STRANGE SONGS



for Baritone, SATB Chorus, and Piano Quintet

Bill Robinson



for Baritone, SATB Chorus, and Piano Quintet

1979—Sept. 9, 2010; March 19-April 19, 2012 Arranged for Piano Quintet Feb. 15—March 11, 2024 *Corrected to December 1, 2024* Duration: 19 minutes

This is a collection of four vocal works; these are much expanded from original chamber versions during the summer of 2010 and spring of 2012, then revised in 2024.

In 2004, as I was about to graduate with a BS in physics from NCSU, I wrote an odd little poem called *I'm a Physicist and That's Just Fine*. Not long after, I set it for baritone and piano. The arrangement here is much longer and more complex than the original song.

I attended a macrobiotic meeting in Boston in 1979 where there was to be an entertainment at the end given by attendees. I quickly wrote *Little Miss Nonfat* as a composition that anyone who could read music could perform; it was for spoken chorus in four parts. However, my search for performers was in vain. This version is far longer and more involved than the very simple original, which was under two minutes long.

Until February 2015, *Strange Songs* included *Der Jammerwock*, a setting of Robert Scott's 1872 translation of *Jabberwocky* into German. That is now withdrawn.

Math Class: or, Does the Zero Have Buddha-Nature™? started off in 1982 as a companion spoken chorus piece to Little Miss Nonfat, also in four parts, written after a year as a physics and math major at North Texas State University. It also is much expanded in this version for chorus and orchestra. I added this to the first edition in 2012.

In the summer of 2003, I was doing physics at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and decided to write a satirical song about the decades of rejection I had suffered from musicians. Thus, I dedicated *What I Hear After Submitting A Score* to the many musicians who gave me so much material from 1984 through 2005 by turning down my music because it was too easy, too hard, too long, too brief, too classical, too popular, too modern, too old-fashioned, too secular, too religious, too fast, too slow, too serious, too humorous, they're busy playing something else, or in short, *because I wouldn't give them money.* Thankfully, since 2006 things are much better and I have found some wonderful performers.

Strange Songs as completed in 2012 is for either full orchestra or two pianos, baritone and SATBariB chorus. Neither was performed by 2024. I made this version for piano quintet, baritone, and SATB chorus (one singer on a part) in preparation for a concert in January 2025 marking my 70th birthday, and finally bring this music to the stage and have a recording.

Commissioned *inscientibus, ex post facto, sub rosa* by Stephen Reynolds and Susan Osborne, July 2020

Bill Robinson

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Cover photo by Lon Cooper, 1975, of me in front of the NTSU library

I'm a Physicist and That's Just Fine

I'm a Physicist and that's just fine—

It's much better than a life of crime.

If you really want to see me sneer,

Just imply I'm an engineer.

I fuss with numbers transcendental; When I was young they called me mental. If it can't be measured, it don't exist— In this here science, that's the gist. We need evidence, with fame for finders. For spooky things, we've got on

blinders-

UFOs and chosts and prayer, Hippies, preachers, tall blue hair.

I'm a skeptic, tried and true; My origin is Cosmic Goo. I can calculate the odds, Which, *though Zero*, admit no Gods.

I sit inside and study all day; My eyes are dim, my skin is gray. My way with women is legendary— I'll meet one someday, don't mean maybe!

I'm a Physicist and that's just fine— It's much better than a life of crime. From Giga to Femto, from Cosmos to Quark, One man's Genius is another man's Dork. If Dork I must be, then Dork I must be; The Answer to Everything is— Twenty-three!

> Bill Robinson January 2004

Little Miss Nonfat lyrics

Soprano

Little Miss Little Miss Nonfat Little Miss Little Miss Nonfat Little Miss Nonfat sat sat sat sat on her tom cat sat on her tom cat sat sat sat sat sat on her tom cat sat on her tom cat sat on her tom cat sat on her sat on her sat on her sat on her tom cat Splat! Splat! Splat!

Little Miss Little Miss Little Miss Nonfat tom cat Little Miss Tom cat Nonfat sat on her Nonfat tom cat Born in a manger Little Miss Tom cat Nonfat sat on her Nonfat tom cat Little Miss Tom cat Nonfat sat on her Nonfat tom cat eating her soybean tofu cho too few cho too few

Alcatraz mayhem oom-pah Alcatraz mayhem poo-bah Little Miss Percy cat stranger Percy Percy Grainger born in born in a manger sat on her Tom Cat

Spinoza along came along came along came along came along came Spinoza noza long long noza beer along came Spinoza he knew the end was near

he knew the end was near mayhem

hey just leave me alone quit it quit it quit it quit it quit it hey just leave me alone quit it quit it

Little Miss Little Miss Nonfat Little Miss Little Miss Nonfat sat sat sat sat sat on her tom cat sat on her tom cat along came Spinoza along came Spinoza along came She squashed him with her spoon she squashed him with her spoon she squashed him with her spoon SPLAT!!

Alto

Little Miss Little Miss Nonfat Little Miss Little Miss Nonfat Little Miss Nonfat sat sat sat sat on her tom cat sat on her tom cat sat sat sat sat sat oom-pah Percy Grainger oom-pah poo-bah oom-pah poo-bah oom-pah poo-bah sat on her tom cat Splat! Splat! Splat! Splat!

Little Miss Little Miss Nonfat tom cat Little Miss Tom cat Nonfat sat on her Nonfat tom cat Born in a manger Tom cat Nonfat sat on her Nonfat tom cat eating her soybean tofu chew tofu chew tofu Tom cat Nonfat sat on her Nonfat tom cat eating her soybean tofu chew tofu chew tofu cho too few cho too few

Little Miss Alcatraz danger born in born in a manger sat on her Tom Cat

along came Spinoza along came along came along came along came along came Spinoza long long noza came

along came Spinoza he knew the end was near he knew the end was near

hey just leave me alone quit it hey just leave me alone quit it quit it

Little Miss Little Miss Nonfat Little Miss Little Miss Nonfat sat sat sat sat oom-pah Percy Grainger oom-pah Percy Grainger oom-pah poo-bah oom-pah poo-bah oompah She squashed him with her spoon she squashed him with her spoon she squashed him with her spoon SPLAT!!

Tenor

oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah poo-bah oom-pah oom-pah poo-bah oom-pah poobah sat sat sat sat sat on her tom cat sat on her sat on her sat on her sat on her tom cat Splat! Splat! Splat!

Percy Percy Percy Grainger born in a manger Percy Percy Percy Grainger born in a manger Percy born in a manger

cho too few cho too few a manger eating her manger born in a manger sat on her Tom Cat

along came Spinoza along came Spinoza along came along came along came along came Spinoza noza long long noza za he smelled of rum and along came Spinoza he smelled of shame and fear along came Spinoza he smelled of rum and beer

he knew the end was mayhem

oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah poo-bah oom-pah oom-pah poo-bah sat sat sat sat sat sat on her tom cat

Spinoza She squashed him with her spoon she squashed him with her squashed him with her spoon SPLAT!!

Baritone

oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah poo-bah oom-pah oom-pah poo-bah oom-pah poobah sat sat sat sat sat on her tom cat Splat! Splat! Splat!

Percy Percy Percy Grainger born in a manger Percy Percy Percy Grainger born in a manger Percy born in a manger Little Miss Tom cat Nonfat sat on her Nonfat tom cat eating her soybean tofu Little Miss Tom cat Nonfat sat on her Nonfat tom cat eating her soybean tofu chew tofu chew tofu cho too few cho too few

Percy Grainger born in a manger nonfat ranger born in a manger sat on her Tom Cat

along came along came along came along came Spinoza along came Spinoza along came along came along came along came along came Spinoza long noza Spino

along came Spinoza he smelled of shame and fear along came Spinoza he smelled of rum and beer he knew the end was

quit it (etc...) hey just leave me alone quit it quit it quit it quit it (etc.) oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah oom-pah (etc.)

sat sat sat sat sat sat on her tom cat

Spinoza She squashed him with her spoon she squashed him with her squashed him with her spoon SPLAT!!

Bass

Oh oom-pah Percy Grainger oom-pah Percy Grainger oom-pah Percy Grainger oom-pah Percy Grainger

sat sat sat sat sat on her tom cat sat on her tom cat poo-bah sat on her tom cat Splat! Splat! Splat!

oom-pah poo-bah oom-pah poo-bah oom-pah oom-pah poo-bah

Tom cat Nonfat sat on her Nonfat tom cat eating her soybean tofu chew tofu chew tofu

Tom cat Nonfat sat on her Nonfat tom cat eating her soybean tofu chew tofu chew tofu

cho too few cho too few

Percy Grainger born in a manger tofu mayhem Grainger sat on her Tom Cat

along came Spinoza along came Spinoza along came Spinoza along came along came along came along came along came Spinoza long noza long along along came Spinoza he smelled of rum and beer

Alcatraz

quit it quit i

Oh sat sat sat sat sat sat on her tom cat

Spinoza She squashed him with her spoon she squashed him with her squashed him with her spoon SPLAT!!

Math Class: or, Does the Zero Have Buddha-Nature?™

Soprano

Trig trig trig trig trig trig trig If f is a function If g is a function If h is a func If I is a function I is a function

Two point seven one eight two eight one eight two eight one eight five Three Three point one four one five nine two six five three five eight nine seven nine three two three eight Four, one two and the sum is seven the sum is seven the sum is seven the sum the sum Time for a test!

Miserere nobis miserere miserere nobis miserere nobis Time for a test! Time for a test! Time for a Time for a test! Time for a test!

One from one is One from one is One from one is One from one is One from one

a hole! a hole! a hole! buddhanumba zip a hole! a hole! buddhanumba One from one is a Japanese fighter plane Japanese Japanese fighter plane Answers in the back of the buddhanumba zipper Zorro Thoreau Bozo Zulu zebra zenith Ozone Ozone tee hee tee hee tee hee tee hee tahiti tahiti tahiti tahiti ta hi ta hi

Trig trig trig trig trig trig trig Add and the world adds with you Add and the world adds with you Add and the world adds Add and the world adds with you Add and the world adds with you

Alto

Digit digit digit digit digit digit digit digit If f is a function If g is a function If h is a function I is a function I is a function

Two point seven one eight two eight one eight two eight one eight five Three point Three point one four one five nine two six five three five eight nine seven nine three two three eight

Four Four, one two and the sum is seven Four one two four one two four one two the sum Time for a test!

Miserere nobis miserere nobis miserere miserere nobis nobis Time for a test! Time for a test! Time for a test! Time for a test! Time for a test!

One from one is One from one is One from one is One from one void

buddhanumba zip buddhanumba zip zipper Zorro Thoreau Bozo Zulu zebra zenith Zeno Answers in the back of the book buddhanumba One from one is an Oh in the Ozone O in the Oh in the Oh in the Ozone Ozone ha ha

ha ha ha ha haha ha ha

Digit digit digit digit digit digit digit Add and the world adds with you Add and the world adds

Tenor

Answers in the back of the book Answers in the back of the book If f is a function If g is a function If h is a function I is a function I is a function

Two point seven one eight two eight one eight two eight one eight five Three point one four one five nine two six five three five eight nine seven nine three two three eight four six Four Four, one two and the sum is seven

the sum is seven the sum is seven the sum the sum Time for a test! Time for a test!

Time for a test

Miserere nobis miserere nobis miserere miserere nobis nobis Time for a test! Time for a test! Time for a test! Time for a Time for a test! Time for a test!

One from one is One from one is One from one a hole! a hole! a hole! buddhanumba zip a hole! a hole! buddhanumba zip a hole! zipper Zorro Thoreau Bozo Zulu zebra zenith Zeno Answers in the back of the book

One from one is an Oh in the Ozone Oh Oh Oh Ozone Ozone chorkle ho ho Add and the world adds with you Add and the world adds Subtract and you subtract alone.

Baritone

Radian radian radian radian If f is a function If g is a function If h is a function I is a function I is a function

One point six one eight oh three three nine eight eight Three point one four one five nine two

six five three five eight nine seven nine three two three eight four six

Four Four, one two and the sum is seven Four Four one two, four one two, four one two, the sum Time for a test! Time for a test! Time for a test

Miserere nobis miserere nobis miserere nobis nobis Time for a test! Time for a test! Time for a test! test! Time for a test! Time for a test!

One from one is One from one is One from one One from one One from one is nothingness buddhanumba buddhanumba buddhanumba buddhanumba One from one is a Japanese fighter plane Japanese Japanese fighter plane Answers in the back of the book One from one is an Oh in the Ozone O in the Oh in the Oh in the Ozone Ozone ho hoho ho ho

rrr-recap rrr-recap rrr-recap rrr-recap Add and the world adds with you Add and the world adds

Bass

Logarithm lf I is a function I is a function

One point six one eight oh three three nine eight eight Three point one four one five nine two six five three five eight nine seven nine three two three eight four six

Four Four, one two and the sum is seven

Four, one two Four one two, four one two, four one two, the sum Time for a test! Time for a test! Time for a test

Miserere nobis miserere nobis miserere nobis nobis

Time for a test! One from one is One from one One from one buddhanumba buddhanumba buddhanumba buddhanumba One from one is a Japanese fighter plane Japanese Japanese fighter plane buddhanumba buddhanumba zipper Zorro Thoreau Bozo buddhanumba buddhanumba buddhanumba buddhanumba ho hoho ho ho

Logarithm Add and the world adds with you Add and the world adds with you

What I Hear After Submitting a Score

Solo: Well-versed in matters Physical, Your attitude is Mystical.

We cannot play without some Pay

That, or your left Testicle. Chorus: We cannot play without some Pay That, or your left Testicle.

Solo: With claims to be Devotional, Your morals are Contortional. We cannot play without some

Pay And also Tips, proportional. *Chorus:* We cannot play without some Pay And also Tips, proportional.

Solo: In Theory you're a dumb-dumb; A Doctorate you have none. We cannot sing without that thing

Called Money, in a lump sum.

Chorus: We cannot sing without that thing Called Money, in a lump sum.

Solo: Your Music has no Power; Your face is set to glower. You've been to jail, You're going to fail— You really need a shower! Chorus: You've been to jail, You're going to fail— You really need a shower!

Solo: You sometimes write for Trumpet; You'd rather have a Strumpet.

We have your Score, Now pay some more Or we shall surely dump it. *Chorus:* We have your Score, Now pay some more Or we shall surely dump it.

Solo: You want a pity party; Your counterpoint is sorry; You wear a frown, You're zipper's down Where is your Check? It's tardy!

Chorus: You wear a frown, You're zipper's down Where is your Check? It's tardy!

Solo: No funding is your excuse; Your Music can find no use. It's as we feared, You're just too weird— Your Score is in the Refuse! Chorus: It's as we feared, You're just too weird— Your Score is in the Refuse!

Bill Robinson

Performance notes

At the end of the piece, the conductor (if there is one) should hold his/her nose and dump the score into a wastebasket.

This Piano Quintet version is best performed with one singer on a part. All accidentals hold through the measure and not beyond, and do not apply to octaves. strange songs

[6']

Bill Robinson

I. I'm A Physicist and That's Just Fine

With Calculated Abandon (=96)Solo **-)**: Baritone I'm a Phys-i-cist and that's just fine Soprano Alto Tenor Bass be Violin I Violin II tremolo Viola σ f ppCello ⇒ $\overline{\mathbf{\Theta}}$ Ð (-96)With Calculated Abandon Piano h













































II. Little Miss Nopfat

[5']



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[5']





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IV. What I Hear After Submitting A Score

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