



## To the tune "Magnolia Flower"—"The water in the pond"

### 木蘭花 · 池塘水綠風微暖

#### Text Information

Author | Yan Shu

Language | Chinese

Period | 11th Century

Genre | Song lyric (ci)

Source | Tang, Guizhang 唐圭璋 (ed.). *Quan Song Ci* 全宋詞. Vol 1. Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1965. 96.

Collection | Love Songs of the Medieval World: Lyrics from Europe and Asia

URL | <https://sourcebook.stanford.edu/text/tune-magnolia-flower-water-pond>

Translation by Qian Jia. Introduction and notes by Nina Du and Runqi Zhang.

#### Introduction to the Text

Yan Shu, a powerful statesman in the early Northern Song court, had a long and successful career both as an official and as a poet. Among his many literary achievements (which include poetry, song lyrics and prose) his *ci* compositions are best known. His lyrics are elegant in their choice of words, controlled in the emotions they express, and not as playful as the *ci* of other well-known poets. They often capture feelings of solitude and sorrow, creating a melancholic mood, but the poet is rarely explicit about what triggers the worry or sadness.

In this *ci*, the speaker recalls when he first met a beautiful woman. The first and final lines relate to the present, framing the old memories which make up the middle section of the song. This creates a contrast between the sorrowful and solitary present and the celebratory atmosphere when he first met his lover. The "flowers" mentioned in the closing lines have a double meaning: they are both flowering trees in the gardens where banquets were held and, even more, the female singers and dancers who entertained at those banquets, like the young woman the poet recalls in the first stanza.



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木蘭花

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池塘水綠風微暖。  
記得玉真初見面。  
重頭歌韻響錚琮，  
入破舞腰紅亂旋。

The water in the pond is green, and the wind is slightly warm.  
I remember meeting Yuzhen for the first time.  
The double-head song is loud and emotional,  
As the coda began, her waist swung and her red skirt swirled.

5 玉鉤闌下香階畔。  
醉後不知斜日晚。  
當時共我賞花人，  
點檢如今無一半。

5 By the railings under the jade hooks and in front of the fragrant steps,  
I was drunk, not knowing that the sun had slanted and the time was late.  
The men who appreciated the flowers with me at that time,  
Now as I count them, are fewer than half.

**Critical Notes**

**Translation**

- Line 2* Yuzhen is a generic name often used for beautiful singers or and dancers.
- Line 3* The "double-head song" is a tune which has the same beat for each of its two stanzas.
- Line 4* "Coda" here refers to the structure of longer songs in the Tang and Song dynasties, which usually consisted of three parts (or "chapters"). "Po", translated here as "coda", was the name given to the final chapter, which usually had a quick tempo. The Chinese character literally means "to break in" or "to break apart".
- Line 5* Jade hooks would have been used to hang a curtain over a doorway.