

The Lonely Wife

for soprano, flute doubling alto flute, percussion

DAVID BLAKE

Preview File Only

If no alto flute, transpose bars 160 to the end up an octave

Percussion Medium and Large Gongs
 Small and Medium Suspended Cymbals } soft sticks
 Maracas } throughout
 Small and Medium Wood Blocks
 Claves
 Crotales D Eb E \flat
 Chinese drum (or equivalent: tenor range)

Preview File Only

Duration approx. 16 minutes

This cycle was conceived as a theatre piece but can be performed as a concert work.

The staging described is a suggestion. If preferred, or if the performance space is unsuitable, other ways can be devised.

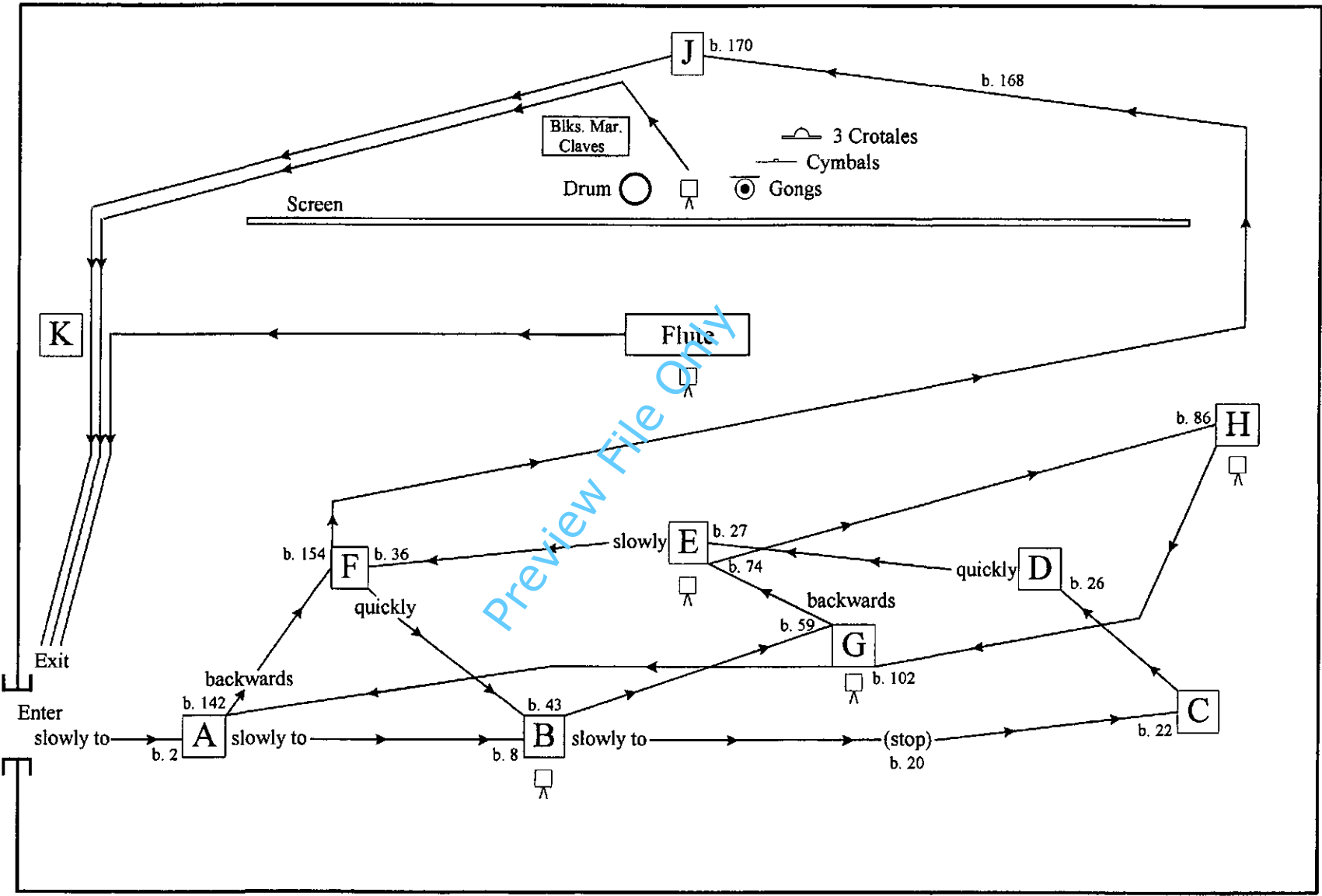
All three performers are women. They are the same person. Preferably they should have black hair, the singer's and percussionist's flowing down, the flautist's pinned up with combs. Each should have identical long dressing gowns, silvery rather than strongly coloured. The singer enters in a night-dress, carrying her gown. All are barefoot.

The lighting is initially gloomy, approximating to early dawn by the end. A shaft of white light of increasing intensity falls upon the flautist from bar 7 until fading at bar 19.

The flautist and percussionist are in position before the piece begins, the flautist (cross-legged?) on a small dais, the percussionist behind a screen large enough to obscure her and all the instruments.

It is desirable that the singer performs from memory. If lit stands are placed where suggested, only the following sections need be memorised — bars 4-7, 17-28, 36-42, (74-80), 82-85, 143-end.

Her movements suggest a wealthy lady's perambulations around a large house. The players' exits should make clear their oneness.



I
HSU KAN 171-218

Since you, sir, went away,
The bright mirror is cloudy and dark.
My thoughts of you are like flowing water.
Will they ever cease?

II
Emperor WEI MING 204-239

Bright, white moon, rays shining on my bed.
In despair I cannot sleep, the night is so long.
Soft breezes blow at my bedroom door,
Silk curtains swish and flutter.
I put on my gown and, trailing its long sash,
Walk into the hall.
East, West, which way to turn?
High above, the birds fly South for the spring.
Their sad calls pierce my heart.
Feelings overflow and tears drench my clothes.
I stand, singing aloud,
Releasing my anguish to the sky.

III
WANG JORNG 468-494

Since you, sir, went away,
My golden burner has not been lit.
I am like the bright candle
At midnight, vainly burning itself away.

IV
YAO FAN fl. early 6th Century

I wake and know what hatred is.
Human hearts are so different.
Who can face a pillow of horn,
The emptiness of a lonely night?

V
YANG FANG fl. early 4th Century

Tigers roar, valley winds blow,
Dragons leap, clouds scud.

My love stays close to you
As a shadow follows the body.

We eat grain from the same root,
Drink from the marriage cup.
In bed we share the seamless quilt.

We are like birds of one heart,
Fish that swim eye to eye.
Our love splits metal and rock,
Is stronger than glue mixed with lacquer.
My one desire is never to be parted,
Our bodies to be made one.

VI

LIU YUN 465-511

Clouds floating, the sky warm-hued,
Green grass and the fresh morning fragrance.
Mountains have lost their gloom and chill,
Gardens are moist with the dawn.
The scene touches my spring heart
And my sorrow is re-awakened.
Since you, sir, went away,
Orchid hall hums no more with the loom.

He only cares about his government campaigning—
Never thinks that parting is wrong.

VII

LIU HSLAO-CHO 481-539

Hairpins he left, carved in tortoiseshell,
Silk woven with mandarin ducks.
These don't compare with wet trees in flower,
Or the entwined branches in his bedroom.
Autumn had fallen when we said farewell,
Now fragrant spring has come.
I cannot send my thoughts to you—
Sadly, only the heady perfume of my sleeves.

VIII

PAO LING HWEI fl. 464

Since you, sir, went away,
I stand unsmiling at the door.
At night there are no sounds of cooking,
By day the high gate stays shut.
Fireflies drift into my bedcurtains,
In the garden purple orchids bloom.
Your journey may end at winter's close—
Till late spring I'll wait for you.

For Shu-ni
The Lonely Wife

Poems from the Chinese

English versions by
 Shu-ni Tzu and
 David Blake

Music by
 David Blake
 2002

(♩ = c. 52) freely

Flute *p* *p* *mp*

Soprano Enter. Walk slowly to —

LARGE GONG

Percussion *pp*

I Hsu Kan
 ♩ = 52 *spoken softly, to herself* flexible, quasi a tempo

wide vib. 3

zi jun zhi chu ye
 自君之出也

MEDIUM GONG

Since you, sir, — went a - way, —

pp

5 3

pp *p* *p* *pp*

The bright mir-ror is cloud-y and dark. My thoughts of you are like flowing wa-ter. Will they e-ver

damp

Ray of white light...

3 *p* *mf*

walk slowly to —

cease? —

damp

pp

II Wei Ming

$\text{♩} = \text{c. } 66$
...intense

10

p flowing

B *mp*

Bright, white moon, rays shin-ing on my bed. In des-pair I can-not

MED. WD. BLK.

p

mp *p* *poco rit.* *a tempo* *pp*

sleep, the night is so long. Soft bree-zes

poco rit. *a tempo* *p*

pp

p *mp*

blow at my bed-room-door, Silk cur-tains swi-sh and flutter. —

put on gown...

pp

Poco più lento $\text{♩} = 58$

ray of light fades..

...and move slowly to — *pp*

I put on my gown and, trail-ing its long sash, Walk in-to the hall. —

mf