



Paul Burnell

24 Steps

Narrator and accordion
and/or other instruments

2002

QB

24 Steps

Paul Burnell

Composed 2002

For narrator and accordion and/or other instruments

Duration 8:00 approx.

The narrator may need to be amplified, or instruments placed distantly from the narrator, to achieve an overall balance.

The accordion can be doubled or replaced with other instruments (shown in brackets). The instruments may be placed in two groups, 1 and 2, placed wide of the narrator.

Any wind and brass players may blow across the tops of small bottles (any pitch) from the beginning until their instrumental entries, then again from 15 until the end - observing the G.P. - aiming to produce a soft breathy sound and staggering breaths.

The accordion / instruments begins each bar when cued by the narrator. So for example, at the beginning, when the narrator speaks "moving on to Step number 1" the ensemble starts the second bar - marked with the boxed number 1.

Instruments choose notes with the aim of achieving a balanced chord. The instruments start playing with a slow irregular tremolo, and 'stretch' the tremolo at the 'step' points - so that the tremolo is even slower at the end and beginning of each bar. The very slow irregular tremolo should be similar to a slow 'morse code' effect. Half way through the piece indications are given to change to a 'throbbing/pulsed' tremolo, and at the end to a rapid tremolo. The accordion may incorporate hand flutter, knee tremolo etc. Other instruments may use a tremolo effect appropriate to their instrument, using bowings, alternate fingerings, or other effects. If a tremolo is impossible then instruments may play sustained notes. Wind and brass players may take breaks as necessary.

The accented grace notes between 7 and 14 are interspersed within the chords ad lib.

If the narrator is amplified, a delay and or/distortion effect may be added from 'Step 23'.

Optional - Two people hold a bed sheet horizontally, raising it in front of, or behind the narrator to represent the river level.

24 Steps was first performed by the Phoenix Recorder Orchestra in July 2004, in an arrangement by Steve Marshall.

This score edition created in 2022.

24 Steps

Narrator

[Do not speak words in square brackets], words underlined are cues for musicians, those in **bold** are break cues.

Ok love? Here we go again. [Pause - count to three] The river is very high. I'm standing next to a notice that reads: '24 steps down to the ferry'. The notice is next to some steps and the first step is just above the water. I'm looking at the notice. I'm looking down at the steps. I'm [pause] moving on to Step number 1. The next half dozen steps are below, obscured by the water. The steps don't seem to be very high. There is river bank to the left of me, river bank to the right. A light breeze. It's late afternoon and the sun is warm on the back of my neck. [Pause - count to four] I'm moving on to Step 2. The river is now on my shoes, but my feet aren't wet. River on my new leather shoes. The sun is warm on my neck. I'm moving back to Step 1. A light breeze. Late afternoon. [Pause - count to three] The sun is warm. Step 2 Shoes in the river. Going further. Step 3 Shoes are wet, and my socks are now damp. Feet are cool. Look - moving back to Step 1 The sun is... [Pause - count to three] No one around. Step 2 My shoes. Step 3 My socks, the sun. Step 4 Now the bottom of my trousers are wet. I think perhaps I'd better go back up to Step 1 Light... Late... My neck is warm. What is the....? Step 2 Shoes. Step 3 Socks. Step 4 Trousers. Step 5 Now a little wetter, a little... Someone's coming. Quick, back up to Step 1 "Hello. Lovely day" They're looking at my wet trousers. "Hello doggies." [Pause - count to two] They've passed by. Step 2 What were they smirking at? Step 3 Mind their own business. Step 4 Silly-looking couple. Step 5 Really stupid-looking pets. Step 6 The sun is warm on the back of my neck. I'm getting wet. That's ok. [Pause - count to 3] **I can...** Step 7 Oops. That's my knees. See? River at my [Pause - count to two] knees. Bending my knees. Straightening my knees. Step 8 Above my knees now. The water tickles. Should I be feeling...? Step 9 The river is now at my thighs. The hairs on the back of my neck are on end. [Pause - count to two] Has the sun gone in? Step 10 Getting a bit cool for comfort. My trousers are heavy. Dragging with the current. Step 11 I'm on tip-toe. River swirling and gurgling. Not looking forward to the next... Look out duck. Step 12 Very cool just here. Reeds on the opposite bank are hissing in the breeze. I said look out duck. Step 13 The river is at my hips. I'm hearing a tractor in the fields behind me. Step 14 My belt is in the water. Holding my arms just above the surface. The breeze is turning, stronger, there's a pungent scent - some rotting branches **somewhere?** Step 15 Ah, all of a sudden the water feels a bit warmer. The river's at my waist. [Pause - count to four] I can hear the surface rippling. Step 16 The sun is out again and there are sounds above. Looking up. [Pause - count to four] Birds [pause - count to three] circling. Step 17 Looking down and the river is around my ribs. [Pause - count to three] I'm more in than out. Step 18 Look, my shirt is swelling up around me like a sail and [Pause - count to five] pulling me. Step 19 River at my chest. Breathing [Pause - count to four] slowly. Reeds stirring in the breeze. Step 20 [Pause - count to three] Yellow leaves [Pause - count to three] drifting past. Remember the last time we did this? Step 21 Behold - a head floating in water. Another step and the river will be [pause - count to two] at my lips. Step 22 [Pause - count to five] Step 23 My eyes [pause] are at [pause] river level. The river is very [pause] uneven, blurred. Wonder [pause] if it's - still the same [Pause - count to two] below? Step 24

24 Steps

Narrator and accordion and/or other instruments

Optional: 2 people hold bed sheet horizontally - raising it in front of, or behind, narrator to represent the river level

(Additional instruments - Groups 1 and 2 - placed either side of the narrator)

Paul Burnell

Move on to each bar - 'step' - as cued by narrator. Play with a very slow irregular tremolo, 'stretched' as move across each bar. Accordion may incorporate hand flutter, knee tremolo etc. Change to throbbing trem. at 7, rapid trem. at 23.

(wind & brass blow small bottles from start until cued entries +, then again from 15 until end)

1 2 1 2 3 1 2 3 4

Very slow irregular tremolo (strings, flutes)

1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 6

"*I can..."

(+ wind) (+ brass)

(pp) cresc. p (+ brass) cresc.

7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

"*somewhere"

slow throbbing/pulsed tremolo progressively add more staccato accented notes - 8va higher ad lib.

15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24

Master

decrease trem. rate... decrease even more... almost continuous... held note

(bottles) (bottles) (bottles together) (bottles continue)

G.P. G.P.

mf dim. p ff

Group 1 in G

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(wind & brass blow small bottles from start until cued entries +, then again from 15 until end)

1 2 1 2 3 1

Very slow irregular tremolo (strings, flutes)

2 3 4 1 2 3 4

(+ wind)

5 1 2 3 4 5 6

(+ brass)

"*I can..."

7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

slow throbbing/pulsed tremolo

progressively add more staccato accented notes - *8va* higher ad lib. "*somewhere"

15 16 17 18 19

decrease trem. rate... (bottles)

decrease even more...

almost continuous...

20 21 22 23 24

held note

G.P.

rapid trem.

(end bar together)

(bottles continue)

Group 1 in C

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(wind & brass blow small bottles from start until cued entries +, then again from 15 until end)

1 2 1 2 3 1

Very slow irregular tremolo (strings, flutes)

2 3 4 1 2 3 4

(+ wind)

5 1 2 3 4 5 6

(+ brass)

"*I can..."

7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

slow throbbing/pulsed tremolo progressively add more staccato accented notes - *8va* higher ad lib. "*somewhere"

15 16 17 18 19

decrease trem. rate... (bottles) decrease even more... almost continuous...

20 21 22 23 24

held note G.P. rapid trem. (end bar together) (bottles continue)

Group 1 in B \flat

24 Steps

Narrator and accordion and/or other instruments

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Move on to each bar - 'step' - as cued by narrator. Play with a very slow irregular tremolo, 'stretched' as move across each bar. Accordion may incorporate hand flutter, knee tremolo etc. Change to throbbing trem. at 7, rapid trem. at 23.

(wind & brass blow small bottles from start until cued entries +, then again from 15 until end)

1 2 1 2 3 1

Very slow irregular tremolo (strings, flutes)

pp

2 3 4 1 (+ wind) 2 3 4

(pp) *cresc.*

5 1 (+ brass) 2 3 4 5 6 "I can..."

p *cresc.*

7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

slow throbbing/pulsed tremolo progressively add more staccato accented notes - *8va* higher ad lib. "somewhere"

mp

15 16 17 18 19

decrease trem. rate... (bottles) decrease even more... almost continuous...

mf *dim.*

20 21 22 23 24

held note **G.P.** rapid trem. (end bar together) (bottles continue)

p *ff*

Group 2 in F

24 Steps

Narrator and accordion and/or other instruments

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Move on to each bar - 'step' - as cued by narrator. Play with a very slow irregular tremolo, 'stretched' as move across each bar. Accordion may incorporate hand flutter, knee tremolo etc. Change to throbbing trem. at 7, rapid trem. at 23.

(wind & brass blow small bottles from start until cued entries +, then again from 15 until end)

1 2 1 2 3 1

Very slow irregular tremolo (strings)

pp

2 3 4 1 (+ wind) 2 3 4

(pp) *cresc.*

5 1 (+ brass) 2 3 4 5 6 "I can..."

p *cresc.*

7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 "somewhere"

slow throbbing/pulsed tremolo

mp

15 decrease trem. rate... (bottles) 16 17 decrease even more... 18 19 almost continuous...

mf *dim.*

20 21 held note 22 G.P. 23 rapid trem. 24 (end bar together) (bottles continue)

p *ff*

Group 2 in C

24 Steps

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Move on to each bar - 'step' - as cued by narrator. Play with a very slow irregular tremolo, 'stretched' as move across each bar. Accordion may incorporate hand flutter, knee tremolo etc. Change to throbbing trem. at 7, rapid trem. at 23.

(wind & brass blow small bottles from start until cued entries +, then again from 15 until end)

Very slow irregular tremolo (strings)

1 2 1 2 3 1

2 3 4 1 2 3 4 (+ wind) (pp) cresc.

5 1 2 3 4 5 6 (+ brass) p cresc. "*I can..."

7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 slow throbbing/pulsed tremolo mp "*somewhere"

15 16 17 18 19 decrease trem. rate... (bottles) mf dim. decrease even more... almost continuous...

20 21 22 23 24 held note p G.P. rapid trem. (end bar together) (bottles continue) ff

Group 2 in B \flat (lower)

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Move on to each bar - 'step' - as cued by narrator. Play with a very slow irregular tremolo, 'stretched' as move across each bar. Accordion may incorporate hand flutter, knee tremolo etc. Change to throbbing trem. at 7, rapid trem. at 23.

(wind & brass blow small bottles from start until cued entries +, then again from 15 until end)

Very slow irregular tremolo (strings)

pp

(+ wind)

(pp) *cresc.*

(+ brass)

p *cresc.* *"*I can..."*

slow throbbing/pulsed tremolo

mp *"*somewhere"*

decrease trem. rate... (bottles)

mf *dim.* almost continuous...

held note

p **G.P.** rapid trem.

ff (end bar together) (bottles continue)

Group 2 in E \flat

24 Steps

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Move on to each bar - 'step' - as cued by narrator. Play with a very slow irregular tremolo, 'stretched' as move across each bar. Accordion may incorporate hand flutter, knee tremolo etc. Change to throbbing trem. at 7, rapid trem. at 23.

(wind & brass blow small bottles from start until cued entries +, then again from 15 until end)

1 2 1 2 3 1

Very slow irregular tremolo (strings)

pp

2 3 4 1 (+ wind) 2 3 4

(pp) *cresc.*

5 1 (+ brass) 2 3 4 5 6

"*I can..."

p *cresc.*

7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

slow throbbing/pulsed tremolo

"*somewhere"

mp

15 16 17 18 19

decrease trem. rate... (bottles) decrease even more... almost continuous...

mf *dim.*

20 21 22 23 24

held note G.P. rapid trem. (end bar together) (bottles continue)

p *ff*

* short break at double bars on words "I can..." and "Somewhere"

Group 2 in C (alto clef)

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Move on to each bar - 'step' - as cued by narrator. Play with a very slow irregular tremolo, 'stretched' as move across each bar. Accordion may incorporate hand flutter, knee tremolo etc. Change to throbbing trem. at 7, rapid trem. at 23.

(wind & brass blow small bottles from start until cued entries +, then again from 15 until end)

1 2 1 2 3 1

Very slow irregular tremolo (strings)

pp

2 3 4 1 2 3 4

(+ wind)

(pp) *cresc.*

5 1 2 3 4 5 6

(+ brass)

"*I can..."

p *cresc.*

7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

slow throbbing/pulsed tremolo

"*somewhere"

mp

15 16 17 18 19

decrease trem. rate... (bottles)

decrease even more...

almost continuous...

mf *dim.*

20 21 22 23 24

held note

G.P.

rapid trem.

(end bar together) (bottles continue)

p *ff*

* short break at double bars on words "I can..." and "Somewhere"