

Robinsongs

for Mezzo-Soprano, Oboe, and Piano

April 30—September 11, 2012

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 a 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

[5:20]

I. Some Hallucinations

lyrics by Lewis Carroll
music by Bill Robinson

A perfectly sane tempo (♩ = 60)

Voice

Oboe

Piano

p

8va

Ob.

p

mp

mp

*

Ob.

mf

mf

8va

Ob.

mp

mp

mp

8va

*

8va

8va

Some Hallucinations

14

V. *p* He

Ob. *mp* *p*

14

p

8vb---

18

V. *mp* thought the saw an El-ephant, That practiced on a fife: He looked a-gain, and found it was A let-ter from his wife. "At

Ob.

18

mp

8vb---

20

V. *mf* length I re-a-lize," he said, "The *f* bit-terness of life."

Ob. *f*

20

mf *f*

8vb---

23

Ob. *ff*

23

ff

25

V. *p* He

Ob. *ff* *p*

25 *ff* *mp* *p* *legato*

Red.

28

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

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

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

Red.

30

V. looked a - gain, and found it was His Sis - ter's Hus - band's Niece. "Un -

Ob. (*mf*)

30 (*mf*)

Red.

32

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

Ob. *f*

32 *f*

Red.

Some Hallucinations

34 *ff*

V.

Ob. *ff* *lice!* *p*

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

Ob.

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

39 (*mf*) 3

Ob.

39 (*mf*) 6 6 6

40 *f*

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

Ob. *f* 3 3 3

40 *f* 3 3

42

V.

Greek:

Ob.

42

Ob.

44

44

46

V.

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

Ob.

46

cresc. *ff*

cresc. *ff*

cresc. *ff*

Red. *

Ob.

49

mf *mp*

49

mf *mp*

Some Hallucinations

52

Ob.

6 3 6 6

54 *mp cresc. p. a p.*

V.

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

Ob.

cresc. p. a p.

54

cresc. p. a p.

ped.

56 (*mf*) *f*

V.

can - - - not speak!"

Ob.

(*mf*) *f*

56

(*mf*) *f*

ped. *ped.* *

58

Ob.

ff

58

ff

Some Hallucinations

60

Ob.

p

60

ff *p*

8va

Red.

64

V.

mp

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

Ob.

64

mp *Red.* *

66

V.

f

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

Ob.

mp *f*

66

f *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

68

V.

Hip - po - pot - a - mus.

Ob.

68

f *p*

8va

Red. *Red.* *Red.*

Some Hallucinations

72

Ob. *p* *mp*

72 *mp*

8va

75 *mf*

V. "If this should stay to

Ob. *mf*

75 *mf*

8va

77 *f* *ff*

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

Ob. *f* *ff*

77 *f* *ff*

8va

79

V. us!"

Ob. *pp*

79 *p*

8va

II. The Purist [3']

lyrics by Ogden Nash
music by Bill Robinson

Allegro academia (♩ = 120)

Voice

Oboe

Piano

mp

Allegro academia (♩ = 120)

mp

Ob.

legato

V.

Ob.

Piano

f

I give you now Pro-fes - sor

f

Leg. *

V.

Ob.

Piano

f

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

The Purist

10

22

V. *tist,* *Trus - tees ex - claimed, "He ne - ver*

Ob.

24

V. *bun - gles!"* *f* *And sent him off to dis - tant*

Ob.

28

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

Ob.

32

Ob. *f*

32 *f* *p* *legato*

legato

36

V. *f* Camped on a tro - pic ri - ver -

36

f

Red.

39

V. side, One day he missed his lov - ing bride. She

Ob. *f*

39

Red.

42

V. had, the guide informed him la - ter, Been eat - en by an al - li -

Ob.

42

Red.

45

V. *ff* ga - tor.

Ob. *ff* *dim. p. a p.* *f*

45

ff *dim. p. a p.* *f*

Red.

The Purist

12

Ob. 48 *(mf)* *(mp)*

Ped. Ped. Ped. Ped.

Ob. 50 *p*

Ped. Ped. Ped. *

Ob. 55 *mp*

mp

Ob. 61

68

Ob.

68

71

V.

Pro - fes - sor Twist could not but smile but smile but

Ob.

71

74

V.

smile but smile but smile but smile but smile but

Ob.

74

rit.

77

V.

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

Ob.

77

a tempo

III. You Are Old, Father William [6']

lyrics by Lewis Carroll
music by Bill Robinson

Guano ma non troppo (♩ = 65)

Voice

Oboe

Piano

mp

"You are

5

mf

f

old, fa-ther Wil - liam," the young man said, "And your hair has be-come ve-ry white; _____ And

5

mp

mf

p.

Reo. * *Reo.* *

8

f

yet you in-ces - sant - ly stand on your head - - - - - Do you

8

f

Reo. *

12

f

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

12

f

Father William

14 *mp* "In my

mp *p* *mp*

ped. *

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

f *f*

21 now that I'm per - fect-ly sure I have none, Why, I do it a - gain and a - gain. Why, I

ff *ff*

23 do it a - gain and a - gain. Why, I do it a - gain and a - gain. Why, I

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

Father William

16
25

do it a - gain and a - gain."

ff

27

mp

"You are

29

p

mf

old," said the youth, "as I men - tioned be - fore, And have grown most un - com - mon - ly

mf

Red. *

31

f

fat; Yet you — turned a back - som - ersault in at the

f

p

f

Red. *

35

door

This system contains measures 35 and 36. The vocal line starts with a whole note 'door' in measure 35. The piano accompaniment features a complex texture with sixteenth-note runs in the right hand and sustained chords in the left hand.

36

Pray what is the rea - son of

This system contains measures 36 and 37. The vocal line continues with 'Pray what is the rea - son of'. The piano accompaniment continues with similar textures, including sixteenth-note patterns and sustained chords.

38

that?"

mf

This system contains measures 38 and 39. The vocal line begins with 'that?'. The piano accompaniment features a change in texture, with more active sixteenth-note runs in the right hand and sustained chords in the left hand. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present.

40

p

This system contains measures 40 and 41. The vocal line continues. The piano accompaniment features a change in texture, with more active sixteenth-note runs in the right hand and sustained chords in the left hand. A dynamic marking of *p* is present.

Father William

18

43 *p* *cresc. p. a p.* *(mp)*
"In my youth," said the sage, as he shook his grey locks, "I

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

46 *(mf)*
kept all my limbs ve - ry sup - ple By the

46 *(mf)*

48 *f* *ff*
use of this oint - ment-one shil - ling the box - Al - low me to sell you a cou-ple?"

48 *f* *ff*
Leo. *Leo.* *Leo.* *sim.*

50 *p*

50 *mp* *p* *p*

54 *mf*
"You are old," said the youth, "and your jaws are too weak For

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

61
youth," said his fa - ther, "I took to the law, And _____ ar - gued each case with my wife; _____

Father William

63 *ff*

And the mus - cu - lar strength, which it gave to my

65 jaw, Has las - ted the rest of my

65 *ff*

68 life." "You are

68 *mf* *p*

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;

73 *legato* *p*

77

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

80

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

pp

83

f

84

ff

ff

"I have

Father William

22

86

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

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

92

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

92