

Robinsongs

for Mezzo-Soprano, Flute, Clarinet in B flat, and Piano

April 30—September 11, 2012; arranged August 11-27, 2015
Duration: about 14 minutes Cover photo: Parma Cathedral dome

For Joseph, Mary Kay, and Rebecca Robinson

Joseph and Mary Kay Robinson (no relation) came to a concert in 2006 featuring some of my music performed by Eric Pritchard at Duke University. Joe had a long career as principle oboist with the New York Philharmonic, and Mary Kay has performed extensively as a violinist. They asked me to write a trio for oboe, violin, and piano, which resulted in *Aditya Hridayam*. After they performed this at Duke with Thomas Warburton, I realized how lucky I was to work with musicians of this caliber. In February 2012, Mary Kay was one of the musicians performing my *Clarinet Sextet* for clarinet and strings, which was a wonderful performance.

In 2011, Joe and Mary Kay asked me to write a piece they could perform with their aspiring diva daughter Becky, with Mary Kay playing piano. I wrestled with ideas for lyrics for many months, but found this to be an exceptionally difficult assignment. After finishing *Violations* for viol consort (or string ensembles) on February 19, 2012, it was time to sit down to do *Robinsongs*, a set of songs for, well, the Robinsons. After delays and false starts with other lyrics, I managed to start scribbling Lewis Carroll's *Some Hallucinations* on April 30, but progress was quite difficult. After that came Ogden Nash's *The Purist*. (I've made a good-faith effort to find the holder of the copyright—but then, my music is so far from profitable that I don't suppose royalties will be an issue.) Finally after much struggle and an uncommonly slow season of composition, came another Lewis Carroll poem, *You Are Old, Father William*, finished on the ominous date of September 11.

In August 2015 I made this new version of *Robinsongs* for mezzo, flute, clarinet, and piano, at the suggestion of Marianne Breneman, clarinetist and member of Conundrum, a chamber music group of soprano, flute, clarinet, and piano. This also resulted in making a second edition of the original version.

Accidentals hold through the measure and not beyond, and do not refer to other octaves. Sometimes I include courtesy accidentals to avoid confusion. Notes retain their value through meter changes.

It is a great privilege to give this little piece to such superb musicians, and I hope they find it enjoyable to play.

Bill Robinson

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Some Hallucinations

He thought he saw an Elephant,
That practiced on a fife:
He looked again, and found it was
A letter from his wife.
"At length I realize," he said,
"The bitterness of life."

He thought he saw a Buffalo
Upon the chimneypiece:
He looked again, and found it was
His Sister's Husband's Niece.
"Unless you leave this house," he said,
"I'll send for the Police!"

He thought he saw a Rattlesnake
That questioned him in Greek:
He looked again, and found it was
The Middle of Next Week.
"The one thing I regret," he said,
"Is that it cannot speak!"

He thought he saw a Banker's Clerk
Descending from the 'bus:
He looked again, and found it was
A Hippopotamus.
"If this should stay to dine," he said,
"There won't be much for us!"

--Lewis Carroll

The Purist

I give you now Professor Twist,
A conscientious scientist,
Trustees exclaimed, "He never bungles!"
And sent him off to distant jungles.
Camped on a tropic riverside,
One day he missed his loving bride.
She had, the guide informed him later,
Been eaten by an alligator.
Professor Twist could not but smile.
"You mean," he said, "a crocodile."

--Ogden Nash

You Are Old, Father William

"You are old, father William," the young man
said,
"And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head--
Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

"In my youth," father William replied to his
son,
"I feared it might injure the brain;
But now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again."

"You are old," said the youth, "as I mentioned
before,
And have grown most uncommonly fat;
Yet you turned a back-somersault in at the
door--
Pray what is the reason of that?"

"In my youth," said the sage, as he shook his
grey locks,
"I kept all my limbs very supple
By the use of this ointment--one shilling the
box--
Allow me to sell you a couple?"

"You are old," said the youth, "and your jaws
are to weak
For anything tougher than suet;
Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and
the beak--
Pray, how did you manage to do it?"

"In my youth," said his father, "I took to the
law,
And argued each case with my wife;
And the muscular strength, which it gave to
my jaw,
Has lasted the rest of my life."

"You are old," said the youth, "one would
hardly suppose
That your eye was as steady as ever;
Yet you balanced an eel on the end of your
nose--
What made you so awfully clever?"

"I have answered three questions and that is
enough,"
Said the father. "Don't give yourself airs!
Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
Be off, or I'll kick you down stairs!"

---Lewis Carroll

Robinsongs

1. Some Hallucinations

[5:20]

lyrics by Lewis Carroll

music by Bill Robinson

A perfectly sane tempo (♩ = 60)

Voice

Flute

Clarinet in B \flat

Piano

p

p

p

p

8va

8va

Red.

*

5

5

mp

mp

mp

8

8

mf

mf

mf

8va

Red.

Some Hallucinations

2

Musical score for measures 11-14. The score is in 3/4 time and features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line consists of a melodic phrase starting on a whole note, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note. The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes. The dynamic marking is *mp*. A small asterisk is placed below the piano part at the end of measure 14.

Musical score for measures 15-17. The score is in 3/4 time and features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a rest in measure 15, followed by a half note in measure 16, and a quarter note in measure 17. The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes. The dynamic marking is *p*. The word "He" is written below the vocal line in measure 17. An *8vb* marking is present at the end of the piano part in measure 17.

Musical score for measures 18-20. The score is in 3/4 time and features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a melodic phrase starting on a whole note, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note. The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes. The dynamic marking is *mp*. The lyrics are: "thought he saw an El-e-phant, That prac-ticed on a fife: He looked a-gain, and found it was A let-ter from his wife. "At". An *8vb* marking is present at the end of the piano part in measure 18.

20 *mf* *f*

length I re - a - lize," he said, "The bit - ter - ness of life."

f

mf *f*

(8^{vb})

23

ff

ff

23 *ff*

25 *p*

He

ff *p*

ff *p*

25 *legato* *p*

ff *mp*

Red.

Some Hallucinations

4

28 *cresc. p. a p.* (*mp*)
thought he saw a Buf - fa - lo Up - on the chim - ney - piece: He

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

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

Red.

30 (*mf*)
looked a - gain, and found it was His Sis - ter's Hus - band's Niece. "Un -

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

30 (*mf*)

Red.

32 *f*
less you leave this house," he said, "I'll send for the Po -

f

32 *f*

Red.

34 *ff*

licel!"

ff *p*

ff *mf* *p*

37

cresc. p. a p. (*mp*) 6

mp *cresc. p. a p.*

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

39

(*mf*) 3

(*mf*) 6

39 (*mf*) 6 6 6 6

Some Hallucinations

6

40 *f*

He thought he saw a Rat - tle - snake That ques - tioned him in

f

f

42

Greek:

f

44

f

Some Hallucinations

46 *cresc.* ----- *ff*

He looked a - gain, and found it was The Mid - dle of Next Week.

cresc. ----- *ff*

cresc. ----- *ff*

46 *cresc.* ----- *ff*

ped. *

49 ----- *mp*

mf -----

49 *mf* ----- *mp*

52 -----

52 -----

52 -----

Some Hallucinations

8

54 *mp cresc. p. a p.*

"The one thing I re - gret," he said, "Is that it

cresc. p. a p.

This system contains the vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves for measures 54 and 55. The vocal line is in treble clef with lyrics. The piano accompaniment consists of a right-hand staff in treble clef and a left-hand staff in bass clef. The dynamics are marked *mp* and *cresc. p. a p.*

54

cresc. p. a p.

ped.

This system shows the piano accompaniment for measures 54 and 55. It features a right-hand staff in treble clef and a left-hand staff in bass clef. The dynamics are marked *cresc. p. a p.* and *ped.*

56 *(mf)*

can - - - not speak!"

(mf) *f*

(mf) *f*

This system contains the vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves for measures 56 and 57. The vocal line is in treble clef with lyrics. The piano accompaniment consists of a right-hand staff in treble clef and a left-hand staff in bass clef. Dynamics are marked *(mf)* and *f*.

56

(mf) *f*

ped. *ped.* *

This system shows the piano accompaniment for measures 56 and 57. It features a right-hand staff in treble clef and a left-hand staff in bass clef. Dynamics are marked *(mf)* and *f*. Pedal markings *ped.* and *ped.* with an asterisk are present.

58

ff *ff*

This system contains the vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves for measures 58 and 59. The vocal line is in treble clef. The piano accompaniment consists of a right-hand staff in treble clef and a left-hand staff in bass clef. Dynamics are marked *ff* and *ff*.

58

ff

This system shows the piano accompaniment for measures 58 and 59. It features a right-hand staff in treble clef and a left-hand staff in bass clef. The dynamics are marked *ff*.

60

8^{va}

p

ff

p

Reo.

64

mp

He thought he saw a Ban - ker's Clerk De -

mp

p

Reo.

66

scen - ding from the 'bus: He looked a - gain, and found it was A

f

mp

f

f

Reo.

Reo.

Reo.

Some Hallucinations

10

68

Hip - po - pot - a - mus.

f *p* *p*

8va

Leo. *

72

mp *mp*

8va

75

mf *mf*

"If this should stay to

8va

77 *f* ————— *ff*

dine," he said, "There won't be much for

f ————— *ff*

77 *ff* *8va*

* *ff*

79 us!"

pp

pp

79 *8va* *p*

pp

p

II. The Purist [3']

lyrics by Ogden Nash
music by Bill Robinson

Allegro academia (♩ = 120)

Score for the first system (measures 1-7):

- Voice:** Rests throughout.
- Flute:** Melodic line starting with a *mp* dynamic.
- Clarinet in B \flat :** Melodic line mirroring the flute, also starting with a *mp* dynamic.
- Piano:** Accompaniment with chords and a bass line, starting with a *mp* dynamic.

Score for the second system (measures 8-15):

- Voice:** Rests throughout.
- Flute:** Continues the melodic line with a slur over measures 8-15.
- Clarinet in B \flat :** Continues the melodic line with a slur over measures 8-15.
- Piano:** Accompaniment with a *legato* marking in the right hand.

Score for the third system (measures 16-19):

- Voice:** Enters with the lyrics "I give you now Pro-fes - sor" starting at measure 17. Dynamics include *f*.
- Flute:** Melodic line with a *f* dynamic at measure 17.
- Clarinet in B \flat :** Melodic line with a *f* dynamic at measure 17.
- Piano:** Accompaniment with a *f* dynamic at measure 17. Includes a *ped.* (pedal) marking at the end of the system.

20

Twist, A con - sci - en - tious sci - en -

22

tist, Trus - tees ex - claimed, "He ne - ver

24

bun - gles!" *f* And

The Purist

14

27

sent him off to dis - tant jun - gles. And sent him off to dis - tant jun - gles.

27

31

31

f *p* *legato*

Red. *

35

f Camped

35

38

on a tro - pic ri - ver - side, One day he missed his lov - ing

f

38

f

Reo.

41

bride. She had, the guide in - formed him la - ter, Been

41

Reo.

Reo.

44

eat - en by an al - li - ga - tor.

ff

ff *dim. p. a p.*

ff *dim. p. a p.*

44

ff *dim. p. a p.*

Reo.

The Purist

16

47

Musical score for measures 47-48. The system includes three staves: a vocal line (top), a piano accompaniment (middle), and a basso continuo line (bottom). The vocal line starts with a whole rest in measure 47 and begins in measure 48. The piano accompaniment features a melodic line with slurs and dynamic markings of *f* and *(mf)*. The basso continuo line has a rhythmic pattern with slurs and dynamic markings of *f* and *(mf)*. Measure 49 is indicated at the start of the piano and basso continuo staves.

49

Musical score for measures 49-52. The system includes three staves: a vocal line (top), a piano accompaniment (middle), and a basso continuo line (bottom). The vocal line begins in measure 49 with a melodic line and dynamic marking of *(mp)*. The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line and dynamic markings of *(mp)* and *p*. The basso continuo line has a rhythmic pattern with slurs and dynamic markings of *(mp)* and *p*. Measure 53 is indicated at the start of the piano and basso continuo staves.

53

Musical score for measures 53-56. The system includes three staves: a vocal line (top), a piano accompaniment (middle), and a basso continuo line (bottom). The vocal line has whole rests in measures 53-56. The piano accompaniment features a melodic line with slurs and dynamic markings of *p*. The basso continuo line has a rhythmic pattern with slurs and dynamic markings of *p*. Measure 57 is indicated at the start of the piano and basso continuo staves.

59

mp

59

67

mp

67

70

f

Pro - fes - sor Twist could not but

f

70

The Purist

18

73

smile but smile but smile but smile but smile but smile but smile but

ff *f*

76 *rit.* *a tempo*

smile but smile. "You

mf *mp* *p*

76 *rit.* *a tempo*

mf *mp* *p*

79

mean," he said, "a cro - - co - - dile."

p

79

12 *f*
think, at your age, it is right? Do you think, at your age, it is right?"
f

12 *f*

14 *mp*
"In my
p *mp*

14 *p* *mp*
ped. *

19 *f*
youth," fa-ther Wil- liam re-plied to his son, "I feared it might in- jure the brain; But
f

19 *f*

Father William

23

35

door

36

Pray what is the rea - son of

38

that?"

mf

40

p

p

43

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

"In my youth," said the sage, as he shook his grey locks, "I

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

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

43

cresc. p. a p.

Red. *

46

(mf)

kept all my limbs ve - ry sup - ple By the

(mf)

(mf)

46

(mf)

56 *dim.*

an - y - thing tough - er than su - et; — Yet you fin - ished the goose, with the bones and the beak - Pray,

p

58 *p* *f*

how did you man - age to do it?" — "In my

p *mp*

61

youth," said his fa - ther, "I took to the law, And ar - gued each case with my wife; —

f

73

old," said the youth, "one would hard-ly sup-pose That your eye was as stea-dy as ev - er ev - er ev - er ev - er;

p

73

77

Yet you ba - lanced an eel on the end of your nose - What

pp

77

80

made you so aw - ful - ly cle - ver?"

pp

80

Father William

29

83

Musical notation for measures 83-84, upper staves. The top staff is a vocal line with a whole rest in measure 83 and a half note in measure 84. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The right-hand piano part has a melodic line starting in measure 83 with a forte (*f*) dynamic, moving to fortissimo (*ff*) in measure 84. The left-hand piano part has a bass line starting in measure 83 with a forte (*f*) dynamic, moving to fortissimo (*ff*) in measure 84.

83

Musical notation for measures 83-84, lower staves. The middle staff is a bass line with a forte (*f*) dynamic, featuring a series of eighth notes with slurs. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with a forte (*f*) dynamic, featuring a series of chords with slurs.

84

Musical notation for measures 84-85, upper staves. The top staff is a vocal line with a half note in measure 84 and a quarter note in measure 85. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The right-hand piano part has a melodic line starting in measure 84 with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic, moving to a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic in measure 85. The left-hand piano part has a bass line starting in measure 84 with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic, moving to a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic in measure 85.

ff

"I have

84

Musical notation for measures 84-85, lower staves. The middle staff is a bass line with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic, featuring a series of eighth notes with slurs. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic, featuring a series of chords with slurs.

86

Musical notation for measures 86-87, upper staves. The top staff is a vocal line with a half note in measure 86 and a quarter note in measure 87. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The right-hand piano part has a melodic line starting in measure 86 with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic, moving to a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic in measure 87. The left-hand piano part has a bass line starting in measure 86 with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic, moving to a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic in measure 87.

an-swered three ques-tions, and that is e-nough," Said the fa-ther. "Don't give your-self airs! Do you

86

Musical notation for measures 86-87, lower staves. The middle staff is a bass line with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic, featuring a series of eighth notes with slurs. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic, featuring a series of chords with slurs.

88

think I can list - en all day to such stuff? Be off, or I'll kick you down stairs! Be

88

90

off, or I'll kick you down stairs! Be off, or I'll kick you down stairs! Be

90

ped. *ped.* *ped.* *sim.*

92

off, or I'll kick you downstairs!"

f *mp* *pp*

92

ff *f* *mp* *pp*

ped.