

Twelve Slow Rounds

Paul Burnell

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Composed 2012

Twelve 4-part rounds for voices and/or instruments using English translations by Herbert A. Giles of Chinese poems.

The rounds may be performed by voices, or by instruments alone, or a combination of both, and may be doubled an octave lower.

All performers read from the same music and are divided into four even groups - A, B, C D. The standard method of round performing can be observed. For example, group A begins line 1 then proceeds to lines 2, 3 etc. Group B begins line 1 as group A begins line 2 and continues in the same way. In this way all the groups sing the same melody but with all the groups beginning at different times. The groups may continue repeating the melody a pre-determined number of times.

Some rounds have optional pauses in the last bar of each line. These pauses do not have to be observed. If the pauses are observed the groups should end the movement together. Where movements do not have written pauses, this means that the groups should end one after the other.

Other performance options, such as drones, are given at the bottom of each page. Performers may use any style of singing or playing and are free to consider other accompanying textures that seem appropriate.

The texts for the rounds are taken from 'Chinese Poetry in English Verse' (1898) by Herbert Allen Giles. The translations are of classical Chinese poems, and those set here are credited by Giles as follows:

1. Li Po [Chinese: 李白; pinyin: Lǐ Bái, Lǐ Bó; (701-762)]
2. Mei Shêng
3. Tu Fu [Chinese: 杜甫; pinyin: Dù Fǔ; (712-770)]
4. Tu Ch'in-niang [Chinese: 杜秋娘; pinyin: Du Qiu Niang; (c.750-850)]
5. Tu Mu [Chinese: 杜牧; pinyin: Dù Mù; (803-852)]
6. Tu Mu
7. Hsieh Jung [Xie Lingyun?]
8. Wang An-shih [Chinese: 王安石; pinyin: Wáng Ānshí; (1021-1086)]
9. Anon.
10. Li Po
11. Yang I [Yang Yi (974-1030)]
12. Li Po

[Information in square brackets added by the composer]

Twelve Slow Rounds

1

Herbert A. Giles (1845-1935)

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Adagio ♩ = 69

1 At the Yel - low - Crane pa - go - da, where
2 mists and flow - ers of A - - pril
3 At the Em - er - ald Isle, your less - en - ing
4 left me with the Riv - - er, roll - ing

1 we stopped to bid a - dieu, The
2 seemed to wish good speed to you.
3 — sail had van - ished from my eye, And
4 on - - ward to the sky.

Optional: Drone on high C sharp, introduced quietly halfway through and finishing at the end of the round.

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2

Lento ♩ = 48

1 The red hi - bis - cus and the reed, The
2 All these I gath - er as I stray, As
3 I strive to pierce with strain - ing eyes The
4 A - las that hearts which beat as one Should

1 fra - grant flowers of marsh and mead, (⌣)
2 though for one now far a - way, (⌣)
3 dis - tance that be - tween us lies. (⌣)
4 thus be part - ed and un - done! (⌣)

Optional: plastics bags quietly and constantly rustled throughout to produce the effect of a gentle breeze through tall grass.

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3

Adagio ♩ = 72

1 A - las for the lone - ly plant that

2 While the man - go-bird screams loud and long

3 Full with the fresh - ets of the spring the_

4 fer - ry - boat swings i - - dly,

1 grows be - side the riv - er bed, (◡)

2 from the tall tree o - ver-head! (◡)

3 tor - - - ent rush-es on The (◡)

4 for the fer - ry - man is gone. (◡)

Optional: Semibreves/whole notes struck on the first beat of every bar on orchestral bass drum throughout.

Also optional: low D crotchets/quarter notes on beats 2 and 4, starting halfway through the round and continuing to the end.

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4

Larghetto ♩ = 63

1 I would not have thee grudge those robes
2 But I would have thee grudge the hours
3 Go pluck the bloom - ing flow - er be - times,
4 A - las up - on the with - ered stem

1 which gleam in rich ar - ray,
2 which glide a - way.
3 lest when thou com'st a - gain
4 no bloom - ing flow - ers re - main!

Optional: repeating crotchets/quarter notes on Ab above middle C played from the beginning but fading out before the round has finished. Ideally played on vibraphone or piano string struck with a soft mallet.

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5

Largo ♩ = 60

1 Too late, a - las! I came to
2 Yet must I not re -
3 For though the ros - y buds of
4 Be - hold the clus - ter - ring fruit

1 find the love - - ly spring had fled.
2 - gret the days of youth that now are dead;
3 spring the cru - - el winds have laid,
4 that hangs _____ be - neath the leaf - y shade!

Optional: Low G drone throughout.

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6

Lento ♩ = 56

1 A wil - der-ness a - lone re - mains,
 2 The riv - er runs un - heed - ed by,
 3 Dusk comes, the east wind blows, and
 4 Pet - als, like nymphs from bal - co - nies,

1 all gar - den glo - ries gone;
 2 weeds grow un - heed - ed on.
 3 birds pipe forth a mourn - ful sound;
 4 come tum - bling to the ground.

Optional: towards end voices stop singing the text and instead sing the notes quietly to 'oo'.
 Also optional: Repeating 4-bar bass figure during the middle part of the round - dotted minims/half notes in this order: C, Bb, C, D.

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7

Larghetto ♩ = 63

1 At eve, a - long the riv - er bank, the
2 mist - crowned wave - lets lure me on
3 To think how all an - tiq - ui - ty
4 Has float - ed down the stream and gone!

Optional: Quiet, legato quavers/eighth notes alternating A-Bb (above middle C), starting before the round and continuing throughout.

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8

Largo ♩ = 60

1 The in - cense - stick is burnt to ash,
2 The mid-night breeze blows sharp - ly by and
3 Yet I am kept from slum - ber
4 Sweet shapes of flow - ers a - cross the blind

1 the wa - ter - clock is stilled,
2 all a - round is chilled.
3 by the beau - ty of the spring:
4 the quiv - er - ing moon - beams fling!

Optional: Drone on G, ideally tremolo on vibraphone or marimba, introduced half-way through the round.

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9

Adagietto ♩ = 76

Stagger breathing ad lib.

1 The bright moon shin - ing o - ver - head,

2 The stream be - neath the breeze - 's touch,

3 Are pure and per - fect joys in - deed,

4 But few are they who think them such.

Optional: Drone on D throughout.

Also optional: an additional drone on D an octave lower, 8 beats long with a crotchet/quarter note rest, repeating every 3 bars.

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10

Adagio ♩ = 72

1 Cold _____ dew's _____ of night

2 And soak _____ my

3 I'll step be - hind

4 And _____ watch _____ the au - -

Detailed description: This system contains the first four staves of a musical score. Each staff is in 4/4 time and features a treble clef. The music is written in a key with one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: 1. Cold _____ dew's _____ of night; 2. And soak _____ my; 3. I'll step be - hind; 4. And _____ watch _____ the au - -. The lyrics are placed below the corresponding staves, with horizontal lines indicating the syllable placement.

1 the ter - race crown, -

2 stock-ings and my _____ gown;

3 The crys - tal blind, -

4 tumn moon _____ sink _____ down. _____

Detailed description: This system contains the next four staves of the musical score. Each staff is in 4/4 time and features a treble clef. The music is written in a key with two flats (Bb). The lyrics are: 1. the ter - race crown, -; 2. stock-ings and my _____ gown; 3. The crys - tal blind, -; 4. tumn moon _____ sink _____ down. _____. The lyrics are placed below the corresponding staves, with horizontal lines indicating the syllable placement.

Optional: quiet roll on suspended cymbal or tam-tam throughout.

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11

Largo ♩ = 60

Stagger breathing ad lib.

1
Up - on this tall pa - go - da's peak (◡)

2
My hands can nigh the stars en - close; (◡)

3
I dare not raise my voice to speak, (◡)

4
For fear of star - tling God's re - pose. (◡)

The musical score consists of four staves, each with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Largo' with a quarter note equal to 60 beats per minute. The instruction 'Stagger breathing ad lib.' is placed above the first staff. Each staff contains a single melodic line of half notes. The lyrics are written below the notes, with a small inverted triangle symbol (◡) above the final note of each line. The lyrics are: 'Up - on this tall pa - go - da's peak', 'My hands can nigh the stars en - close;', 'I dare not raise my voice to speak,', and 'For fear of star - tling God's re - pose.' The notes are: Staff 1: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4; Staff 2: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4; Staff 3: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4; Staff 4: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4.

Optional: a multitude of thumb pianos (kalimbas/mbiras, or similar) with random pitches played very delicately throughout.

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12

Adagio ♩ = 66

1 Rain can-not quench thy lan tern's light,

2 Wind makes it shine more bright-ly bright;

3 Oh why not fly to heav-en a far

4 and twin-kle near the moon a star?

Optional: Repeated F quavers/eighth notes as an introduction and then throughout. Ideally including vibraphone, guitar, piano etc.