

Protest Poems

for Narrator, Violin, Clarinet, Cello, and Piano

Clarinet in B flat

part for electronic music readers



Bill Robinson

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March 16—June 8, 2024

Duration: about 25 minutes

for John and Nancy Lambert

In January 2024, Eric Pritchard offered the idea of a concert at Duke University in January 2025 to mark my 70th birthday. I thought it timely to set some protest poems for narrator and a chamber group. *At last, an opportunity to do what I do best—complain.* As is my habit, I then set the piece for orchestra, giving me my third symphony.

The first poem, “Pity the Party”, is inspired by “Pity the Nation” by Laurence Ferlinghetti, who in turn was inspired by a poem of the same name by Khalil Gibran. While this is pointed directly at today’s Republican Party in the US, it applies just as well to neo-fascist and authoritarian parties around the world, such as the BJP in India.

The second poem, “Father Stalin, Look at This” is a Ukrainian children’s song from about 1933. This was at the height of the Holodomor, when Stalin deliberately starved six million people to death in the process of collectivizing farms.

The third poem, “Political Theology”, I wrote a few years ago in disgust with the power of religion in governments through history. It is also critique of a civilization that is based on the destruction of Nature, and which is hell-bent on catastrophic overpopulation and extirpation of resources.

The fourth poem, “The birds don’t know about self-immolation”, was posted anonymously on social media two days after Aaron Bushnell burned himself to death in front of the Israeli embassy in Washington DC on February 25, 2024, to protest the war in Gaza.

The fifth poem, “Artificial Insanity”, I wrote (with a little ironic assistance from artificial intelligence, which I couldn’t resist) based on Alan Ginsberg’s poem “Howl”. It is about the threat to our mental health and culture from modern technology, especially AI.

Performance notes

Should this music be performed in places and times where the references are unknown, obscure, or irrelevant to the audience and musicians, the texts may be changed to be more applicable to the local situation.

Cover art; anti-fascist poster by John Heartfield, Germany early 1930’s

Bill Robinson

Publisher Parish Press, Garner NC 2nd Edition June 8, 2024 (*corrected to 10/18/2024*)
billrobinsonmusic.com

Protest Poems

lyrics: Bill Robinson

(after L. Ferlinghetti (after K. Gibran))

I. Pity the Party [4:15]

The musical score for "Fascismo" is presented in a multi-staff format. The top staff is for the Narrator, with lyrics: "Pit - y the par - ty whose". The Violin, Clarinet in Bb, and Cello parts are arranged in a grand staff. The Piano part is at the bottom. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, and *ff*, as well as crescendos and a *legato* marking. The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 76$. The score is divided into measures, with some measures containing multiple notes and rests. The overall structure is a continuous musical piece with a clear narrative focus.

27

whose *f* sag - es are purged, and whose

cresc. *f*

27

cresc. *f*

27

cresc. *f*

30

big - ots dom - i - nate the me - di - a.

30

f *p* *cresc.* (*mp*)

30

p *cresc.* (*mp*)

34

mf Pit - y the par - ty that *f* prais - es *ff* dic - ta - tors and ac -

34

mf *cresc.* *f* *ff*

34

mf *cresc.* *f* *ff*

34

mf *f* *ff*

Pity the Party

4

37

claims the bul - ly as he - ro, and aims to dom - i - nate the world by force and tor - ture in the

37

37

8va

41

name of free - dom.

46

Pit - y the par - ty whose

41

46

pp

pp

pp

8va

47

Gods are Mon - ey and Guns, and sleeps the sleep of op - i - oids.

47

cresc.

cresc.

legato

cresc.

5

57

sick

while

57

57

Pity the Party

6

59

ty - coons get what they want.

59

ff dim. *(mf)*

62

mp Pit - ty the par - ty that speaks one lan-guage, and de-mands pu - ri - ty of blood

62

mp

62

mp

66

and soil for the Ar - y - an race.

66

ff

66

ff

70 *ff*

Pit - y the par - ty, oh pit - y the peo - ple who al - low their rights to e - rode and their free - doms to be

70 *ff*

mp *ff*

70 *mp* *ff*

74

washed a - way by ha - tred and fear and lies and old - time re - li - gion.

74

ff

74

ff

74

ff

78

80 *pp*

My coun - try, tears of thee, once land of lib - er - ty.

78

80 *pp*

rit.

78

80 *pp*

rit.

78

80 *pp*

rit.

Ukrainian children's song, 1933

Holodomoderato (♩.=68)

Narrator

Violin

Clarinet in B \flat

Cello

Piano

Holodomoderato (♩.=68)

Holodomoderato (♩.=68)

6

6

6

6

10

10

10

Col lec - tive farm - ing is such bliss

The hut's in ru - ins, the barn's all sagged

Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this

The musical score is written for a narrator and four instruments: Violin, Clarinet in B-flat, Cello, and Piano. The tempo is marked 'Holodomoderato' with a quarter note equal to 68 beats per minute. The key signature has one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The time signature is 12/8. The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-5) features the narrator and instruments. The second system (measures 6-9) includes the narrator's vocal line 'Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this' and instrumental accompaniment. The third system (measures 10-13) includes the narrator's vocal line 'Col lec - tive farm - ing is such bliss' and 'The hut's in ru - ins, the barn's all sagged', with instrumental accompaniment. Dynamics include pp, p, and p.

Father Stalin, Look at This

9

14

mp *mf* *mf* *mp*

All the hors-es bro-ken nags

And on the hut

14

mp *mp* *mf* *mp*

14

p *mp* *mf* *mp*

18

p *mp* *mf* *f*

a ham-mer and sick-le

And in the hut

death and

18

p *cresc.* *(mp)* *(mf)*

18

p

22

fam-ine

22

f *f* *f*

22

f

Father Stalin, Look at This

10 ²⁷

f Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this *f* *dim.* *p* No cows left, no pigs at all *p*

27

f *dim.* *p*

27

f *dim.* *p*

27

mp *p*

8^{va}

33

Just your pic - ture on the wall

p *cresc.* *mf* *lim.* *pp*

33

p *cresc.* *mf* *lim.* *pp*

33

cresc. *mf* *dim.* *pp*

(8^{va})

37

Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this Dad - dy and Mom - my are

p *p*

37

p

37

p

40

in the grave The

mf

p cresc. *(mf)*

40

p cresc. *(mf)*

40

p cresc. *(mf)*

40

mp

43

poor child cries as a-lone he goes

f *rit.* *a tempo*

43

f *rit.* *a tempo*

43

mf *f* *rit.* *a tempo*

43

mf *f* *rit.* *a tempo*

48

50 *p* Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this

48

50 *p* *cresc.*

48

f dim. *(mp)* *p* *cresc.*

48

p *cresc.*

Father Stalin, Look at This

12 52

52

8

mf *cresc.*

There's no bread and there's no fat The

52

mp

mp

52

legato

(mp) *(mf)*

54 *f* *dim.* *mp*

par - ty's end - ed all of that

54

f *dim.* *(mp)*

56

p *mp*

Seek not the gen - tle nor the mild

p *cresc.* *mp* *mf*

56

p *cresc.* *(mp)*

p *cresc.* *(mp)*

56

p *cresc.* *(mp)*

66 *mp* Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at 12 *mf* this The 8 *f* par - ty man he beats and 12 8

66 *mp* 12 *mf* 8 *f* 12 8

66 *mp* 12 *mf* 8 *f* 12 8

Father Stalin, Look at This

14 69

[illegible]

71

beats and stamps

And

8 sends us to Si - be - ri - an

71

71

74

camps

74

74

Coda (♩ = 56)

ff

ff

Coda (♩ = 56)

Coda (♩ = 56)

79

79

p *mp* *f*

83

83

ff *p* *pp*

87

pp

Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this Col - lec - tive farm - ing is such bliss

87

87

pp

Allegro apocalypso (♩ = 76)

Narrator

Violin

Clarinet in B \flat

Cello

Piano

Allegro apocalypso (♩ = 76)

7

7

7

10

10

10

Lyrics by Bill Robinson

"Go break the sod," said our God, "The world is here for you to own. Go forth and spread your

16 17

fruit - ful sons; Sub - due the beasts and dam the streams, Cut the trees and pave the streets, Burn the dead from

16

16

22

e - ons past To feed the flames and turn the wheels. Make war for gold and kill for me. O - bey your lead - ers and your priests Whom

22

22

29

I have fa-vored with my grace. Al - ways more, and al - ways fas-ter; Mine the ore and

29

29

31

31

31

34

crush the stone. Do this well, and I will teach you all a migh - ty les - son."

34

38

What our God said we longed to hear. We slew our Mo - ther and sucked the mar - row

38

39

pp *p* *mp*

pp *p* *mp*

38

39

ff *pp* *p* *mp*

44

from her bones. The grow - ing mob may come to dine, The grow - ing mob may

44

mf *mp*

mf *mp*

44

mf *mp*

49 *pp* come to dine, To night there is e - nough to eat. 53 For - get to-mor-row, we

49 *pp* 53 Con sord.

49 *pp* 53 Con sord.

49 *pp* 53

55 live but once; We drill but once, we burn but once, we mine but once. The fish-ing's good, un - til there's none.

55

55

61 To - night there is e - nough to eat.

61 61

61

II

day af - ter Aa - ron Bush - nell set him - self on

II

11

15

fire, I go out for an ear-ly morn-ing walk, wrapped in air far too

mf

15

mf

19

warm for late Feb-ru-ar-y in the Mid-west a heat wave. False Spring has brought

19

19

The Birds

22 24 *cresc.* Na - ture roar - ing back to life. 25 *f* I want to shake eve - ry per - son I

24 *cresc.* 25 *f* *ff*

24 *cresc.* *f* *ff*

24 *cresc.* 25 *f* *ff*

27 stroll past. "Did you know there's a gen - o - cide hap - pen - ing?"

27 *ff*

27

30 Did you see a man

30 *legato* *ff*

30

32

burn him - self a - live in pro - test?"

32

32

pp

35

I would ask, if

35

36

pp

p

35

36

p

legato

37

on - ly I could count on a re - sponse that is - n't dead - eyed.

mf

f

p

37

37

mf

f

p

24 40

Measures 40-41 of the musical score. The vocal line (top staff) begins with a whole rest in measure 40 and a half note in measure 41, with the lyrics "But I". The piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves) features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, both marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The key signature has one flat, and the time signature is 4/4.

Measures 42-43 of the musical score. The vocal line (top staff) contains the lyrics "know I'd have bet - ter luck with the birds." across measures 42 and 43. The piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves) continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The key signature has one flat, and the time signature is 4/4.

Measures 44-45 of the musical score. The vocal line (top staff) contains the lyrics "But I know I'd have bet - ter luck with the" across measures 44 and 45. The piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves) features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, both marked with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The key signature has one flat, and the time signature is 4/4.

47

birds, ev - er cu - ri - ous,

mf

dim.

(mf)

dim.

(mf)

(mf)

50

p car - di - nals hop - ping from branch to branch like fi - re - balls. Or mis - siles.

p

p

p

54

I'd tell them, some of us love you so much we'd die for you. For a sin - gle snip - pet of

dolce

dolce

dolce

26 59

bird - song. For a child's first glimpse of feath-ers glow-ing in the clear light.

59

59

64 *pp* For a tree for you to perch in a-mong the rub-ble. *fff* He shout-ed **68** *f* FREE PAL-ES-TINE *mf* FREE PAL-ES-TINE *mf* FREE PAL-ES-

64 **68** *fff* *f* *mf*

64 *pp* *fff* *f* *mf*

64 *pp* *fff* *f* *mf*

71 *p* TINE un-til he choked on the flames. *f* The call-back: *p* a long, mourn-ful whis-tle from a -

71 *p* *f* *p*

71 *p* *f* *p*

71 *p* *f* *p*

The Birds

77 *rit.* Coda (♩ = 66) *p* *mp+* 27

bove. The sun is blaz-ing too bright to make out more than a sil-hou-ette tak-ing off, ris-ing

77 *rit.* Coda (♩ = 66) *p cresc.*

77 *rit.* Coda (♩ = 66) *p cresc. legato*

82 *mf* *mf* *f* *mp* *p*

slow and then fast like smoke.

82 *(mf)* *f* *mf* *mp* *p* *pp*

82 *(mf)* *f* *mf* *mp* *p* *pp*

86 *molto rit.* *a tempo*

86 *molto rit.* *a tempo*

86 *molto rit.* *a tempo*

Contracyberpunktus I (♩ = 88)

Narrator

Violin

Clarinet in B♭

Cello

Piano

mp I saw the best minds of my gen-er-a-tion wast-ed by

cresc. p. a p.

p *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

p *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

p *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

6 (*mf*) 3 *f* *ff*

vid-e-o games, bloat-ed hys-ter-i-cal goth-ic, drag-ging themselves through sim-u-lat-ed streets at

6 (*mf*) *f* *ff*

11 dawn look-ing for an an-gry mi-cro-dose,

ff dim. *mf* *mp*

11 *ff dim.* *mf* *mp* *8va*

16 *mp* an - gel - head - ed prep - pies burn - ing for the hea - ven - ly mi - cro - wave con - nec - tion to the

16 *mp*

16 *mp*

20 *p* sat - el - lite serv - er in the ma - chin - er - y of night, *rit.* *Contracyberpunktus II* $(\text{♩} = 76)$

20 *dim.* *p* *rit.* *Contracyberpunktus II* $(\text{♩} = 76)$

20 *dim.* *p* *rit.* *Contracyberpunktus II* $(\text{♩} = 76)$

20 *dim.* *p* *rit.* *Contracyberpunktus II* $(\text{♩} = 76)$

25 *pp* *cresc. p. a p.* *(p)* *(mp)* *(mf)* who sed - en - tar - y and hol - low - eyed and high sat up drink - ing a - ya - huas - ca in the

25 *pp* *cresc. p. a p.* *(p)* *(mp)* *(mf)*

25 *mp* *cresc. p. a p.* *(p)* *(mp)* *(mf)*

25 *cresc. p. a p.* *(p)* *(mp)* *(mf)*

30

30 *f* *ff* *molto rit.* Contracyberpunktus I (♩ = 88)

su - per - nat - u - ral dark - ness of pent - house flats

30 *f* *ff* *dim.* *(mf)* *(mp)* *p* (♩ = 88) Contracyberpunktus I

30 *f* *ff* *dim.* *(mf)* *(mp)* *p* *molto rit.* Contracyberpunktus I (♩ = 88)

36 *p* *cresc. p. a p.* *(mp)* *(mf)*

con - tem - plat - ing the mad - ness of lust - ing for Mar - i - lyn Mon - ro - bot Mar - i - lyn Mon - ro - bot,

36 *p* *cresc. p. a p.* *(mp)* *(mf)*

36 *cresc. p. a p.* *(mp)* *(mf)*

41 *f* *ff* *rit.* *mf* *mp* *p* *a tempo* (44)

who bared their brains to da - ta min - ers un - der the Sil - i - con Val - ley moon,

41 *f* *ff* *rit.* *a tempo* (44)

41 *f* *ff* *rit.* *a tempo* (44)

45 *mp* who passed un-di-gest - ed through u - ni-ver-si-ties *mp, cresc. p. a p.* with ra-di-ant dis-tance learn-ing eyes hal-

mp *cresc. p. a p.* *(mf)*

45 *mp* *cresc. p. a p.* *(mf)*

p *mp* *cresc. p. a p.* *(mf)*

45 *cresc. p. a p.* *(mf)*

mp *(mf)*

50 *f* lu-ci-nat-ing tech - no - bab-ble and the spir - it of Al - an Tur-ing, *ff* who were ex-pelled

f *ff*

50 *f* *ff*

50 *f* *ff*

54 *ff dim.* from the a-cad-e-mies for cra-zy ob-scene codes on the Mi-cro-soft Win-dows *ff dim.* *(mf)*

54 *ff dim.* *(mf)* *mp*

54 *dim.* *(mf)* *8va mp*

Artificial Insanity

32

58 *mp* of the soul, *p* who lurked in un - spo - ken chat rooms *mf* *cresc.*

58 *mp* *cresc.* *mf*

58 *p* *cresc.* *(mp)* *(mf)*

62 *f* ble - ding hours *dim.* through the screen - lit *(mp)* night yearn - ing *(p)*

62 *f* *dim.* *(mp)* *(p)*

62 *f* *dim.* *(mp)* *(p)*

65 *rit.* *pp* for their mo - ther-board's love, *a tempo* *ff* who ate fire in tech labs

65 *rit.* *pp* *a tempo* *ff*

65 *rit.* *pp* *a tempo* *ff*

69 *f* *dim. p. a p.* *(mf)*

or drank tur-pen-tine in cor-po-rate caf-e-te-ri-as, who chained them-selves to

69 *f* *dim. p. a p.* *(mf)*

69 *f* *dim. p. a p.* *(mf)*

72 *(mp)*

rout-ers to mine for im-ag-i-nar-y mon-ey, who dis-ap-peared in-to

72 *(mp)*

72 *(mp)*

72 *(mp)*

75 *(p)* *pp*

no-where Zen New Jer-sey leav-ing noth-ing but the shad-ows of their

75 *(p)* *pp*

75 *(p)* *pp*

80 **ff** 81 **ff**

smart phones, who stud - ied Ayn Rand A - leis - ter Crow - ley cy - ber -

84 net - ics and O - prah Win - frey be - cause the cos - mos in - stinc - tive - ly vi - brat - ed at their

88 **ff** **mf** 89 **ff** **mf**

feet on Mar - tha's Vin - yard, who walked all night with

91 *mp*

shoes full of blood on the snow - bank docks mis - led by glob - al po -

mp

91 *mp*

mp

94 *cresc.* *f* *ff*

si - tion - ing, who lit end - less joints for their linked - in brain cells

cresc. *f* *ff*

94 *cresc.* *f* *ff*

cresc. *f* *ff*

97

float - ing a - cross the tops of cit - ies cel - e - bra - ting the end of or -

97

97

36

100

101

gan - ic life, who tuned in to te - le - van - gel - ists, and

100

101

100

101

103

reached be - hind that T - V set to FEEL the POW-ER. What

non stacc.

pizz.

p

103

non stacc.

pizz.

p

103

107

sphinx of in - te - grat - ed cir - cuit - ry bashed o - pen their skulls and ate up their hu -

arco

107

p

107

p

110 *p* *cresc.* *ff* *ff*

man - i - ty? Mad dead au - tom - a - tons Mad dead au - tom - a - tons

110 *p* *cresc.* *ff*

110 *p* *cresc.* *ff*

113 Mad dead au - tom - a - tons of Sil - i - con Val - ley! Mad dead au - tom - a - tons

113 *ff* Mad dead au - tom - a - tons

113 *ff* Mad dead au - tom - a - tons

116 Mad dead au - tom - a - tons Mad dead au - tom - a - tons of Sil - i - con Val - ley!

116 Mad dead au - tom - a - tons Mad dead au - tom - a - tons of Sil - i - con Val - ley!

116 Mad dead au - tom - a - tons Mad dead au - tom - a - tons of Sil - i - con Val - ley!

Artificial Insanity

38

119 *ff* *dim.* *rit.* *(mp)* **Contracyberpunktus II** ($\text{♩} = 76$)
Mad dead au-tom-a-tons Mad dead au-tom-a-tons of Sil-i-con Val-ley.
pp *pp*

119 *ff* *dim.* *rit.* *(mp)* **Contracyberpunktus II** ($\text{♩} = 76$)
pp *pp*

119 *ff* *dim.* *rit.* *(mp)* **Contracyberpunktus II** ($\text{♩} = 76$)
pp *pp*

125 *pp* *cresc. p. a p.* *(p)* *(mp)*
Ar-ti-fi-cial in-tel-li-gence, I'm with you where you hide in the cracks of

125 *pp* *cresc. p. a p.* *(p)* *(mp)*
mp *cresc. p. a p.*
mp *cresc. p. a p.*

125 *pp* *cresc. p. a p.* *(mp)*

130 *(mf)* *f* *ff* **133** *dim.*
so-cial me-di-a, stripped in-sane and kitsch I'm with you where you

130 *(mf)* *f* *ff* **133** *dim.*
(mf) *f* *ff* *dim.*

130 *(mf)* *f* *ff* **133** *dim.*
(mf) *f* *ff* *dim.*

39

144 *p* vo - ur - ing our hu - man - i - ty, the ghosts in the ma - chines haunt - ing our dreams. I saw the

144 *p*

147

144 *p*

147

148

best minds of our time de - stroyed by mad - ness, and now they wan - der through the waste - land

148

148

152

of tech - nol - o - gy, their hu - man - i - ty e - rased by the cold, un - feel - ing

152

152

pp

pp

pp

157

hand of the com - put - er.

157

157

rit.

rit.

rit.