

Michael Murray

**Neutral Tones**  
**Four Songs of Thomas Hardy**

*for baritone and viola*

- I. The Self-Unseeing
- II. Looking Across
- III. The Robin
- IV. Neutral Tones

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### **I. The Self-Unseeing**

Here is the ancient floor,  
Footworn and hollowed and thin,  
Here was the former door  
Where the dead feet walked in.

She sat here in her chair,  
Smiling into the fire;  
He who played stood there,  
Bowing it higher and higher.

Childlike, I danced in a dream;  
Blessings emblazoned that day;  
Everything glowed with a gleam;  
Yet we were looking away!

### **II. Looking Across**

It is dark in the sky,  
And silence is where  
Our laughs rang high;  
And recall do I  
That One is out there.

The dawn is not nigh,  
And the trees are bare,  
And the waterways sigh  
That a year has drawn by,  
And Two are out there.

The wind drops to die  
Like the phantom of Care  
Too frail for a cry,  
And heart brings to eye  
That Three are out there.

This Life runs dry  
That once ran rare  
And rosy in dye,  
And fleet the days fly,  
And Four are out there.

Tired, tired am I  
Of this earthly air,  
And my wraith asks: Why,  
Since these calm lie,  
Are not Five out there?

### **III. The Robin**

When up aloft  
I fly and fly,  
I see in pools  
The shining sky,  
And a happy bird  
Am I, am I!

When I descend  
Towards their brink  
I stand, and look,  
And stoop, and drink,  
And bathe my wings,  
And chink and prink.

When winter frost  
Makes earth as steel  
I search and search  
But find no meal,  
And most unhappy  
Then I feel.

But when it lasts,  
And snows still fall,  
I get to feel  
No grief at all,  
For I turn to a cold stiff  
Feathery ball!

### **IV. Neutral Tones**

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 gray.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove  
Over tedious riddles of 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 grayish leaves.

# Neutral Tones

## I. The Self-Unseeing

Thomas Hardy

Michael Murray

**Moderato** ♩ = 96

2 3 4 5

*mf* *f* *mf*

6 7 8 9 10

Here is the an-cient floor, Foot-worn and hol-owed and

11 12 13 14 15

thin, Here was the for-mer door Where the dead

*mf* *mp*

16 17 18 19 20

feet walked in. She

*f* *mp*

## I. The Self-Unseeing

21 sat here in her chair, 22 Smil - ing 23 in - to the fire; 24

25 He who played stood there, 26 bow-ing it 27 high - er 28

29 and high - er. 30 Child - like, 31 I danced in a 32

33 dream; 34 Bless - ings 35 em-blaz-oned that day; 36 Ev-ery-thing glowed 37

38 with a gleam; 39 Yet we were look - ing 40 a - way! 41 42

*mf* **più mosso** ♩ = 104 *f* *mp* **tempo primo** *p*

MM006-2

The musical score is written for a voice and piano. The voice part is in a single system with lyrics. The piano accompaniment is in 3/4 time and features many triplets. The score is divided into systems, with measures 21-24, 25-28, 29-32, 33-37, and 38-42. Dynamics include *mf*, *f*, *mp*, and *p*. Tempo markings include **più mosso** (♩ = 104) and **tempo primo**. The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.