 'humming in twilight' are indeed vividly delicious lines. Again, here I have created soundscapes that evoke these scenarios, and took the liberty to quote the Hindi song "*Jaon kaha batayen dil*" by Mukesh, as Pooja did, in her poem.

Text by Pooja Nansi  
Excerpt of 'a rant' from *Stiletto Scars*

# harping on what should be

(like a broken record)

Chen Zhangyi

With Angst  $\text{♩} = 90$

Soprano *p* *mf*  
Why are there no po - em - s tell - ing us to

Mezzo-soprano *p* *mf*  
Why? no po - em - s tell - ing us to

Alto *p* *mf*  
Why? Why? tell - ing us to

Tenor *p* *mf*  
Why? Why?

Bass

Piano Reduction *p* *mf*  
With Angst  $\text{♩} = 90$

4 *f* articulate *mp* dolce  
think, think, think, dream, dream,

*f* articulate *mp* dolce  
think, think, think, dream, dream,

*f* articulate *mp* dolce  
think, think, think, dream, dream,

*f* articulate *mp* dolce  
think, think, think, dream, dream,

*f* articulate *mp* dolce  
think, think, think, dream, dream,

*f* articulate *mp* dolce  
think, think, dream, dream,

*f* articulate *mp* dolce

Musical score for measures 8-11. It consists of five vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "dream in crazy un un". The piano part features a complex harmonic structure with many accidentals and a large interval in the right hand.

Musical score for measures 12-15. It consists of five vocal staves and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are: "pre - dic - ta - ble free". The piano part features a complex harmonic structure with many accidentals and a large interval in the right hand. There are triplets in the vocal lines.

15

(♩ . = ♩) Strict; Predictable ♩ = 60

verse, not in strict son-nets with rules or

verse, not in strict son-nets with rules or

verse, not in strict son-nets with rules or

free verse, not in strict son-nets with rules or

free verse not strict

(♩ . = ♩) Strict; Predictable ♩ = 60

19

A Tempo ♩ = 90

struc - ture on what should be

struc - ture harp - ing on what should be

struc - ture harp - ing on what should be harp - ing

struc - ture harp - ing on what should be

son - nets harp - ing on what should be

A Tempo ♩ = 90

like a broken record. like a broken record.  
like a broken record. like a broken record.  
on harp-ing on like a broken record. like a broken record.  
harp-ing harp-ing on what should be  
harp-ing on what should be

(like a broken record)

27 *f dim.* think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think,  
*f dim.* think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think,  
*f dim.* think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think,  
*f dim.* think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think,  
*f dim.* think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think,  
*f dim.* think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think,  
*f dim.* think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think, think,

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dream \_\_\_\_\_ (solo)

dream \_\_\_\_\_ in

dream \_\_\_\_\_ in

dream \_\_\_\_\_ in

dream \_\_\_\_\_ in

dream \_\_\_\_\_ in

(like a broken record)

*mf*

cra - zy cra - zy cra - zy un - un

*mf*

cra - zy cra - zy cra - zy un

*mf*

cra - zy cra - zy cra - zy un - un

*mf*

cra - zy cra - zy cra - zy un - un

*mf*

cra - zy cra - zy cra - zy un

43  $\text{gradually more glottal}$  (♩=♩) **Predictable** ♩. = 60 (♩=♩)

un  
 un - un - un - pre - dic - ta - ble

un  
 un - un - un - pre - dic - ta - ble

un  
 un - un - un - pre - dic - ta - ble

un  
 un - un - un - pre - dic - ta - ble

un  
 un - un - un - pre - dic - ta - ble

**Predictable** ♩. = 60 (♩=♩)

46 (♩ = 90)

on what should be  
 harp - ing on what should be  
 harp - ing on what should be harp - ing  
 harp - ing on what should be

(♩ = 90)

49 (♩ = 60)

rit. . . . .

(♩ = 90)

harp - ing harp - ing on like a

harp - ing harp - ing harp - ing on like a

harp - ing harp - ing harp - ing harp - ing harp - ing on harp - ing

harp - ing on harp - ing on harp

harp - ing on harp - ing on

(♩ = 60) rit. (♩ = 90)

bro - ken re - cord. re - cord.

bro - ken re - cord. re - cord.

on like a bro - ken re - cord. re - cord.

ing harp - ing on what should be, like a bro - ken

harp - ing on what should be, like a bro - ken



Text from Pooja Nansi's  
"The Inadequate vocabulary  
I learnt from Enid Blyton,  
Ted Hughes and Jane Austen"

for The Graduate Singers

# it will never be the same

'new-age phenomenon with a soft tabla soundscape'

Chen Zhangyi

'of being exotic' ♩ = 90

Soprano

Mezzo-soprano

Alto

Tenor

Baritone

Bass

*pp* drone-like (create overtones)

*pp* *p* *pp*

*pp* alapana-like

*p*

a - i - e - o - u a - i - e - o - u a -

(gradually morph to the next vowel)

sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma

9

*p*

*mp*

*p*

*p* drone-like (create overtones)

*p*

- i - e - o - u sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa

pa sa re ga ma pa dha ni

a - i -

(gradually morph to the next vowel)

A

14

*mf* sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa

*mp* sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa sa

*mp* sa a i e o

*mf* e o u

*p* \*imitating indian percussion

Tha doom ki ta tha ka, Ta ka ta ri ki ta tha ka tham

\*konokkol patterns borrowed from percussionist Vikku Vinayakram

B

19 *mp* molto legato, poco a poco cresc.

You are ting bow

*(mp)* You pect rain

*(mp)* you ex a rain

*sub. p* sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa sa i e o u

*p* u sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa

Tha long doom ki ta tha ka, Ta ka ta ri ki ta tha ka doom Tha long ka doom, Tha long ka doom, Ta ka ta ri ki ta tha ka,

**C**

24

a po em

of po em (m)

of po em (m)

*p*

sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa sa i e o u

*mp* *p*

sa i e o u sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa

Tha doom ki ta tha ka, Ta ka ta ri ki ta tha ka tham Tha long doom ki ta tha ka, Ta ka ta ri ki ta tha ka tham

**D**

29

(m) with ka - ma - su - tra

that deals with ka - ma - su - tra with ka - ma - su - tra

*p*

it will ne - ver be it will ne - ver be it will ne - ver be it will ne - ver be

*p* *p*

it will ne - ver be it will ne - ver be it will ne - ver be it will ne - ver be ne -

*mp*

it will ne - ver be it will ne - ver be

Tha long doom ta ka ta ri ki ta tha ka Tha long ka doom Tha long ka doom, Tha long doom ta ka ta ri ki ta tha ka Tha long ka

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44 **G** *mp* molto legato, poco a poco cresc.

You are \_\_\_\_\_ ting \_\_\_\_\_ bow \_\_\_\_\_  
 You \_\_\_\_\_ pect \_\_\_\_\_ rain \_\_\_\_\_  
 You \_\_\_\_\_ ex \_\_\_\_\_ a rain \_\_\_\_\_  
 e - o - u - a - i - e - o -  
*p* drone-like (create overtones)  
 a i e o u  
 (gradually morph to the next vowel)

a po em \_\_\_\_\_  
 of po em (m)  
 of po em (m)  
 u

54 3

(m)

*mp* cresc.      3      3

ne - ver be the same

*mp* cresc.      3      3

ne - ver be the same

*mp* cresc.      3      3

It will \_\_\_\_\_ ne - ver be the same

*mp* cresc.      3      3

It will \_\_\_\_\_ ne - ver be the same

*mp* cresc.      3      3

It will \_\_\_\_\_ ne - ver be the same

59 *mf* cresc.      3      (top voice, solo)

Lan - guage

*mf* cresc.      3

Lan - guage

*mf* cresc.      3

Lan - guage

*mf* cresc.      3

Lan - guage

*mf* cresc.      3

Lan - guage

*mf* cresc.      3

Lan - guage

*ppp*      sa re ga ma pa

*ppp*      sa re ga ma pa

*p* drone-like (create overtones)      a - i

65 I

*mp* cresc.

It will ne - ver be

*mp* cresc.

It will ne - ver be, it will ne - ver be,

*mp* cresc.

It will ne - ver be, it will ne - ver be, it will ne - ver be,

*p* cresc.

sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa sa

*p* cresc.

sa re ga ma pa sa re ga ma pa sa it will ne -

*mp*

(gradually morph to the next vowel)

(imitating indian percussion)

Tha doom ki ta tha ka, Ta ka ta ri ki ta tha ka tham

70 J

*p* cresc. molto

It will ne - ver be, ne - ver be the same.

*mf*

*p* cresc. molto

it will ne - ver be, it will ne - ver be, it will ne - ver be, ne - ver be the same, ne - ver be the same

*p* cresc. molto

ne - ver be the same ne - ver be the same, ne - ver be the same

*mf*

*p* cresc. molto

it will ne - ver be, it will ne - ver be, it will ne - ver be, it will ne - ver be it will ne - ver be the same.

*p* cresc. molto

ne - ver be the same, ne - ver be the same, ne - ver be the same, ne - ver be the same

*p* cresc. molto

Tha long doom ki ta tha ka, Ta ka ta ri ki ta tha ka doom Tha long ka doom, Tha long ka doom, Ta ka ta ri ki ta tha ka, doom

# listening to mukesh

Inspired by Pooja Nansi's  
'listening to mukesh'

Chen Zhangyi

'in that deliciously punctuated rhythm'  
♩ = 112

**A**

Soprano *p* *mf* *f*  
doo sa ni pa ma

Mezzo-soprano *p* *mf* *f*  
doo pa ma re ga

Alto *p* *mf* *f*  
doo re ga sa ni

Tenor *pp* *f*  
doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

Bass *ppp* *mfp* *f* ('stone-thud bass')  
doo doo doo doo doo doo

6

ga ni pa ma ga re ni re ma dha sa ni pa ma ga

re ma sa sa sa ni pa ni sa ma pa ma re ga re

sa sa ni pa ma pa ma ga pa ni re re sa ni pa

doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

**B**

10

sa re sa ma dha sa ni pa ma pa  
 ni ni ni sa ma ma sa sa re  
 pa ga ma pa ni re ga dha ni ni  
 doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo  
 doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

14

*mf* (solo, echo)

sa ga ma pa ni pa ma pa ma ga ma ga sa ga ma pa ni pa ni sa ni pa ma ga sa ni sa ga ma  
 doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

*f* (optional solo)

sa ga ma pa sa ga ma pa ni pa ma pa ma ga ma ga sa ga ma pa ni pa ni sa ni pa ma ga sa ni sa ga ma pa  
 doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

19 C (tutti)

pa I'm hum - ming in

doo I'm hum - ming in

doo I'm hum - ming in

tutti *mf* *p*

doo dah dah doo doo dah dah doo doo dah dah doo doo dah dah doo doo dah dah doo

doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

23

twi - light in twi - light

twi - light in twi - light

twi - light in twi - light

*mf*

du lu du da du lu du da du lu du da du lu du da du da du lu du lu du da du da

doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo

doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo



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43 **F** humming in twilight  $\text{♩} = 72$  (humming)

*p* ha mmm mmm

*mf* ha doo doo *mf*

*mp* (humming) *p* *mp*  
mmm mmm mmm mmm

*p* (humming)  
mmm mmm

*mf* 'Mukesh'  
ja - oon ka - ha ba - ta - yen dil Du - n'ya ba - di hain sang - dil

47 (humming)

*mf* *p* ah ah mmm

doo doo *mp*

*mp* (humming) *p*  
mmm mmm mmm

*p*  
du - lu du - lu du - lu du - lu du - lu du - lu

*mf*  
Chan - di - ni Ai - yen Ghar Ja - la - ne

51

mmm ah

doo doo doo

ooo ooo

*p*

du - lu du - lu du - lu du - lu du - lu du - lu du - lu ooo

Suj - he Na Ko - yi Man - zil 3 ooo

(top voice solo)

54

ah

ooo