

Hugo Bell

Hermitage

For Double SATB Voices

2024

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c. 5 minutes

空	山	不	见	人
但	闻	人	语	响
返	景	入	深	林
复	照	青	苔	上

Empty	Mountain	(Not)	See	People
But	Hear	People	Words	Echo
Return	Brightness	Enter	Deep	Forest
Again	Reflect	Green	Moss	Above

鹿柴 (Deer Park)

Wang Wei (699-759)

Commentary

Hermitage draws inspiration from Wang Wei's renowned poem, 'Deer Park,' a celebrated work from the Tang Dynasty era, and explores the complexities which arise when attempting to translate this poem into English.

The difficulty in translating this poem encompasses several facets, including the monosyllabic nature of the Chinese characters, the rhyming structure, grammatical ambiguities relating to plurals, the lack of grammatical person, and even clear definitions of nouns. Numerous translations have been attempted, each markedly different from the last, but they merely scratch the surface of the original work.

An abstracted, literal translation of the original 20-character poem is used throughout the piece, with each word devoid of surrounding context, yet contributing to a surface-level impression of meaning. As the piece develops, further poetic extrapolations are intertwined with one another, as if viewing the same scene from numerous perspectives at once.

Performance Instructions

Pulse

Each performer must follow their own, independent pulse (heartbeat) in lieu of traditional time-keeping, where a single heartbeat is equal to a crotchet note value. Consequently, each performer will be singing at a completely independent tempo from one another.

The score has been designed so that each performer can hold their part in one hand, and use their free hand to monitor their pulse.

The easiest places to locate your pulse are on your wrist or upper neck. PPG devices such as smart watches or oximeters could also be used to track pulse but this is at the discretion of the artistic director.

Exact musical synchronisation with one's pulse is neither expected nor possible due to the irregular nature of human heartbeats. Performers should react to each individual pulse and avoid the musical inclination to anticipate the following beat.

Setup

The performers are divided into two choirs. If the piece is being performed with more than one performer to a part, Choir 1 should be set up as a solo quartet, and Choir 2 as a tutti chorus. With a larger group of 15 or more performers per voice type it would be possible for Choir 1 to have 2 or 3 to a part. Experimentation with part allocation and balance is encouraged.

The piece can be performed either conducted or uncondacted. If being performed conducted, then the conductor should follow the 'Overview of Parts' appendix and cue each entry. If being performed uncondacted, then Soprano 1 will cue the start of the piece and the performers must listen carefully for the indicated cues.

Structure

Each performer sings from their own individual part, but an 'Overview of Parts' has been created to visualise how the parts relate to one another. Due to the absence of metre and synchronisation the alignments are only approximate.

The piece is structured in canonic form, with Choir 1 acting as a foreground texture and Choir 2 acting as a prolated background texture.

Each part should be sung through to the end without any breaks unless explicitly specified in the part (e.g., Choir 1 before figure B).

The piece ends with Choir 1 finishing their parts in succession as Choir 2 continually repeats a single phrase. Once all of Choir 1 have finished, each Choir 2 performer should conclude their current phrase.

The architecture of the piece accounts for a wide range of potential pulse rates. In the event that a performer has a drastically different pulse rate to the others, then the artistic director is encouraged to use their judgement to re-adapt entries and endings so as not to disrupt the *gestalt* of the piece.

Notation

- *Hauptstimme* (H.) markings have been included to denote textural hierarchies.
- Repeat markings are inclusive (i.e., '2x' means the bracketed phrase should be sung twice; '3x' means it should be sung three times, etc.)
- A blank space on the 'Overview of Parts' indicates that a voice should not be singing.
- Two rehearsal marks have been included for practicality.

Interpretation

Balance and blend are of utmost importance in this piece, and rehearsals should focus on creating a well-balanced texture with clear distinctions between foreground and background.

Individual words should be treated as separate musical events; thus, the role of phrasing and breathing in this piece is contrary to most choral pieces. The exception to this is the section from figure B in Choir 1 where full prose is incorporated.

Performances should be delivered in a plain and natural manner, allowing unexpected interactions between parts to emerge organically.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my good friend and fellow composer, Esther Wu, for her help in translating the original text and redrafting the derivations.

Soprano 1 Part

Hermitage

Text adapted from Wang Wei (699-759)

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H..... [3x] H..... [3x]

mp Em - pty Moun - tain *pp* Em - pty Moun - tain *mp* Re - turn Bright - ness *pp* Re - turn Bright - ness

A

H.....→

mf Em - pty Mountain Shine Green Moss A - gain A bove Peo - ple Not See Peo - ple

Words Re turn E - cho But Bright - ness En - ter Deep Hear Fo - rest *p* (stop singing)

B

enter approx. 10 seconds after the rest of Choir 1 have completely finished

f lyrical & melodic


A cross the em - pty hills no-one can be seen. But here might e - cho-ing voi - ces be heard. Re - flect - ing rays fall u - pon the deep wood, Gli - tter - ing a - gain on the dark green moss. *p*

Alto 1 Part

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Text adapted from
Wang Wei (699-759)

♩ = 

H..... 3x H..... 3x

enter after the first 4 notes of Soprano 1

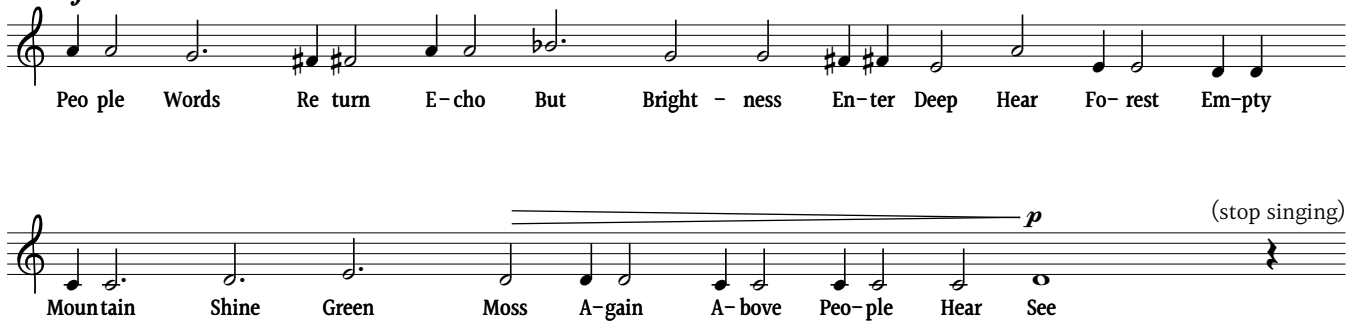


mp *pp* *mp* *pp*

Not See Peo - ple Not See Peo - ple En - ter Deep Fo - rest En - ter Deep Fo - rest

A

H..... →



mf *p* (stop singing)

Peo ple Words Re turn E-cho But Bright - ness En-ter Deep Hear Fo- rest Em-pty

Mountain Shine Green Moss A-gain A-bove Peo-ple Hear See

B

enter after the word 'Seen' in Soprano 1

f lyrical & melodic



f *p*

Lone - ly moun- tains: no - one to be seen. Yet hear hu - man sound e-cho- ing.


Re- turn- ing sun - light en - ters the dark fo- rest, A- gain shin- ing on the green moss a-bove

Tenor 1 Part

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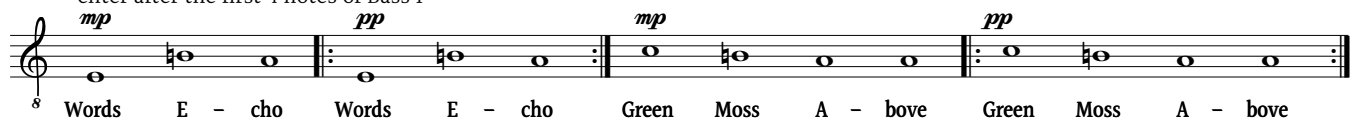
Text adapted from Wang Wei (699-759)

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♩ = 

H.----- 3x H.----- 3x

enter after the first 4 notes of Bass 1



mp *pp* *mp* *pp*

Words E - cho Words E - cho Green Moss A - bove Green Moss A - bove

A

H.----->

mf



Em - pty Mountain Shine Green Moss A - gain A - bove Peo - ple Not See Peo - ple




Words Re turn E - cho But Bright - ness En - ter Deep Hear Fo - rest

p (stop singing)

B

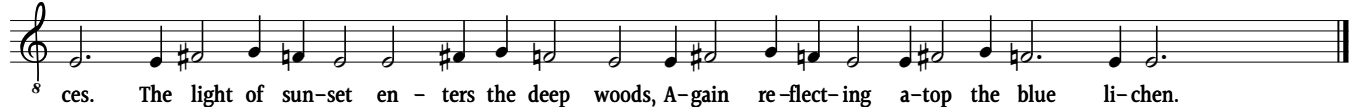
enter after the word 'No-one' in Alto 1

f lyrical & melodic



Em - pty moun - tain, no - one in sight But I hear the e - cho of hu - man voi -

dim. poco a poco, fading from the foreground gradually *p*



ces. The light of sun - set en - ters the deep woods, A - gain re - flect - ing a - top the blue li - chen.

Bass 1 Part

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Text adapted from
Wang Wei (699-759)



H..... 3x H..... 3x

enter after the first 4 notes of Alto 1

mp *pp* *mp* *pp*

Soprano 2 Part

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enter with Soprano 1

2x

pp

Em - pty Moun - tain Re - turn Bright - ness

A

p

Em - pty Mountain Shine Green Moss A - gain A - bove Peo - ple Not See Peo ple

Words Re - turn E - cho But Bright - ness En - ter Deep Hear Fo - rest

B

Repeat continuously until Choir 1 have stopped singing.
Once they have all stopped, finish your phrase

p

Re - turn Bright - ness En - ter Deep Fo - rest

Alto 2 Part

Hermitage

Text adapted from Wang Wei (699-759)

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enter with Alto 1

pp *pp*

Not See Peo - ple En - ter Deep Fo - rest

A

p

Peo - ple Words Re - turn E - cho But Bright - ness En - ter Deep Hear

Fo - rest Em - pty Moun - tain Shine Green Moss A - gain A - bove Peo - ple

B

Repeat continuously until Choir 1 have stopped singing.
Once they have all stopped, finish your phrase

p

Hear See A - gain Shine Green Moss A - bove

Tenor 2 Part

Hermitage

Text adapted from Wang Wei (699-759)

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enter with Tenor 1

pp

Words E - cho Green Moss A - bove

A

p

Em - pty Moun-tain Shine Green Moss A - gain A - bove Peo - ple

Not See Peo ple Words Re-tum E - cho But Bright - ness En - ter Deep Hear

B

Repeat continuously until Choir 1 have stopped singing.
Once they have all stopped, finish your phrase

p

Fo - rest Em - pty Moun-tains Not See Peo - ple

Bass 2 Part

Hermitage

Text adapted from Wang Wei (699-759)

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enter with Bass 1 2x 2x

But Hear Peo - ple A - gain Shine Re - flect

A

Peo - ple Words Re - turn E - cho But Bright - ness En - ter Deep Hear

Fo - rest Em - pty Moun - tain Shine Green Moss A - gain A - bove Peo -

B

Repeat continuously until Choir 1 have stopped singing.
Once they have all stopped, finish your phrase

ple Hear See But Hear Peo - ple Words Sound

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Overview of Parts

Text adapted from
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CHOIR 1

Soprano: *mp* Em - pty Moun - tain *pp* Em - pty Moun - tain (3x)

Alto: enter after the first 4 notes of Soprano 1 *mp* Not See Peo - ple *pp* Not See Peo - ple (3x)

Tenor: enter after the first 4 notes of Bass 1 *mp* Words E - cho *pp* Words E - cho (3x)

Bass: enter after the first 4 notes of Alto 1 *mp* But Hear Peo - ple *pp* But Hear Peo - ple (3x)

CHOIR 2

Soprano: enter with Soprano 1 *pp* Em - - pty Moun - tain (2x)

Alto: enter with Alto 1 *pp* Not See Peo - ple (2x)

Tenor: enter with Tenor 1 *pp* Words E - - cho (2x)

Bass: enter with Bass 1 *pp* But Hear Peo - - ple (2x)

S1. *mp* *pp* 3x
 Re - turn Bright - ness Re - turn Bright - ness

A1. *mp* *pp* 3x
 En - ter Deep Fo - rest En - ter Deep Fo - rest

T1. *mp* *pp* 3x
 Green Moss A - bove Green Moss A - bove

B1. *mp* *pp* 3x
 A - gain Re - flect A - gain Re - flect

S2. *pp* 2x
 Re - turn _____ Bright - ness _____

A2. *pp* 2x
 En - ter _____ Deep _____ Fo - rest _____

T2. *pp* 2x
 Green _____ Moss _____ A - bove _____

B2. *pp* 2x
 A - gain _____ Re - flect _____

A

H.----->

mf

S1. Em - pty Mountain Shine Green Moss A - gain A - bove Peo - ple Not See Peo - ple Words Re - turn E - cho But Bright - ness

A1. *mf* H.----->
Peo - ple Words Re - turn E - cho But Bright - ness En - ter Deep Hear

T1.

B1.

S2. *p* Em - pty Moun - tain Shine Green Moss A - gain A - bove Peo - ple Not

A2. *p* Peo - ple Words Re - turn E - cho

T2.

B2.

S1. *p*
En - ter Deep Hear Fo - rest

A1. *p*
Fo - rest Em - pty Mountain Shine Green Moss A - gain A - bove Peo - ple Hear See

T1. *mf* H.....
Em - pty Moun - tain Shine Green Moss A - gain A - bove Peo - ple Not See Peo - ple Words Re - turn E - cho But Bright - ness

B1. *mf* H.....
Peo - ple Words Re - turn E - cho But Bright - ness En - ter Deep Hear

S2.
See Peo - ple Words Re - turn E - cho But Bright - ness

A2.
But Bright - ness En - ter Deep Hear Fo - rest Em - pty Moun - tain Shine

T2. *p*
Em - pty Moun - tain Shine Green Moss A - gain A - bove Peo - ple Not

B2. *p*
Peo - ple Words Re - turn E - cho But

S1.

A1.

T1.
En - ter Deep Hear Fo - rest

B1.
Fo - rest Em - pty Mountain Shine Green Moss A - gain A - bove Peo - ple Hear See

S2.
En - ter Deep Hear Fo - rest

A2.
Green Moss A - gain A - bove Peo - ple Hear See

T2.
See Peo - ple Words Re - turn E - cho But Bright - ness

B2.
Bright - ness En - ter Deep Hear Fo - rest Em - pty Moun - tain Shine Green

B

enter approx. 10 seconds after the rest of Choir 1 have completely finished

f lyrical & melodic

dim. poco a poco, fading from the foreground gradually

S1. *f* A - cross the em - pty hills no - one can be seen. But here might e - cho - ing voi - ces be heard. Re - flect ing rays fall u - pon the deep wood,

enter after the word 'Seen' in Soprano 1

f lyrical & melodic

A1. Lone - ly moun - tains: no - one to be seen. Yet hear hu - man sound e - cho ing.

enter after the word 'No-one' in Alto 1

f lyrical & melodic

T1. Em - pty mountain, no - one in sight But I hear the e -

enter after the word 'Mountain' in Tenor 1

f lyrical & melodic

B1. In the em - pty hills no - one can

Repeat continuously until Choir 1 have stopped singing. Once they have all stopped, finish your phrase

S2. *p* Re - turn Bright - ness En - ter Deep Fo - rest

Repeat continuously until Choir 1 have stopped singing. Once they have all stopped, finish your phrase

A2. *p* A - gain Shine Green Moss A - bove

Repeat continuously until Choir 1 have stopped singing. Once they have all stopped, finish your phrase

T2. *p* En - ter Deep Hear Fo - rest Em - pty Moun - tains Not See Peo - ple

Repeat continuously until Choir 1 have stopped singing. Once they have all stopped, finish your phrase

B2. *p* Moss A - gain A - bove Peo - ple Hear See But Hear Peo - ple Words Sound

S1. *p*
 Gli - tter-ing a gain on the dark green moss.

A1. *dim. poco a poco, fading from the foreground gradually p*
 Return ing sun-light en - ters the dark fo rest, A gain shin ing on the green moss, a-bove.

T1. *dim. poco a poco, fading from the foreground gradually p*
 cho of hu - man voi - ces. The light of sun - set en - ters the deep woods, A-gain re flect ing a-top the blue lichen.

B1. *dim. poco a poco, fading from the foreground gradually p*
 be seen, But hu - man voi ces are heard e-cho ing a round. The re-lect-ed sun-light pier - ces the fo-rest depths and falls a - gain u pon the mossy ground.

Once Choir 1 have stopped singing, each Choir 2 singer finishes their phrase until there is no-one left singing

S2. _____

A2. _____

T2. _____

B2. _____