



# *Many Years and No Turning*

*For Male Voice, Viola and Percussion*

*Words by Gerry Loose*

*Music by Nigel Morgan*

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## About the piece

This work acts like a full stop to a series of chamber music compositions written between 1971 and 1974. These include *Matins, Nocturns, Sonnances, Asperges* and *Tapisserie*. This score was written for the celebrated tenor Robert Tear, whose creation of the role of Dov in Michael Tippett's *The Knot Garden* was fresh in my mind when I wrote *Many Years . . .*

This extended song also provided a preparation for writing the incidental music for Larry Butler's translation of *Beowulf* devised for performances by Christopher Leith's Puppet Company at the opening of the Cottesloe Theatre on London's South Bank. For this project I had a singer, a harpist and a percussionist. Music from this score commissioned by the National Theatre can be found in my duo for guitar and percussion *Beowulf Music*.

*Many Years . . .* is an uncompromising piece. It is a soliloquy: a poet questions his creative life and his way of living. When I read this work in the poet's cottage in rural Essex, a location near where I was living at the time, it seemed to say so much about a shared situation; we were both on the cusp of change. The moment I read it I knew I would set it . . .

In 1972 Gerry Loose created the libretto for my children's opera *Monkey*. He is a scholar of Japanese and Chinese literature and has produced many celebrated translations, most recently *The Botanical Basho*, (edited and English versions of Japanese poems by Gerry Loose (with Toda Yoshin), Botanic Gardens Press, Glasgow, UK, 2001) <http://www.worldhaikureview.org/2-2/booknews6.shtml>

Gerry Loose is now one of the leading exponents of *renga*, a highly formalised technique of collaborative poetry making. A lifelong gardener and conservationist, his publications include *Tongues of Stone; a measure; The Elementary Particles*; and *The Holistic Handbook for Scotland*.

## Guide to Performance

Common to many works of this period (1971-4) the music is imagined without the close and often intrusive detail of dynamics and articulations. Where they exist they are guides, no more. Treat the music as though it was a script to a scene from a play.

As in many other compositions that feature solo percussion, the performer should create a 'kit' suited to the performers' sound and the performance context. Above all the 'kit' should not be too resonant. The basic instruments required are:

2 cymbals (small and large)

2 woodblocks

2 temple-blocks

(arranged on a single stand to enable a glissando or sweeping stroke to be played across the instruments from low to high, high to low)

4 small drums (congas and bongos might suffice).

A range of beaters and hands/fingers might be used.

## Many Years and No Turning

That night,  
in bed (as children will)  
we spoke of large things,  
outside.  
There are scabs all along you, my land.

I have no home,  
a woman lives there with me.  
Simple things please us.  
They are always taken away.  
I cannot recall any other way.

From out my mouth the useless words.  
There is a woman.  
There is a love.  
I want to shout this.  
But it will not be said.

All things live in their meat  
Stare out  
What is not real:  
In muscle, sinew  
Anger is not an answer  
To hell with despair  
That's no sense.

Sometimes you will hear a song  
rise from a woman's lips.  
Then, whatever time of day, it is morning.

Again some days  
there is a constant pressure  
on the stomach.  
It might be fear.  
There is always this  
guard on the tongue.  
How else should it be?  
How else should it be?

In the little spring of January's light  
(for many years and no turning)  
Life, in up to the hilt  
like the monk's boy who broke the teacup –  
'All things must end.'  
Simply, there is no other way.

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# Many Years and No Turning

*semplice* ♩ = 60

Male Voice

Viola

Cymbal 1

Cymbal 2

Temple blocks

Tom-toms

7

12

That night, in bed (as chil - dren will) we spoke of large things out-side. There are

(tom-toms)

17

scabs all a long you, my land.

23

I have no home, a wo-man lives there with me

28

si-mple things please us they are al-ways ta-ken a way.

34

$\overset{-3}{\text{tr}} = \text{tr} \quad (\text{♩} = 92)$

I can -not re - call a -ny oth -er way.

40

46



51

From out my mouth the use-less words there is a wo-man there is a love

tr

56

I want to shout this but it will not be said

tr

61

all things

(pizz)

pizz.

67

live in their meat stare out what is not real in mu - sle,

(cym. 2).  
gliss.

72

sin - - ew, an - - ger is not an an - swer to hell with des -

76

8 -pair that's no - sense

pizz. arco

82

8 some-times you will hear a song rise from a wo-man's lips. Then, whate-ver

87  $\overset{5}{\text{tr}} = \text{tr} \quad (\text{♩} = 60)$

time of day it is mor-ning.

91  $\overset{3}{\text{tr}} \quad \text{pizz.}$

pizz.

96  $\overset{5}{\text{tr}} = \text{tr} \quad (\text{♩} = 86)$

arco

99

Musical score for measures 99-102. The score is written for a piano with a treble and bass clef. Measure 99 features a melodic line in the bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a series of eighth notes. Measure 100 shows a complex piano accompaniment with sixteenth-note patterns in both hands and a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand. Measure 101 includes a fermata over a note in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand. Measure 102 concludes with a fermata over a note in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand. The text "(cym.2)" is written above the right-hand staff in measure 102.

103

Musical score for measures 103-106. The score is written for a piano with a treble and bass clef. Measure 103 features a melodic line in the bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a series of eighth notes. Measure 104 shows a complex piano accompaniment with sixteenth-note patterns in both hands and a sixteenth-note triplet in the right hand. Measure 105 includes a fermata over a note in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand. Measure 106 concludes with a fermata over a note in the right hand and a sixteenth-note triplet in the left hand.

108

$\overset{5}{\text{—}} \text{♪} = \text{♪}$  ( $\text{♪} = 100$ )

A - gain some days there is a con - stant pre - ssure  
trem.

(pizz.)

112

on the sto - mach it might be fear. There is al - ways this guard on the tongue

(pizz.)

116 (♩ = 80)

how else should it be how else should it be.

121 *poco a poco meno mosso* (♩ = 70)

*pizz.*

In the li-ttle spring of Jan-u-ar-y's

125

light (for ma-ny years and no tur-ning) Life, in up to the hilt

129

like the monk's boy who broke the tea-cup

*pizz.*

133

*poco ritardando*

'all things must end'.      Sim - ply      there is no o-ther way.

*for Margaret*  
 July 1972 Talybont-on-Usk