

HO-YI CHAN
TILL LOVE AND FAME TO NOTHINGNESS DO SINK

David Ho-yi CHAN

Till Love and Fame to Nothingness Do Sink

*for 8-part unaccompanied mixed chorus
(S.S.A.A.T.T.B.B.)*

Till Love and Fame to Nothingness Do Sink

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high piled books, in charact'ry,
Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour!
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love!-then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

Till Love and Fame to Nothingness Do Sink is composed for 8-part unaccompanied mixed chorus. The individualism and romanticism of John Keats very much trigger my intentions to express sentiments on personal affairs associated with this poem, through programme notes for the very first time. In particular, my attachments to the poem turn to be the strongest as I have ever been.

The poem and music possess close references to death, anxiety, love, nature and beauty. Within limited time in life, many things cannot be achieved before death. As a common theme in English Romantic poetry, the nature of harvesting grain, the night sky, stars, clouds and the shore reflect the intangible beauty of the world.

After completing the work in 2021, I recalled the poem when I was passing by Keats's shared lodgings (while studying in 1815-16) near his statue in London Bridge few months ago with my love. Later, we tried to schedule and visit New York together for this premiere and leisure, if our overwhelmed diary and capacity permit. But now, I echo the fears faced by Keats, which I might not be able to compose for live performances, witness the beauty of the world, or experience love anymore, together with the one I love the most.

To the poet, 3 years before his death at the age of 25, Keats realised he may have no time to achieve love and fame, but they rather sink to nothingness.

To me, may love be above fame and all challenges in life everlastingly. It will never sink, but conquer when such wonderful, highly independent and individualistic person will no longer want to be alone one day. As enlightened by Shakespeare, “the course of true love never did run smooth”.

Composing a musical setting on a text which other composers had already attempted at is always a more challenging task, as it is usually more difficult to achieve further on what has left to be done musically and artistically. But I hope this choral setting, together with my sentiments, may bring forth the message behind and bear more fruit. And I dedicate it to anyone who struggles with fears, pressures and pains in work and life.

For the 2020-21 IGNITE Commission by C4: The Choral Composer/Conductor Collective

Till Love and Fame to Nothingness Do Sink

John Keats (1819)

David Ho-yi Chan (2021)

With Rubato (♩ = ca. 66)

Solo *p*

Bass 1

When I have fears that I may cease

Expressively (♩ = ca. 88)

5

S. 1 *pp* *p* *pp*

When I have fears that I may cease to be,

S. 2 *pp* *p* *pp*

When I have fears that I may cease to be,

A. 1 *pp* *p* *pp*

When I fear, I cease be,

A. 2 *pp* *p* *pp*

When I fear, I cease be,

T. 1 *pp* *p* *pp*

have fears, I may cease

T. 2

B. 1 *Tutti pp*

to be,

B. 2 *Tutti pp*

to be,

rall.

Passionately (♩ = ca. 88)

13

S. 1 *p* *mp* *mf*
my pen has glean'd teem-ing brain, Be-fore

S. 2 *p* *mp* *mf*
my pen has glean'd teem-ing brain, Be-fore

A. 1 *p* *mp* *mf*
Be - fore my pen glean'd my teem-ing brain, Be-fore

A. 2 *p* *mp* *mf*
Be - fore my pen glean'd my teem-ing brain, Be-fore

T. 1 *p* *mp* *mf*
has glean'd my teem-ing brain,

T. 2 *p* *mp* *mf*
has glean'd my teem-ing brain,

B. 1 *p* *mp* *mf*
glean'd teem-ing brain,

B. 2 *p* *mp* *mf*
glean'd teem-ing brain,

rall. **Progressively** (♩ = ca. 76)

19

S. 1 *f* *mf*
high piled books, in char - ac-

S. 2 *f* *mf*
high piled books, in char - ac-

A. 1 *f* *mf*
high piled books, in char - ac t'ry,

A. 2 *f* *mf*
high piled books, in char - ac t'ry,

T. 1 *mf*
in char - ac - t'ry,

T. 2 *mf*
in char - ac - t'ry,

B. 1 *mf*
in char - ac t'ry, in

B. 2 *mf*
in char - ac t'ry, in

rall.

With Love (♩ = ca. 88)

74

S. 1 *mp* un - re - flect - ing love!_____

S. 2 *mp* of un - re - flect - ing love!_____

A. 1 *mp* of un - re - flect - ing love!_____

A. 2 *mp* un - re - flect - ing love!_____

T. 1 *p* in the fa - ery power *mp* love!_____

T. 2 *p* in the fa - ery power *mp* love!_____

B. 1 *p* in the fa - ery power *mp* Then on the

B. 2 *p* in the fa - ery power *mp* Then on the

78

S. 1 *mp* Then on the shore of the wide world I stand a - lone, *mf*

S. 2 *mp* Then on the shore of the wide world I stand a - lone, *mf*

A. 1 *mp* Then on the shore, wide world I stand a - lone, *mf*

A. 2 *mp* Then on the shore, wide world I stand a - lone, *mf*

T. 1 *mp* Then on the shore of the wide world I stand a - lone, *mf*

T. 2 *mp* Then on the shore of the wide world I stand a - lone, *mf*

B. 1 *mp* shore, wide world I stand a - lone, and *mf*

B. 2 *mp* shore, wide world I stand a - lone, and *mf*

83

f *ff* *f* **molto rall.**

S. 1
and think Till love and fame,

S. 2
and think Till love and fame,

A. 1
and think, and think Till love Till love and fame,

A. 2
and think, and think Till love Till love and fame,

T. 1
and think Till love and

T. 2
and think Till love and

B. 1
think, and think love, love, and

B. 2
think, and think love, love and

