

Elliott Bark
NEUTRAL TONES

for Mezzo-Soprano (Countertenor) and Chamber Ensemble

(2008/2011)

Neutral Tones

Thomas Hardy

We stood by a pond that winter day,
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod,
-- They had fallen from an ash, and were grey.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
Over tedious riddles solved years ago;
And some words played between us to and fro -
On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing
Alive enough to have strength to die;
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
Like an ominous bird a-wing....

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,
And a pond edged with greyish leaves.

written in 1890
published in 1898

Program Note

In the first stanza, Hardy sketches his/her memory of previous love that the main character has. In the second and third stanzas, he/she starts expressing his/her madness with sarcastic and brutal words, such as “smile[...]the deadest thing” and “grin of bitterness.” Finally in the fourth stanza, the character describes the memory again with different nuance.

Then, “Why did Hardy title it Neutral Tones?” was a question in my mind. It seemed too dramatic to use the word “neutral.” However, while a person was complaining with the harsh words, the memory (your face) and nature (sun, tree and pond) did not give him any reaction, but just stayed with his/her furious self. It may have a similar image like this: When a person who has concerns and worries talks to a close friend, he/she may feel somewhat relieved. The friend does not have to talk about something. Just staying neutral can give the person relief.

I started thinking about what musical “neutral tones” are: maybe certain hovering melodic motion, maybe simplicity, maybe no dynamic change, maybe symmetrical harmony and register... I expressed various neutral ideas in certain ways while putting dramatic contents in foreground as the poem placed neutral elements behind the dramatic words. This piece illustrates my reaction to the poem and to musical neutral tones.

Neutral Tones was revised in 2011.

2008/2011
Elliott Bark

Instrumentation

Flute
Oboe
Bb Clarinet/Bass Clarinet (extension to C)

F Horn
C Trumpet (straight, cup and harmon mutes)

Percussion I

Marimba
Crotales (c1-c3; sound 2 octaves higher; shared with Perc. II)
Chimes (shared with Perc. II)
Glockenspiel (sounds 2 octaves higher; shared with Perc. II)
Suspended Cymbal (large)
Tom-toms (4; high to low)
Woodblock (large)
Bass Drum

Percussion II

Vibraphone (motor)
Suspended Cymbal (small)
Crotales (c1-c3; sound 2 octaves higher; shared with Perc. I)
Chimes (shared with Perc. I)
Glockenspiel (sound 2 octaves higher; shared with Perc. I)
Tam-tam (medium)

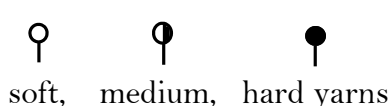

Piano/Celesta (one player)
Harp (harmonics sound as written)

Mezzo-Soprano (or Countertenor)

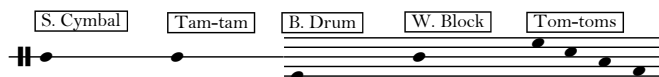
Violin
Viola
Cello

Duration ca. 8' 30"

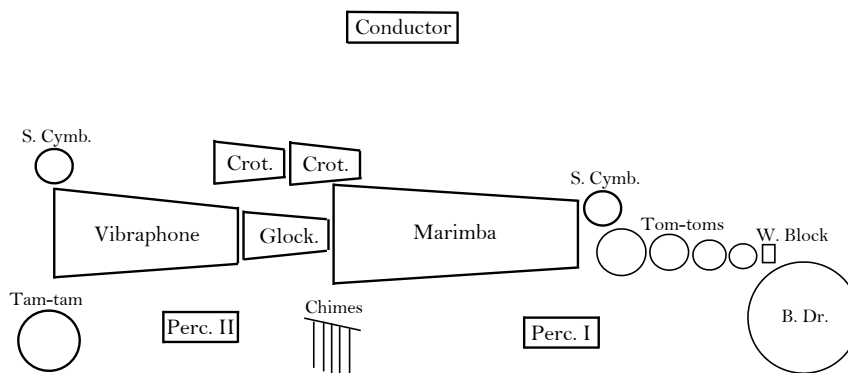
Mallets

Marimba Vibraphone S. Symbal Tom-toms W. Block Bass Drum	 soft, medium, hard yarns
Chimes	Chime hammer (fiberglass) or hard yarns (as indicated)
Crotales Glockenspiel	always with plastic mallet 
Tam-tam	always with beater

Percussion Identification Chart



Suggested Setup for Percussion Instruments



NEUTRAL TONES

Thomas Hardy

for Countertenor and Chamber Ensemble

Elliott Bark

Slow and calm

$\text{♩} = 48$

Flute

Oboe

Bb Clarinet/
Bass Clarinet

F Horn

C Trumpet

Percussion I
Marimba

Percussion II
Vibra.

Celesta

Piano

Harp

Mezzo-Soprano
(Countertenor)

Violin

Viola

Cello

1 2 3 4 5

2

6

Fl. *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

Ob. *non vib.* *p* *pp*

Bb Cl. *Bb Cl.* *non vib.* *pp* *pp* *normal vib.* *pp* *p* *pp*

F Hn. *pp* *ppp*

C Tpt.

Perc. I
Marimba *p* *p* *pp* *p* *pp*

Perc. II
Vibra. *p* *motor on slow* *motor off* *p* *pp* *sub.mp* *sub. pp*

Celesta *pp* *pp* *p* *p*

Piano *Piano* *secco* *L.H. mute string approximately 1" from pinboard* *p*

Hp. *lv.* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *mp* *p* *p* *mp*

M.S.
(C.T.) *6* *purely without vibrato* *pp* *p* *pp* *pp*

We stood by a pond that win - ter day, And the

Vn. *(sul G) non vib.* *pp* *sul A (non vib.)* *pp* *p*

Va. *non vib.* *pp* *sul D non vib.* *pp*

Vc. *non vib.* *pp* *pp* *non vib.* *pp* *molto vib.* *p*

11

Fl. *normal vib.* $\overset{\curvearrowright}{\text{pp}}$ mp $\overset{\curvearrowright}{\text{pp}}$ p

Ob. *normal vib.* p mp mf $\overset{\curvearrowright}{\text{pp}}$ p

Bb Cl. p mp p n p

F Hn. pp p

C Tpt.

Perc. I
Marimba p pp p

Perc. II
Vibra. mp mp pp p

Celesta

Piano pp pp p mp p p

Hp. *(ord.)* p mp p *(ord.)* mp

11

M.S.
(C.T.) p mp p
sun was white as though chid - den of God,

Vn. *normal vib.* mp mf p

Va. p mp *normal vib.* p

Vc. *normal vib.* p mp p ppp p

4

16

Fl. *pp* *p* *p* *p*

Ob. *pp* *p* *p*

Bb Cl./ Bass Cl. *n* *p*

F Hn.

C Tpt.

Perc. I
Marimba
Crotales *p* *mp* *mp*

Perc. II
Vibra. *pp* *p* *p* *p*

Celesta *p* *mp* *mf*

Piano *p*

Hp. *p* *p* *p* *mp*

M.S.
(C.T.) *pp* *p* *mp* *p*

Vn. *pp* *ppp* *p* *p* *mp*

Va. *ppp* *mp* *p* *mp*

Vc. *mp* *p* *p* *mp*

And a few leaves lay on the starv-ing sod,

15 16 17 18 19

21

Fl. *mf* *p* *mp* *mf* *f*

Ob. *mf* *p* *mp* *mf* *f*

Bass Cl. *mf* *f*

F Hn. *p* *mf* *f*

C Tpt. *cup mute* *p* *(c. mute)* *mf* *f*

Perc. I
Marimba *mp*
Crotales *mf*

Perc. II
Vibra. *mf*
S. Cymbal *pp* *mf*

Celesta *mp* *mf*

Piano *mf*

Hp. *mf* *f* *mf* *mp* *f* *mf* *f*

M.S. (C.T.) *mf* *mp* *mf* *f* *mf*

Vn. *mf* *mp* *mf* *f*

Va. *mf* *p* *mf* *f*

Vc. *mf* *mp* *mf* *f*

21

-They had fall - en from an ash And were

6

25 27

Fl. *f*

Ob. *f*

Bass Cl. *f* to Bb Cl.

F Hn. *f*

C Tpt. *f* to straight mute

Marimba L.H. R.H.

Perc. I Marimba Chimes *f* *pp* *pp* *ppp* *p*

Vibra. *f* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

Crotales *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

medium mallets for vibraphone, plastic stick for crotales

Celesta *pp sempre*

Piano *ff* *8^{vb}*

Hp. *pp* *pp* *pp*

25 27

M.S. (C.T.) *f* *with normal vibrato* *pp* *p* *pp* *mp* *p* *p*

grey. Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove O - ver

Vn. *f*

Va. *f*

Vc. *f*

25 26 27 28 29

8

37

Fl. *normal vib.* *ppp*

Ob. *ppp*

Bb Cl. *ppp*

F Hn. *p* *mf*

C Tpt. *p*

Perc. I
Marimba
Chimes *p* *pp* *pp* *pp* *p*

Perc. II
Vibra. *motor on slow* *motor off*

Crotales *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *p*

Celesta *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p*

Piano

Hp. *p*

M.S. (C.T.) *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

to and fro — On which — lost — the more — by our love. The

Vn. *ppp* *sul D* *ppp*

Va. *ppp* *sul C* *ppp* *sul G* *ppp*

Vc. *ppp* *sul D* *ppp* *8va* *ppp*

Slightly Faster

42 ♩ = 54

Fl. *pp* *p* *pp* *p*

Ob. *pp* *p* *pp* *pp* *p*

Bb Cl. *pp* *p* *pp* *p*

F Hn.

C Tpt.

Perc. I
Glock. Glock. *mp* *plastic*

Perc. II
Vibra.

Piano *Piano* *p sempre*
Ped. ad lib.

Hp. *mf*

Slightly Faster

42 ♩ = 54

M.S.
(C.T.) *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mf*

smile on your mouth The smile on

Vn. *pp* *p*

Va. *pp* *p* *pp* *p*

Vc. *pp* *p*

10

Fl. *p* *mp* *mf* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

Ob. *mp* *p* *mf* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

Bb Cl. *mp* *mf* *p* *mfp* *mfp*

F Hn. *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf*

C Tpt. *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf*

Perc. I
Glock.
Chimes

Chimes Chime hammer *p*

Perc. II
Vibra.

Vibra. *p* *f*

Piano

Hp. *f* *f*

M.S.
(C.T.) *fp* *mf* *f* *f* *f*

your mouth was the dead esthing A - live e -

Vn. *p* *mp* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

Va. *mp* *mf* *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

Vc. *mp* *mf* *p* *mf* *f*

46 47 48 49

49

49

Fl. *sub. mf* *p* *mf* *f*

Ob. *sub. mf* *p* *mf* *f*

Bb Cl. *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *f*

F Hn. *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

C Tpt. *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

Perc. I
S. Cymbal *p* *f*

Perc. II
Vibra. *mp* *mp* *mp* *ff*
Chimes *Chime hammer*

Piano

Hp. *f* *mf* *mf* *f* *ff*

M.S.
(C.T.) *mf* *f* *fp* *f* *ff*

Vn. *sub. mf* *p* *mf* *f*

Va. *sub. mf* *p* *mf* *f*

Vc. *mf* *mp* *mp* *mf* *f*

nough to have strength to

50 51 52 53

Fl.

Ob.

Bb Cl./
Bass Cl.

Bass Clarinet

F Hn.

C Tpt.

Perc. I

Tom-toms

W. Block

B. Drum

Perc. II

Chimes

Piano

Hp.

M.S.
(C.T.)

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

mf *mf* *mf* *mf*

5 5 5 5

p *mf*

mf *p*

p *mf*

3 3

mf *p*

p *mf*

mf *p*

mf

3

mf *mp* *pp*

mf *cup mute*

mp

3

mp *p*

Tom-toms

mp *mp* *p*

3

mp

3 3 3 3

mf sempre

die; And a grin And a

f *mp* *mf* *p*

3 3 3 3

f *mp* *mf*

3 3

arco *f* *mp* *mf*

Fl. *mp* *mf* *mp*

Ob. *mp* *mf* *mp*

Bass Cl. *mp* *mf* *mp*

F Hn. *mf* *p* *mf*

C Tpt. *mf* *straight mute* *p* *mf*

Perc. I
 Tom-toms *mp* *pp* *pp* *mp* *p* *mf* *pp* *mp* *mfp* *mf*
 W. Block
 B. Drum

Perc. II
 Glock. *mf* *mf*
 Crotales (principal notes)

Piano *f* *mf* *f*

Hp.

M.S. (C.T.) *fp* *f* *mf* *f*

grin _____ of bit - ter - ness _____

Vn. *mp* *mf* *mp*

Va. *mp* *mf* *mp*

Vc. *mp* *mf* *mp*

Fl. *mf* *f* *mp*

Ob. *mf* *f*

Bass Cl. *mf* *f* *mf*

F Hn. *mfp* *mf*

C Tpt. *mfp* *mf*

Perc. I
Tom-toms *mp* *f* *mf* *f*
W. Block
B. Drum

Perc. II
Vibra. *mf* *f*

Piano *f*

Hp. *f*

M.S. (C.T.) *ff* *f*
swept there - by Like an

Vn. *mf* *f*

Va. *mf* *f*

Vc. *mf* *f* *mf*

67

Fl. *mp* *mp* *f* *p*

Ob. *mp* *mf* *f* *pp*

Bass Cl. *mp* *mp* *f* *p*

F Hn. *mp* *sub. p* *mf* *pp* *non vib.*

C Tpt. *mp* *sub. p* *mf* *pp*

Perc. I
S. Cymbal *pp* *f* *ppp*

Perc. II
Vibra. *mp* *f* *ppp*

Piano/
Celesta *mp* *f* *p* *ppp*

Hp. *f*

M.S.
(C.T.) *mf* *f* *non vib.* *ppp*
o - mi - nous bird a - wing...

Vn. *mp* *mp* *f*

Va. *mp* *mp* *f*

Vc. *mp* *mp* *f* *ppp*

16

71

Fl. *mf* *f* *p* *mp*

Ob. *mp* *mf* *p* *p* *mp*

Bass Cl. *mf* *f* *p*

F Hn. *mf* *f* *p* *p* *mp*

C Tpt. *f* *mp* *f*

Perc. I
W. Block
B. Drum

Perc. II
Vibra.
Chimes

Piano *f*

Hp. *mf* *f*

M.S. (C.T.)

Vn. *ppp* *mp* *f* *p* *mp*

Va. *ppp* *mp* *f*

Vc. *mf* *f*

non vib. *molto non vib.*

molto vib. non vib. *normal vib.*

W. Block *B. Drum* *Chimes* *Chime hammer* *Piano*

(Ped.) *(non Ped.)*

(8va) *(separated bowing)*

Fl. *f* *mf* *f* (2+2+2+1)

Ob. *f* *mf* *f*

Bass Cl. *mp* *f* *mf* *f*

F Hn. *f*

C Tpt. *mf* *f* *p* *mf*

Perc. I
Tom-toms
W. Block
B. Drum

Perc. II
Crotales

Piano *f*

Hp. *mf* *f*

M.S. (C.T.) *f* *mp* *f* (2+2+2+1)

Vn. *f* *mp* *f*

Va. *mp* *f* *mp* *f*

Vc. *mp* *f* *mp* *f*

18

77

Fl. *ff* *f* *ff*

Ob. *ff* *f* *ff*

Bass Cl. *f* *ff* *poco f*

F Hn. *f* *ff* *f*

C Tpt. *f* *ff* *f*

Perc. I
B. Drum *ff* *mp* *ffp*

Perc. II
S. Cymbal *f* *f*

Crotales *f*

Piano *f* *poco f* *cresc.*

Hp. *f* *poco f* *cresc.*

M.S.
(C.T.)

Vn. *f* *poco f*

Va. *f* *poco f*

Vc. *f* *poco f*

83 Tempo I (♩ = 48)

86

Fl. *pp* *ppp* *p*

Ob. *pp* *ppp* *p*

Bb Cl. *pp* *ppp* *p*

F Hn. *to open*

C Tpt.

Perc. I Crotales *plastic plastic* *ppp*

Perc. II Glock.

Celesta

Hp.

M.S. (C.T.) *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

Since then, keen les - sons

Vn. *ppp*

Va. *ppp*

Vc. *ppp*

89

Fl. *ppp* 3

Ob. *ppp* 5

Bb Cl. *ppp* 3

F Hn.

C Tpt.

Perc. I
Crotales *ppp*

Perc. II
Glock. *ppp*
Crotales

Celesta *ppp* Celesta

Hp.

89

M.S. (C.T.) *p* *mp* *pp* *p*
that love de - ceives, And

Vn. *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *ppp*

Va. *ppp* *mp* *ppp*

Vc. *ppp* *mp* *ppp*

Fl. *pp* *ppp* *pp*

Ob. *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *pp*

Bb Cl. *pp* *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *pp*

F Hn. *pp* *p*

C Tpt.

Perc. I
Crotales *pp*

Perc. II
Vibra. *p* *p* *pp*

Piano

Hp. *p*

M.S.
(C.T.) *mp* *mp* *p* *p* *pp* *p*

wrings with wrong, have shaped to me Your face,

Vn. *pp* *p* *pp*

Va. *pp* *p* *pp* *pp* *p*

Vc. *pp* *p* *p* *mp* *pp* *pp* *p*

Fl. *pp* *ppp* *pp*

Ob. *pp* *pp* *pp*

Bb Cl. *pp* *ppp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

F Hn. *pp* *p* *mp* *p* *pp*

C Tpt. *cup mute* *pp*

Perc. I
Crotales *pp* *pp* *pp*

Perc. II
Vibra. *pp* *pp* *mp*

Piano

Hp. *p* *p* *p*

M.S.
(C.T.) *p* *mf*

and the God - curst sun,

Vn. *ppp* *p* *sub. ppp* *p*

Va. *ppp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p*

Vc. *ppp* *p* *pp* *p*

non vib. *molto vib.* *normal vib.*

Fl. *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

Ob. *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

Bb Cl. *p* *mp*

F Hn. *mp*

C Tpt. *mp*

Perc. I
W. Block
B. Drum
S. Cymbal *ppp* *mp* *pp* *mf*

Perc. II
S. Cymbal
Crotales *ppp* *mp* *mf* *mf*

Piano/
Celesta *mf* *mp*

Hp. *mp* *mf*

M.S.
(C.T.) *mf* *ff*
and a tree,

Vn. *mp* *mp* *8va*

Va. *mp* *mp* *8va*

Vc. *mp* *mp*

Fl. *pp* *non vib.* *pp*

Ob. *pp* *pp*

Bb Cl. *mf* *pp* *pp*

F Hn. *p*

C Tpt. *p* *cup mute* *ppp* *p*

Perc. I
B. Drum
Marimba *ppp* *pp* *pp*

Perc. II
Crotales
Vibra. *mp* *pp*

Pno. (Cel.) *pp* *Celesta* *pp* *Piano* +

Hp. *pp* *pp* *pp*

M.S. (C.T.) *rubato* *mp* *ord.* *p* *purely as in the beginning* *p*

Vn. *sub. pp* *mf* *ppp* *sul D non vib.* *pp*

Va. *ppp* *sul G non vib.* *pp* *molto vib.*

Vc. *ppp* *sul D molto vib.* *pp*

106

109

106

109

And a pond

edged

normal vib.

Fl. *mp* *p* *mp*

Ob. *p* *mp*

Bb Cl. *mp* *p* *mp*

F Hn. *p*

C Tpt.

Perc. I
Marimba *p*

Perc. II
Vibra. *p* *mp*

Piano/
Celesta *pizz.* *p* *Celesta* *p*

Hp. *pp* *p*

M.S.
(C.T.) *p* *poco vib.* *mp* *pp non vib.*

Vn. *pizz.* *pp* *normal vib. arco* *p*

Va. *normal vib.* *pp* III IV *p*

Vc. *sul D* *normal vib.* *pp* *p*

with grey - - - - - ish leaves.

Fl. *p*

Ob. *p*

Bb Cl. *p*

F Hn. *p*

C Tpt. *p* (c. mute) non vib.

Perc. I
Marimba
Crotales *p*

Perc. II
Vibra.
Glock. *p*

Piano/
Celesta *p*

Hp. *p*

M.S.
(C.T.)

Vn. *p*

Va. *p*

Vc. *p*

Crotales plastic plastic *pp*

Glock. plastic plastic *pp*

Celesta *p*

Piano *p*