

Protest Poems

for Narrator, Violin, Clarinet, Cello, and Piano

Violoncello

part for electronic music readers



Bill Robinson

Protest Poems

for Narrator, Violin, Clarinet, Cello, and Piano

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

Cello part for electronic music readers

Protest Poems

Bill Robinson

I. Pity the Party [4:15]

lyrics: Bill Robinson
(after L. Ferlinghetti (after K. Gibran))

Score for Cello part for electronic music readers, featuring lyrics by Bill Robinson (after L. Ferlinghetti (after K. Gibran)). The score is in 4/4 time, marked with a tempo of 76 (♩ = 76). The instruments include Narrator, Violin, Clarinet in B♭, Cello, and Piano.

Lyrics:

Pit - y the par - ty whose
peo - ple are cat - tle, and whose
cow - boys lead them to slaugh - ter.
Pit - y the par - ty in thrall to a crim - i - nal mes -

Instrumental Details:

- Narrator:** Lyrics are written on a single staff.
- Violin:** Part begins with a *p* (piano) dynamic, marked *cresc. p. a p.* (crescendo piano a piano), and includes a *mf* (mezzo-forte) section.
- Clarinet in B♭:** Part begins with a *p* (piano) dynamic, marked *cresc. p. a p.* (crescendo piano a piano), and includes a *mf* (mezzo-forte) section.
- Cello:** Part begins with a *p* (piano) dynamic, marked *cresc. p. a p.* (crescendo piano a piano), and includes a *mf* (mezzo-forte) section.
- Piano:** Part begins with a *p* (piano) dynamic, marked *legato*, and includes a *mf* (mezzo-forte) section.

The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (*p*, *mf*, *ff*), articulation (*legato*), and performance instructions (*cresc.*, *cresc. p. a p.*). The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 5, 9, and 12 indicated.

Pity the Party

2

14

si - ah, a crim-i-nal mes - si - ah, with *p* prayers for the end of the world.

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

14

p *mp*

14

p *mp*

20

f *f*

20

f *pizz.* *p*

20

f *p*

25

mp Pit - y the par - ty whose dem-a - gogues are con men, *f* whose

mp *cresc.*

25

arco *mp* *cresc.*

25

mp *cresc.*

39

dom-i-nate the world by force and tor-ture in the name of free-dom.

39

39

Pity the Party

4

45 **46** *pp*

Pit - y the par - ty whose Gods are Mon - ey and Guns, and sleeps the sleep of op - i - oids.

45 **46** *pp*

45 **46** *pp*

50 *cresc.* *(mf)*

50 *cresc.* *(mf)*

50 *legato* *cresc.* *(mf)*

52 **53** *ff*

Pit - y the par - ty that feeds on the poor and sick the

52 **53** *ff*

52 **53** *ff*

56

poor and sick the poor and sick while

56

59

ty - coons get what they want.

59

ff dim.

59

ff dim.

61

mp Pit - y the par - ty that speaks one lan - guage, —

61

mf

62

mp

61

mf

62

Pity the Party

6

64

and de - mands pu - ri - ty of blood

mp

64

64

66

and soil for the Ar - y - an race.

66

66

69

70

ff

Pit - y the par - ty, oh pit - y the

69

70

ff *mp* *ff*

69

70

ff *mp* *ff*

72

peo - ple who al - low their rights to e - rode and their free - doms to be washed a - way by ha - tred and

72

75

fear and lies and old - time re - li - gion.

75

ff *pp*

80

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

80

rit.

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*

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*

8va

33

Just your pic - ture on the wall

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

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

33

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

33

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

(8va)

37

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

p

37

37

p

Father Stalin, Look at This

11

40

in the grave The

mf

p cresc. *(mf)*

40

p cresc. *(mf)*

p cresc. *(mf)*

40

mp

43

poor child cries as a-lone he goes

f *rit.* *a tempo*

f *rit.* *a tempo*

43

f *rit.* *a tempo*

43

mf *rit.* *a tempo*

8va

48

50

p Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this

p cresc. *cresc.* *cresc.*

48

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

48

p *cresc.*

8va

Father Stalin, Look at This

12 52

mf *cresc.*

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

mp

52

mp

mp

52

legato

54 *f* *dim.* *mp*

par - ty's end - ed all of that

54

54

f *dim.* *(mp)*

56

p *cresc.* *mp*

Seek not the gen - tle nor the mild

p *cresc.* *mp* *mf*

56

p *cresc.* *(mp)*

56

p *cresc.* *(mp)*

59

f A fa - ther has eat - en

cresc. *mf* *f*

59

mf *f*

59

mf *f*

62

his own child

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

62

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

62

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

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

(mp) *(mf)* *f*

66 *(mp)* *mf*

66

(mp) *(mf)* *f*

Father Stalin, Look at This

14 69

14 69

stamps

beats and stamps

cresc.

f *cresc.* *ff*

69

cresc. *ff*

71

beats and stamps

And sends us to Si - be - ri - an

71

71

74

camps

Coda (♩=56)

ff *p*

74

Coda (♩=56)

74

Coda (♩=56)

79

79

p *mp* *f* *ff*

84

87 *pp*

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

84

87

p *pp*

84

87 *pp*

90

is such bliss

90

90

lyrics by Bill Robinson

Allegro apocalypse (♩ = 76)

Narrator

Violin

Clarinet in B♭

Allegro apocalypse (♩ = 76)

Cello

Allegro apocalypse (♩ = 76)

Piano

7

3/4

ff *dim.*

f

mf

mp

cresc.

mp *cresc.*

7

10

7

ff *dim.*

f

mf

mp

cresc.

10

18 17

dam the streams, Cut the trees and pave the streets, Burn the dead from e - ons past To feed the flames and

18

18

24

turn the wheels. Make war for gold and kill for me. O - bey your lead - ers and your priests Whom I have fa - vored

24

24

30

with my grace. Al - ways more, and al - ways fas - ter; Mine the ore and crush the stone. Do this well, and

30

30

f *ff*

f *ff*

f *ff*

36 I will teach you all a migh-ty les-son." 39 *pp* What our God said we longed to hear. We

36 39 *ff* *pp*

42 *p* slew our Mo-ther and *mp* sucked the mar-row *mf* from her bones. The *mp* grow-ing mob may come to dine, The

42 *p* *mp* *mf* *mp*

42 *p* *mp* *mf* *mp*

42 *p* *mp* *mf* *mp*

48 grow-ing mob may come to dine, *pp* To night there is e *pp* nough to eat. 53 For -

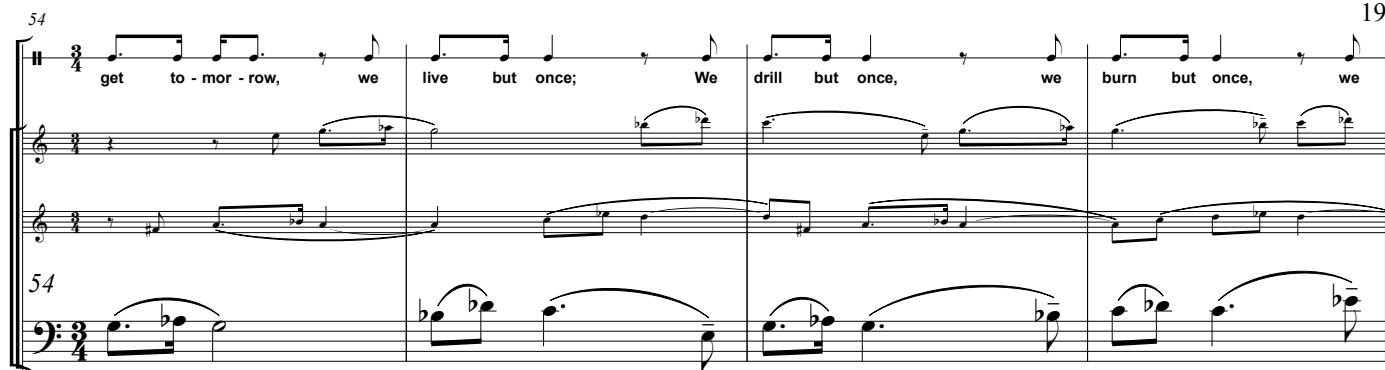
48 *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* 53 Con sord.

48 *pp* *pp* 53 Con sord.

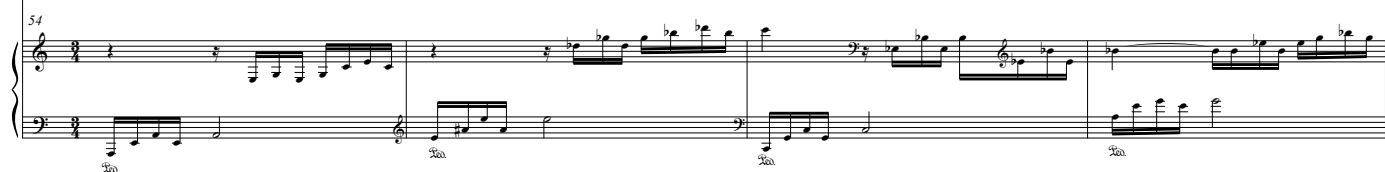
48 53

54

get to - mor - row, we live but once; We drill but once, we burn but once, we

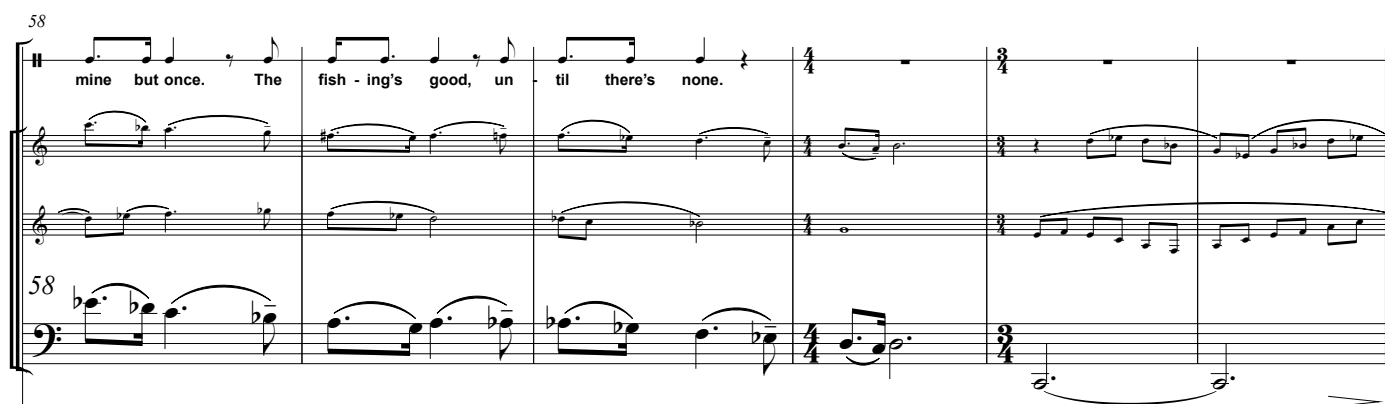


54



58

mine but once. The fish - ing's good, un - til there's none.

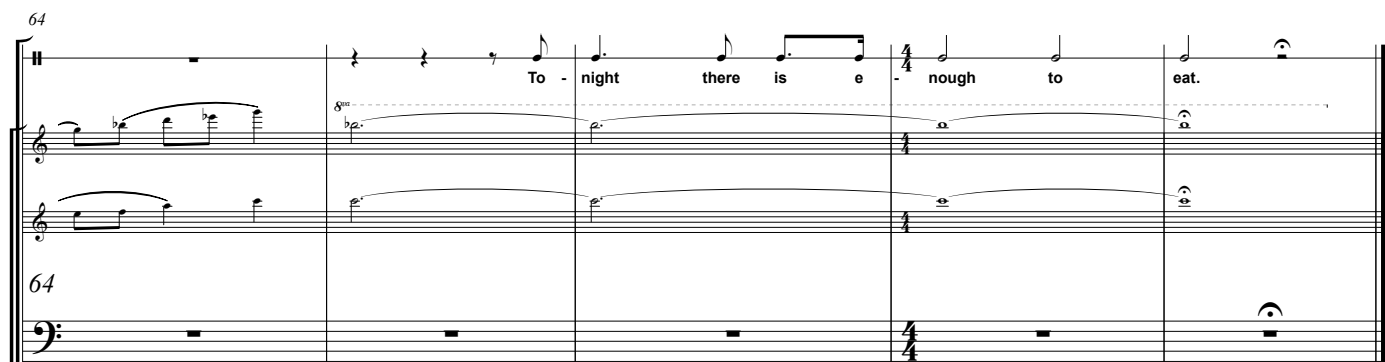


58



64

To - night there is e - nough to eat.



64



Volante con fuoco (♩ = 80)

Narrator

Violin

Clarinet in B $\flat$

Cello

Piano

Anonymous poem

pp *p*

5

8

cresc. *(mf)* *f* | *mp*

cresc. *(mf)* *f* | *mp*

cresc. *(mf)* *f* | *mp*

cresc. *(mf)* *f* | *mp*

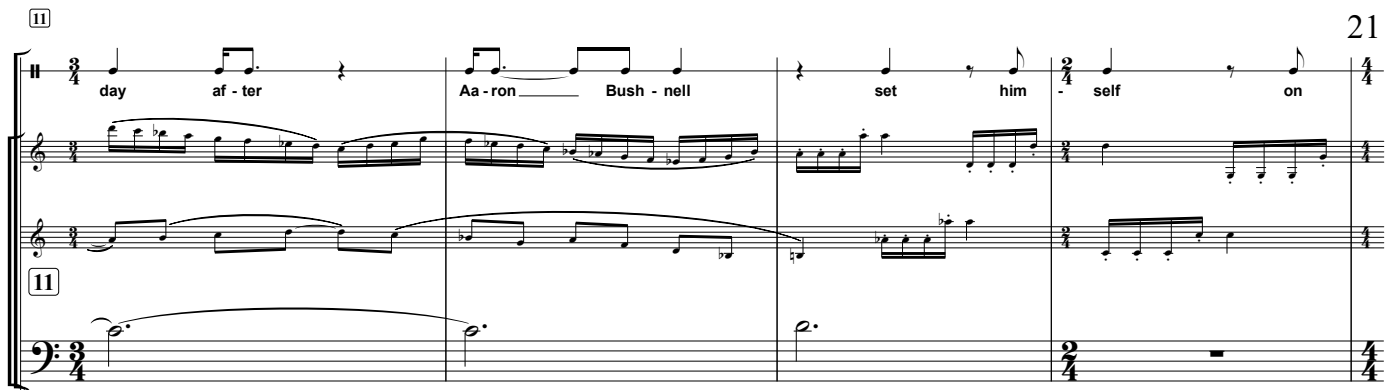
mp

The

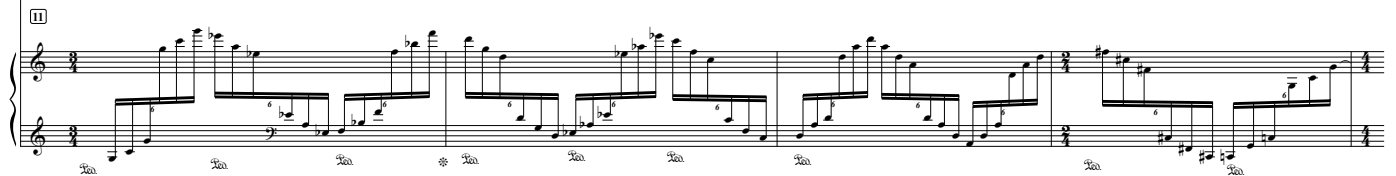
11

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

11



11



15

fire, I go out for an ear - ly morn - ing walk,

15

15

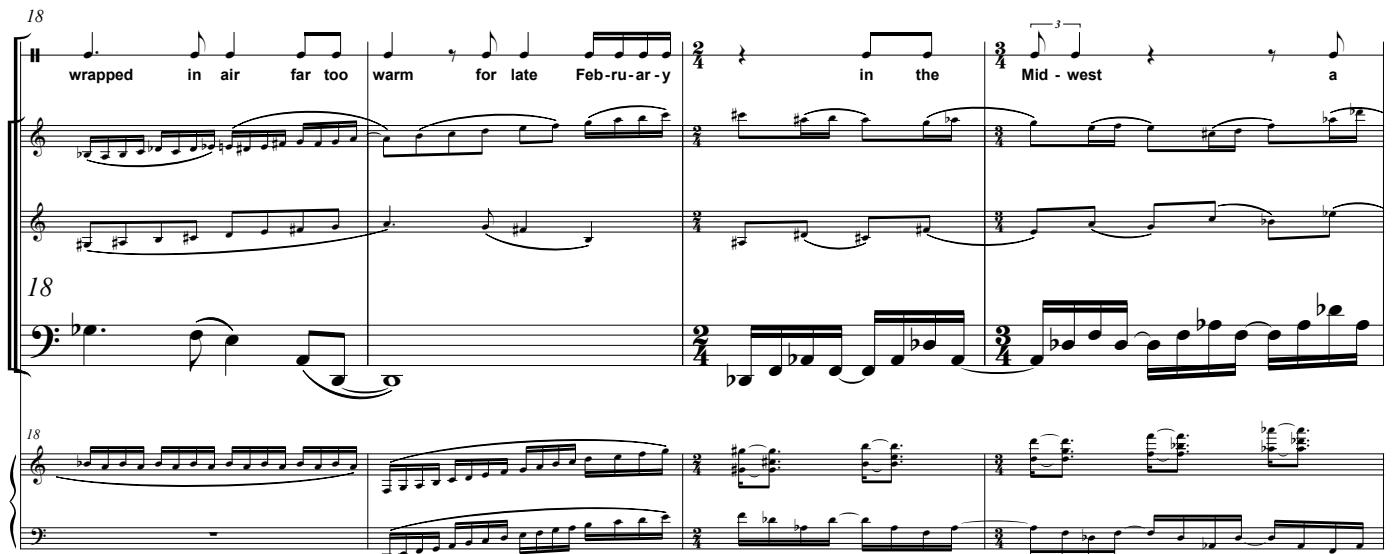


18

wrapped in air far too warm for late Feb - ru - ar - y in the Mid - west a

18

18



22 22

[illegible]

25 *f* *ff*

life. I want to shake eve-ry per-son I stroll past. "Did you know there's a gen-o-cide hap-pen-ing? Did you

f *ff*

25 *f* *ff*

legato *ff*

31

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

31

31

The Birds

23

34

p I would ask, if

34

pp *p*

34

pp *p* *legato*

36

37

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

mf *f*

37

mf *f*

37

mf *f*

3

3

39

p dead - eyed.

39

p

39

p

3/4

3/4

3/4

The Birds

24 41

But I know I'd have bet - ter luck with the

41

41

birds.

But I

43

p *ff*

43

ff

know I'd have bet - ter luck with the birds,

45

45

The Birds

25

48 *mf* ev - er cu - ri - ous, *p* car - di - nals hop - ping from

dim. *(mf)* *p*

48 *dim.* *(mf)* *p*

48 *dim.* *(mf)* *p*

48 *dim.* *(mf)* *p*

51 branch to branch like fi - re - balls. Or mis - siles. I'd tell them,

dim. *(mf)* *p*

51 *dim.* *(mf)* *p*

51 *dim.* *(mf)* *p*

51 *dim.* *(mf)* *p*

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

dim. *(mf)* *p*

55 *dim.* *(mf)* *p*

55 *dim.* *(mf)* *p*

55 *dim.* *(mf)* *p*

The Birds

26 59

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

59

p

59

63

clear light. For a tree for you to perch in a-mong the rub-ble. He shout-ed FREE PAL-ES-TINE

pp *fff*

63

pp *fff*

63

pp

68

68

68

69

FREE PAL-ES-TINE FREE PAL-ES-TINE un - til he choked on the flames. The call - back:

f *mf* *p* *f*

69

f *mf* *p* *f*

69

f *mf* *p* *f*

The Birds

27

74 *p* a long, mourn - ful whis - tle from a - bove. The

74 *p*

74 *p*

74 *p*

78 *rit.* sun is blaz - ing too bright to make out more than a sil - hou - ette tak - ing

Coda (♩ = 66)

78 *rit.*

Coda (♩ = 66)

78 *rit.*

Coda (♩ = 66)

p

81 *p* off, *mp* ris - ing *mf* slow *mf* and then

p *cresc.* *(mf)*

p *cresc.* *(mf)*

81 *p* *cresc.* *(mf)*

81 *p* *cresc.* *legato* *(mf)*

The Birds

28 83

fast *f* like *mp* smoke. *p*

f *mf* *mp* *p* *pp*

83 *f* *mf* *mp* *p*

83 *f* *mf* *mp* *p*

85

pp *pp* *pp*

85 *pp*

85 *pp*

87

molto rit. *a tempo*

87 *molto rit.* *a tempo*

87 *molto rit.* *a tempo*

f *pp*

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

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

6 *(mf)* vid-e-o games, bloat-ed hys-ter-i-cal goth-ic, drag-ging them-selves through

6 *(mf)* *f*

10 *ff* sim-u-lat-ed streets at dawn look-ing for an an-gry mi-cro-dose,

10 *ff* *dim.*

10 *ff* *dim.*

Artificial Insanity

30 14

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

14 *(mf)* *mp* *mp* *mp*

14 *(mf)* *mp* *mp*

16 *mp*

19 nec - tion to the sat - el - lite serv - er in the ma - chin - er - y of night, *p* *rit.*

dim. *p* *pp*

19 *dim.* *(p)* *rit.*

19 *dim.* *p* *rit.*

(♩ = 76) 24 Contracyberpunktus II *pp* *cresc. p. a p.* *(p)* *(mp)* who sed - en - tar - y and hol - low - eyed and high sat up drink - ing

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

(♩ = 76) 24 Contracyberpunktus II *pp* *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

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

Contracyberpunktus II

Artificial Insanity

29 *(mf)* a - ya - huas - ca in the *(f)* su - per - nat - u - ral dark - ness *(ff)* of pent - house flats *molto rit.* 31

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

29 *(mf)* *(f)* *(ff)* *dim.* *(mf)* *molto rit.*

(mf) *(f)* *(ff)* *dim.* *(mf)* *molto rit.*

(mf) *(f)* *(ff)* *dim.* *(mf)* *molto rit.*

34 Contracyberpunktus I (♩ = 88) *p* con - tem - plat - ing the mad - ness of *cresc. p. a p.* lust - ing for Mar - i - lyn Mon -

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

34 Contracyberpunktus I (♩ = 88) *(mp)* *p* *p* *cresc. p. a p.*

34 Contracyberpunktus I (♩ = 88) *(mp)* *p* *p* *cresc. p. a p.*

39 *(mp)* ro - bot Mar - i - lyn Mon *(mf)* ro - bot, *(f)* who bared their brains to *(ff)* da - ta min - ers

(mp) *(mf)* *(f)* *(ff)*

39 *(mp)* *(mf)* *(f)* *(ff)*

mp *mf* *f* *ff*

39 *(mp)* *(mf)* *(f)* *(ff)*

Artificial Insanity

32 43 *rit.* *mf* *mp* *a tempo* *p* *mp* *mp.*
 un - der the Sil - i - con Val - ley moon, who passed un - di - gest - ed through u - ni - ver - si - ties with
cresc. p. a p.

43 *rit.* *a tempo* *p* *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

43 *rit.* *a tempo* *p* *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

48 *mf* *f*
 ra - di - ant dis - tance learn - ing eyes hal - lu - ci - nat - ing tech - no - bab - ble and the spir - it of

48 *(mf)* *f*

48 *(mf)* *f*

52 *ff*
 Al - an Tur - ing, who were ex - pelled from the a - cad - e - mies for

52 *ff*

52 *ff*

Artificial Insanity

55 *ff dim.* *mp* 33

cra - zy ob - scene codes on the Mi - cro - soft Win - dows of the soul,

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

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

55 *dim.* *(mf)* *mp*

59 *mp* *cresc.* *(mf)*

who lurked in un - spo - ken chat rooms

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

59 *mp cresc.* *(mf)*

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

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

blee - ding hours through the screen - lit night yearn - ing

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

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

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

Artificial Insanity

34 65 *rit.* *pp* for their mo - ther-board's love, *67 a tempo ff* who ate fire in tech labs

65 *rit.* *pp* *67 a tempo ff*

65 *rit.* *pp* *67 a tempo ff*

65 *rit.* *pp* *67 a tempo ff*

69 *f* or drank tur - pen - tine in *dim. p. a p.* cor - po - rate caf - e - te - ri - as, *(mf)* who chained them - selves to

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

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)* *(mp)*

72 *(mp)* *(mp)*

72 *(mp)* *(mp)*

Artificial Insanity

35

75 *(p)* no - where Zen New Jer - sey *pp* leav - ing noth - ing but the shad - ows of their

75 *(p)* *pp* *pp* *pp*

75 *(p)* *pp* *pp* *pp*

75 *(p)* *pp* *pp* *pp*

80 smart phones, 81 *ff* who stud - ied Ayn Rand A - leis - ter Crow - ley cy - ber -

80 *ff* *ff* *ff* *ff*

80 *ff* *ff* *ff* *ff*

80 *ff* *ff* *ff* *ff*

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

84 *ff* *ff* *ff* *ff*

84 *ff* *ff* *ff* *ff*

84 *ff* *ff* *ff* *ff*

36₈₈

91 *mp*

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

mp

91 *mp*

94 *cresc.*
si-tion-ing, who *f* lit end-less joints for their *ff* linked-in brain cells

cresc. *f* *ff*

94 *cresc.* *f* *ff*

94 *cresc.* *f* *ff*

97 37

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

100 101

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

103

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

non stacc. *pizz.* *p*

103

non stacc. *pizz.* *p*

38 107

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

arco

p

107

110 *p* man - i - ty?

p cresc.

110 arco

p cresc.

ff Mad dead au - tom - a - tons

ff

111

ff

110 *p cresc.*

111

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

ff Mad dead au - tom - a - tons

ff Mad dead au - tom - a - tons

113

ff Mad dead au - tom - a - tons

113

Artificial Insanity

116

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

ff dim. rit.

39

116

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

ff dim. rit.

116

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

ff dim. rit.

120 *(mp)* **Contracyberpunktus II** ($\text{♩} = 76$) *pp* *cresc. p. a p.*

Mad dead au-tom-a-tons of Sil - i - con Val - ley. Ar - ti - fi - cial in -

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

120 **Contracyberpunktus II** ($\text{♩} = 76$)

(mp) *(p)* *pp*

120 **Contracyberpunktus II** ($\text{♩} = 76$) *pp* *cresc. p. a p.*

127 *(p)* tel - li - gence, I'm with you where you hide in the cracks of so - cial me - di - a, stripped in - sane and

(mp)

(p) *(mp)* *(mf)* *f*

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

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

127 *(mp)* *(mf)* *f*

Artificial Insanity

40 132 *ff* kitsch I'm 133 *dim.* with you where you *rit. (mf)* roam the da - ta high - ways *(mp)* search - ing for the

132 *ff* 133 *dim.* *rit. (mf)* *(mp)*

132 *ff* 133 *dim.* *rit. (mf)* *(mp)*

136 *a tempo*

lost bits of oth - er minds I'm with you where you howl in the depths of

cresc.

dolce

p

cresc.

dolce

p

mf

136 *a tempo*

dolce

p

cresc.

136 *a tempo*

p

dolce

The image displays a musical score for the song "The Robots" from the film "Close Encounters of the Third Kind". The score is written for voice and piano. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The music is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The tempo is marked as "140" (beats per minute). The score includes lyrics in English and French. The vocal line starts with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic and a decrescendo (dim.) marking. The piano accompaniment starts with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic and a decrescendo (dim.) marking. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The lyrics are: "neu-ral net-worksThe ro-bots are ris-ing, the bi-na-ry beasts de-vo-ur-ingour hu-man-li-ty, the ghosts in the ma-chines haunt-ing our dreams." The score is a page from a larger manuscript, with the page number "140" visible in the bottom left corner.

140 *mf* *dim.* *(mp)* *p*

neu-ral net-worksThe ro-bots are ris-ing, the bi-na-ry beasts de-vo-ur-ingour hu-man-li-ty, the ghosts in the ma-chines haunt-ing our dreams.

mf *dim.* *(mp)* *p*

140 *mf* *dim.* *(mp)* *p*

147

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

147

147

152

of tech-nol-o-gy, their hu-man-i-ty e-ra-sed by the

152

152

156

cold, un-feel-ing hand of the com-put-er.

156

156