

Wintra

Liam Elliot

*Wintra* is a setting of excerpts from the original Anglo-Saxon texts, with modern English translations by Aaron Hostetter, which he has created as a part of the Rutgers University *Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry Project*. The text I chose for this piece was inspired by an article by Alexandra Harris that was published in *The Guardian* titled “Making the Weather in English Writing.” Harris writes that she “spent a summer reading Anglo-Saxon poetry and chronicles. The fascination with frost seemed to run so deep that even the language was frozen into its forms: *wintercearig*, *winterbiter*, *wintergeweorþe*. Where was the sun? I kept reading, waiting for the spring. It came in the lyric poems of the 13th century...”.

Reading through Anglo-Saxon texts, there are many mentions of wintry terms, but no mentions of any of the other seasons. For *Wintra*, I have taken all of the mentions of “winters” (used as a substitute for “years”) from *Beowulf*, combined them with Aaron Hostetter’s translations, and organized the excerpts by the number of winters. Writing this piece, I wanted to capture the stillness and intimate sounds of a frozen landscape, and a cyclical sense of time as the winters pass.

### **Tech Requirements**

All three singers should be amplified with a microphone that they can move freely towards and away from and that is not overly susceptible to wind interference. Eliza should be panned most of the way left, Martha panned most of the way right, and Jacqueline panned to the centre.

### **Performance Notes**

All time brackets and tempi are approximate

Notes without stems are roughly proportional

Boxed text applies to the part below

From bar 36 the rhythms are additive, so the metre may be misleading

### **Microphone**

Use microphone at discretion. I’ve given **very** rough indications of On/Off mic, but use the microphone creatively and expressively.

Mics are for the colour of proximity, and to bring out small, intimate sounds, not just for neutral amplification. With this piece I want to bring together small amplified sounds and more conventionally performed sounds.

On Mic passages can be right against the microphone

# Wintra

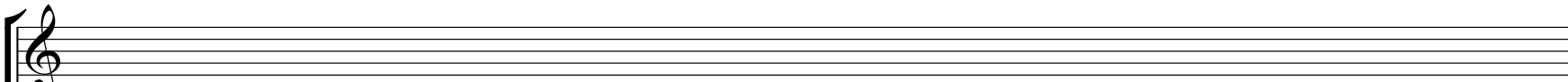
for ModernMedieval

Liam Elliot  
Text from Beowulf  
Translation by Aaron Hostetter

Eliza and Marths whisper below text with so little air that your mouth sounds and consonants are louder than your voiced words  
On mic  
Do not synchronize  
At the edge of intelligability - subtly rise and fall in intelligibility  
Breath unforced but audible - breathe as needed  
Repeat as needed until English starts, then immediately continue

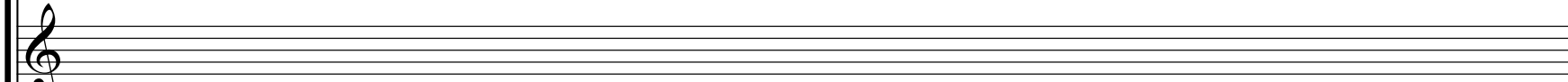
30"

Eliza



ic þis gid be þé áwræc wintrum fród. wís wélþungen þeah ðe wintra lýt under burhlocan gebiden hæbbe þonne hé wintrum fród, worn gemunde.

Martha




ic þis gid be þé áwræc wintrum fród. wís wélþungen þeah ðe wintra lýt under burhlocan gebiden hæbbe þonne hé wintrum fród, worn gemunde.

mic optional  
rhythm free  
much quieter than whispers/barely audible

20"

10"

Jacqueline



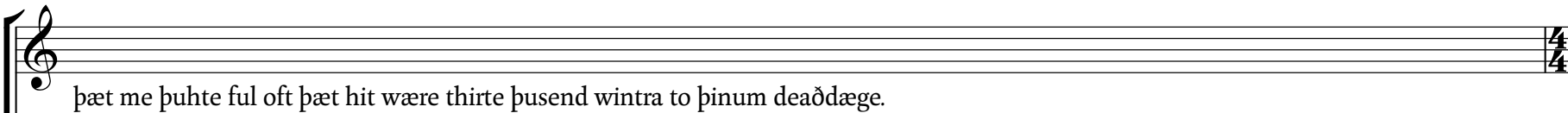
*[hum under breath]*

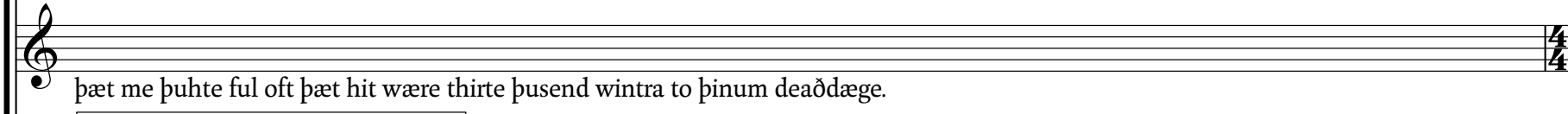
Speak on mic  
Roughly synchronize, don't repeat  
Slightly quieter than English text

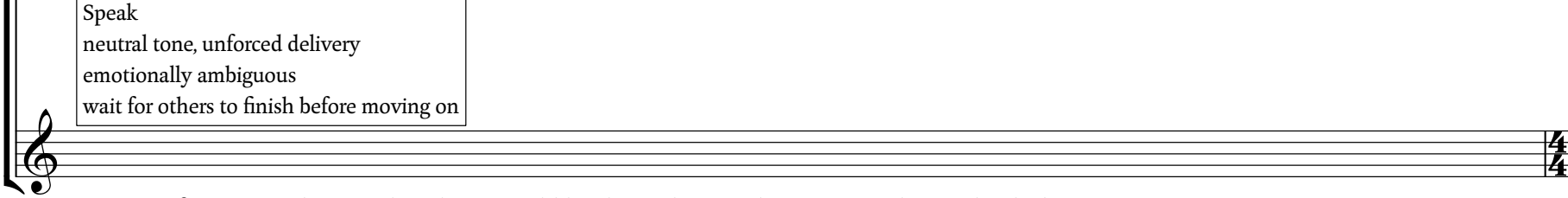
15"

1-3"

6

E. 

M. 

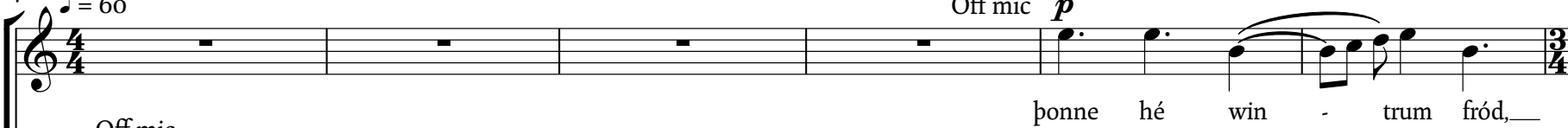
J. 

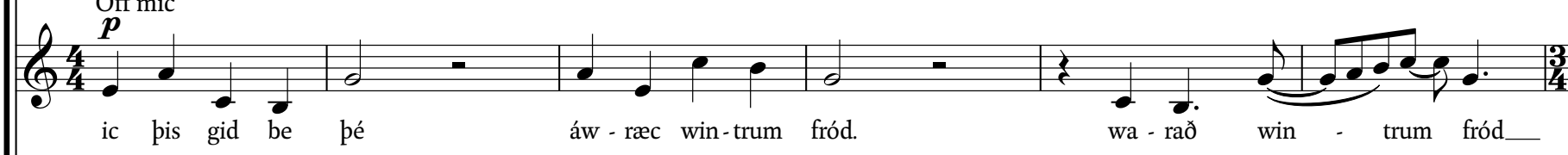
Speak  
neutral tone, unforced delivery  
emotionally ambiguous  
wait for others to finish before moving on

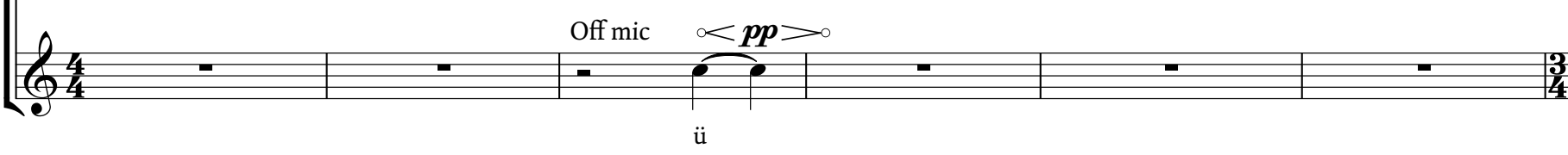
A

7

$\text{♩} = 60$

E. 

M. 

J. 

Off mic *p*

Off mic *p*

Off mic *pp*

13

E. *mp* Off mic  
 worn ge- munde. [hum on mic] pun - gen þé ðe

M. On mic  
 ne byð him wih-te ðý sél. Hm Hm Hm Hm Hm

J. *p* Off mic  
 [hum on mic] wís wél þun - gen þé-ah ðe

Allow air to escape mouth percussively as you begin the note and close to hum

19

E.  $\text{♩} = 90$   
 win-tra lýt un - der burh-lo-can ge bi - den hæg - be

M. On mic *ppp* Off mic  
 Hm [hum] bi - den hæg - be [hum]

J. On mic *ppp* *mp* Off mic *mp*  
 win-tra lýt [hum] Ge - bád win - tra

**B**

25

E. Off mic *ppp*

M. Off mic *mp* [hum]

J. *worn* aér hé on weg hwurfe

ga - mol of gear - dum; hi - ne gear - we ge -

31

E. *mp* = 100-110 On mic

M. Off mic *p*

J. *pp* [hum] On mic *mp*

man *wi - ten - a wélh-wylc wí-de ge - ond eor - þan.* ssssssssss [unpitched]

ic wæs sy - [Breathe In] [unpitched]

37 *mf* *p* Off mic *f*

E. win - tre *p* *mf* *f*  
 [spoken] þá mec sssss - kl' dor

M. fan - win - tre *f* *p* *mf*  
 þá mec sin - ca bal - dor

J. Hm Hm *p* *f* Off mic  
 sin - ca bal - dor

Allow air to escape mouth percussively as you begin the note and close to hum

42 *p* *mf*

E. fré fol - ca fæ - der ge - nam

M. fré

J. *mf* fré - a - win - e æt mi - num fæ - der ge - nam

Speak using a full breath  
emphasize H and F sounds  
on mic, but avoid wind interference

Speak softly with a natural  
rhythm that approximates  
notated rhythm. On mic

47 *non dim.*

E. *On mic p*  
ah hæf - de wæs sé - o hwil mi - cel, twelf

M. *On mic p*  
ah he - old mec ond hæf - de wæs sé - o hwil mi - cel,

J. *On mic p*  
ah hæf - de wæs sé - o hwil mi - cel, twelf

*Off mic mf*

53 *mf* **D**

E. *mf*  
win - tra tid torn ge - þo - lo - d wi - ne Scyl - den - da ic ðás le-

M. *Off mic mf*  
win - tra tid torn ge - þo - lo - de ssssss - d ah

J. *mf*  
win - tra tid torn ge ah



59

Off mic

*f* 3

E. ol - de hé - old fif - tig win - tra

M. *mf* *f* 3 8vb if needed  
hé ge - hé-old te - la fif - tig win - tra

J. *mf*  
ah

64

E. win - tra

M. win - tra

J.

*Speak into mic. Begin softly and accelerate and strengthen slightly to the end of the page, becoming full voiced but not loud. The pacing and rhythm should be natural and free, but should approximately line up as indicated, especially at the beginnings and ends of passages. Begin this page as Eliza sings the final note of the previous page. At the end of the page, move on after a breath.*

**Eliza** wise and well-honored, though light of the  
**Martha** guards, wise in winters—but it is no whit the better for it.  
**Jacqui** Aged in winters, I relate this song for you

**Eliza** winters she had endured under the sheltering-close  
**Martha** when he, wise of winters, remembered many things.  
**Jacqui** He endured a host of winters before he went his way, aged in the yards—readily

**Eliza** I was seven winters old when the lord of treasures, the lord  
**Martha** The time was great, a  
**Jacqui** will every wise man remember him widely throughout the world.

**Eliza** of the people took me from my father's house. I have guided my people for fifty winters  
**Martha** season of twelve winters, that the friend of the Scyldings suffered misery  
**Jacqui** He kept it well for fifty winters

♩ = 60

68 Rhythm very free. Allow notes to stretch and overlap

M. [neutral ah under breath to end. On mic.]

J. Rhythm very free. Allow notes to stretch and overlap

[neutral ah under breath to end. On mic.]

Eliza and Martha see following page

One breath per slur  
Rhythm very free

Repeat until "300 winters," then  
jump to this last phrase, then continue

73

J.

Hold until spoken text ends  
then fade  
Breathe audibly  
Disguise entry/exit

♩ = 60

78

M.

J.

Hold until spoken text ends  
then fade  
Breathe audibly  
Disguise entry/exit

*Begin with Jacqui at bar 73. Delivery is similar to the previous spoken page. After “three hundred winters ago” Martha returns to the previous page for the rest of the piece. Eliza continue on this page to the end of the text.*

**Eliza** þreo hund wintra héold on hrúsan hordærna sum éacencræftig oð ðæt hýne án  
**Martha** þone lichoman þe heo ær longe wæg, þreo hund wintra,

**Eliza** ábealch mon on móde for three hundred winters, hugely grown, until some man enraged it in its  
**Martha** its body-home, that it wore long before, three hundred winters ago. [*Return to prev page bar 78*]

**Eliza** heart. rusty and eaten through, just as they had dwelt there one thousand winters in the earth’s embrace.

*[whispered to end on mic]*

**Eliza** ómige þurhetone swá híc wið eorðan fæðm þúsend wintra þaér eardodon.

