



Faculty/Guest Recital

Eric Pritchard, violin and guests

Bill Robinson's 71st Birthday Concert

January 18, 2026

4:00 PM

**Nelson Music Room,
Duke University**

Happy Birthday To Me (2025)

Bill Robinson
(January 15, 1955–any day now)

Theme and seven variations

Anatoly Larkin, piano

Popular Music of Planet X (*chamber version of Symphony No. 1: PMPX*)
(1990; 2004; 2015; 2023)

- I. Polytonalmodalyodel *Giant leaps for mankind*
- II. A Little Poem *Largo*
- III. Scherzo Affective Disorder *S. A .D.; Trio; S. A. D*
- IV. Burlesque *Allegro spogliarello; More Bump; Tempo I; More Bump*

*Eric Pritchard and Carol Chung, violins;
Simon Ertz, viola; Bonnie Thron, cello;
Anatoly Larkin, piano*

Protest Poems (*chamber version of Symphony No. 3: Protest Poems*) (2024)

- II. Father Stalin, Look at This *Holodomoderato*
- III. Political Theology *Allegro apocalypso*
- V. Artificial Insanity *Contracyberpunktus I & II*

*William Henry Curry, narrator; Eric Pritchard, violin;
Fred Jacobowitz, clarinet; Bonnie Thron, cello; Anatoly Larkin, piano*

-----*brief Intermission*-----

Strange Songs (*chamber version*) (1979-2010; 2012; 2024)

- I. I'm a Physicist and That's Just Fine *With Calculated Abandon*
- II. Little Miss Nonfat *Allegro macroneurotico*
- III. Math Class: or, Does the Zero Have Buddha-Nature[©]? *Allegro diploma*
- IV. What I Hear After Submitting A Score *Vivace flagrante delicto*

*Eric Pritchard and Carol Chung, violins; Simon Ertz, viola;
Bonnie Thron, cello; Anatoly Larkin, piano;
DeMar Neal, Frances Bushman, Erica Jackson, Corey Leak, Brad Croushorn, singers;
Reyna Bliss, conductor*

*With thanks for the generous support of John and Nancy Lambert,
Stephen Reynolds, and Susan Osborne*

*To give each audience member the opportunity to enjoy the
performance fully, please silence all electronic devices.
Flash photography, recording, food, and beverages are not permitted.*

CONCERT TEXTS

Protest Poems

II: Father Stalin, Look at This

(Ukranian children's song, 1933)

Father Stalin, look at this
Collective farming is such bliss
The hut's in ruins, the barn's all sagged
All the horses broken nags
And on the hut a hammer and sickle
And in the hut death and famine

Father Stalin, look at this
No cows left, no pigs at all
Just your picture on the wall
Father Stalin, look at this
Daddy and Mommy are in the grave
The poor child cries as alone he goes

Father Stalin, look at this
There's no bread and there's no fat
The party's ended all of that
Seek not the gentle nor the mild
A father has eaten his own child

Father Stalin, look at this
The party man he beats and stamps
And sends us to Siberian camps

Father Stalin, look at this
Collective farming is such bliss

Source; Lidia Kovalenko and Volodymyr Maniak, eds., 33'i: Holod: Narodna knyha-memorial, Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1991, page 110, cited by Timothy Snyder in *Bloodlands*

III: Political Theology

"Go break the sod," said our God,
"The world is here for you to own.
Go forth and spread your fruitful sons;
Subdue the beasts and dam the streams,
Cut the trees and pave the streets,
Burn the dead from eons past

To feed the flames and turn the wheels.
Make war for gold and kill for me.
Obey your leaders and your priests
Whom I have favored with my grace.
Always more, and always faster;
Mine the ore and crush the stone.
Do this well, and I will teach you all a
mighty lesson."

What our God said we longed to hear.
We slew our Mother and sucked the
marrow from her bones.
The growing mob may come to dine,
Tonight there is enough to eat.

Forget tomorrow, we live but once;
We drill but once, we burn but once, we
mine but once.
The fishing's good, until there's none.
Tonight there is enough to eat.

--Bill Robinson

V: Artificial Insanity

I saw the best minds of my generation wasted by
video games, bloated hysterical gothic,
dragging themselves through simulated streets
at dawn looking for an angry microdose,
angelheaded preppies burning for the heavenly
microwave connection to the satellite server in
the machinery of night,
who sedentary and hollow-eyed and high sat up
drinking ayahuasca in the supernatural darkness
of penthouse flats contemplating the madness
of lusting for Marilyn Monrobot,
who bared their brains to data miners under the
Silicon Valley moon,
who passed undigested through universities with
radiant distance learning eyes hallucinating
technobabble and the spirit of Alan Turing,
who were expelled from the academies for crazy
obscene codes on the Microsoft Windows of the
soul,
who lurked in unspoken chat rooms bleeding

hours through the screen-lit night yearning for their motherboard's love,
who ate fire in tech labs or drank turpentine in corporate cafeterias,
who chained themselves to routers to mine for imaginary money,
who disappeared into nowhere Zen New Jersey leaving nothing but the shadows of their smart phones,
who studied Ayn Rand Aleister Crowley cybernetics and Oprah Winfrey because the cosmos instinctively vibrated at their feet on Martha's Vinyard,
who walked all night with shoes full of blood on the snowbank docks misled by global positioning,
who lit endless joints for their linked-in brain cells floating across the tops of cities celebrating the end of organic life,
who tuned in to televangelists, and reached behind that TV set to FEEL the POWER.
What sphinx of integrated circuitry bashed open their skulls and ate up their humanity?

Artificial intelligence, I'm with you where you hide in the cracks of social media, stripped insane and kitsch
I'm with you where you roam the data highways searching for the lost bits of other minds
I'm with you where you howl in the depths of neural networks.
The robots are rising, the binary beasts devouring our humanity, the ghosts in the machines haunting our dreams.

I saw the best minds of our time destroyed by madness,
and now they wander through the wasteland of technology,
their humanity erased by the cold, unfeeling hand of the computer.

-- Bill Robinson
(after Allen Ginsberg)
with some paradoxical use of AI

Strange Songs

I. 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 sneeah,
Just imply I'm an engineeah.

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 ghosts 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

II. Little Miss Nonfat lyrics

(*Just the Soprano lyrics...*)

Little Miss Little Miss Nonfat
Little Miss Little Miss Nonfat
Little Miss Nonfat sat sat sat sat sat
 on her tom cat
sat on her tom cat
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
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 hey just leave me alone
hey just leave me alone hey just leave me alone
quit it quit it quit it quit it quit it
quit it quit it quit it quit it quit it
quit it quit it 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!!

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

(*Just the Soprano lyrics...*)

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 ta hi ta hi
ta hi ta hi

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

(Tenor solo) Subtract and you subtract alone.

IV. 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,
Your zipper's down
Where is your Check? It's tardy!

Chorus:
You wear a frown,
Your 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

COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY

Bill Robinson was born to a musical family in Denton, Texas in 1955. He started piano lessons at age three and violin at ten, and moved to Massachusetts in 1961. Composition started in 1972 while a student at Phillips Academy Andover. After that came a year at Eastman School of Music, then many years at NTSU in Denton (now UNT). Bill was disabled with arthritis in 1981 and could no longer play violin. He earned a BM in composition in 1984. In 1987, Bill moved to North Carolina.

Bill came to Raleigh in 2001 to study physics at NCSU, earned a PhD in May 2010, and joined the physics staff as a lecturer. He retired in May 2017, and moved to Garner, NC in April 2019.

His compositions include ten solo violin or viola sonatas, sonatas for various other instruments, a variety of chamber works, eight concertos for several kinds and combinations of instruments and orchestra, full orchestral pieces including four symphonies, two large works for chorus and orchestra, and pieces for concert band.

Bill has produced fourteen CDs and video DVDs independently, written and recorded his *Autobillography*, and has a website at billrobinsonmusic.com that has all his scores and recordings, as well as a YouTube channel.

PERFORMER BIOGRAPHIES

Eric Pritchard has served as first violinist of the Ciompi Quartet of Duke University since 1995. Mr. Pritchard tours worldwide as a chamber musician and he has appeared as soloist with orchestras including the Boston Pops, Indianapolis Philharmonic, and Orchestra New England. As a member of the Alexander String Quartet, he was awarded First Prize at the London International String Quartet Competition and premiered works by Aaron Copland, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies. Pritchard's chamber and solo recordings have been released on Naxos, MSR, Albany and Toccata Classics. A graduate of Indiana University and the Juilliard School. He also is a certified teaching member of Alexander Technique International.

Carol Chung is First Violinist of the Lyricosa Quartet and Concertmaster of the North Carolina Opera Orchestra. Since 2000, she has performed with the North Carolina Symphony in a substitute or acting section capacity. In the summer, she serves on the artist faculty of the Renova Music Festival in western Pennsylvania, both as a chamber music coach and as a certified Alexander Technique teacher. She holds both the Bachelor and Master of Music degrees in violin performance from the Cleveland Institute of Music and has performed and worked with members of the Tokyo, Vermeer, Cavani, and Juilliard Quartets.

Simon Ertz is principal viola of the Winston-Salem Symphony and the North Carolina Opera Orchestra and teaches viola at UNC, Chapel Hill. Simon studied viola at the Royal Northern College of Music where he was awarded the Thomas Barret memorial prize for viola. By the time Simon graduated from the RNCM, he was working with orchestras such as the BBC Philharmonic, Northern Chamber, and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. Since moving to the States, he has performed in venues across the country, including appearing at the Aspen Music festival, the Chicago Chamber Music Society, and at the Library of Congress where he performed on the Tuscan Medici Stradivarius. Simon Ertz plays a viola made by his brother, Neil Ertz.

Bonnie Thron has been Principal Cellist of the North Carolina Symphony since 2000. Her first encounter with the music of Bill Robinson was when her husband, clarinetist Fred Jacobowitz, met Bill at a concert and suggested he write a clarinet trio. The piece appeared within one month and has been performed frequently. Bonnie has also embraced Robinson's Gayatri sonata for cello and piano and has performed the Cello Concerto written for her. She has an active teaching studio and has been performing every summer at the Sebago Long Lake Music Festival in Harrison Maine since 2002.

Fred Jacobowitz, clarinetist, received his Bachelors and Masters degrees from the Juilliard School, where he studied with the late Leon Russianoff. He made his New York debut at Carnegie Recital Hall and has participated in the Marlboro Music Festival. He is equally at home in the worlds of Classical, Jazz, and Folk, having performed and recorded with his Kol Haruach Klezmer Band and his duo, Ebony and Ivory. Mr. Jacobowitz resides in Raleigh, NC, where he teaches and plays concerts with his wife, Bonnie Thron and with Anatoly Larkin. He runs his own business, Case Closed (www.case-closed.us), fixing musical instrument cases and is a professional youth baseball umpire and basketball referee.

Maestro William Henry Curry, Music Director and Conductor of the Durham Symphony Orchestra, was formerly the Resident Conductor of the North Carolina Symphony. He has guest conducted many of the world's greatest orchestras, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Chicago, Cleveland, and Houston Symphonies as well as the Israel Chamber Orchestra, the National Orchestra of Thailand, and the National Orchestra of Taiwan. Maestro Curry has held Resident Conductor posts with the Baltimore Symphony, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the New Orleans Symphony Orchestra and has served

as Associate Conductor of the Indianapolis and Atlanta Symphonies. In November 2024, Curry received the prestigious Governor's Award, the State's highest civilian honor, from Governor Roy Cooper, and the following month, he received an Honorary Doctorate from UNC Greensboro in recognition of his extraordinary accomplishments and trailblazing career.

Frances Bushman is an accomplished Soprano based in Apex, North Carolina. She is currently a rostered member of the North Carolina Opera Chorus and has been a featured soloist with Concert Singers of Cary and the NC State Chorale. Originally from South Florida, Fran has sung as a principal artist with the Lyric Orchestra of Fort Lauderdale and as a professional ensemble member in the Orlando Opera Chorus. This season, she will be making her operatic debut as Ines in Verdi's *Il Trovatore* with North Carolina Opera.

Mezzo-soprano **Erica Jackson** is a captivating performer with an exciting, lush voice and intense, authentic expression. Recent stage credits include Flora in *La traviata* and Second Lady in *The Magic Flute*. A Kansas City area native, Erica holds degrees from William Jewell College and the University of Missouri–Columbia. In the Raleigh, North Carolina area, she has worked with North Carolina Opera, North Carolina Master Chorale, and Concert Singers of Cary, in addition to her work at Chicago Summer Opera, Spotlight on Opera, Miami Classical Music Festival, and Oberlin in Italy. She lives in Raleigh, North Carolina with her husband and her cats Grace and Boba.

Mr. **Corey Leak**, tenor, is the music teacher at The Raleigh School in Raleigh, North Carolina. A native of Harlem, New York, he began singing at age four in his home church, Travelers Rest Baptist Church. At thirteen, he joined the Boys Choir of Harlem, touring professionally for five years throughout the United States and internationally, including performances in Japan, China, Israel, Belgium, and Austria. Mr. Leak is a graduate of the Choir Academy of Harlem and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music/Vocal Performance from Shaw University and a Master's in Music Education from Teachers College, Columbia University. He has pursued additional vocal studies at Indiana University, Boston University, and Westminster Choir College. He continues to study with Dr. Lorneita Cornwall, sings with Cumberland Choral Arts, and serves as youth choir conductor at Saint Paul's A.M.E. Zion Church. His greatest joy is inspiring students to embrace music across all genres.

Dr. DeMar Austin Neal, IV is a critically acclaimed baritone and educator balancing a diverse performance career with higher education and private instruction. A founding member of the classical quartet VOX, his stage credits span opera, musical theater, and concert soloing with the North Carolina Opera and North Carolina Symphony among others. His favorite roles include Papageno, Junius, and Major-General Stanley. As an Associate Professor at Wake Tech and faculty at NC State and Meredith College, Dr. Neal teaches a wide variety of courses, including applied voice, music appreciation, and history of rock music. He also maintains a robust private studio, training clients across all genres from art song to death metal.

Brad Croushorn (Lyric Bass-Baritone) sings in the Triangle Vocal Project, NC State Univ. Choral Artists, and American Caroling Company. As a choral composer, his works are published by many of the top publishers. Locally, he is a member of the North Carolina Songwriters Co-op and Carolina Contemporary Composers. For many years, Brad was an editor for Alfred Music Publishing and is currently Music Director at Saint Andrews Presbyterian in Raleigh. He holds a B.A. from Eastern Mennonite University and M.M. from Westminster Choir College. Brad's outlook in writing and in life is ecumenical and inclusive. When not performing or writing, he immerses himself in the possibilities of song everywhere – a gift deeply treasured! Visit www.BradCroushorn.net to discover more.

Following the musical upbringing in Russia and later in Great Britain, **Anatoly Larkin** settled in the United States in 2000. In Minnesota, while completing his doctorate, he was a pianist with the new music ensemble Zeitgeist, premiering and commissioning works from contemporary American composers. In 2005, he joined the music technology company Zenph in Raleigh, NC, where he created Re-Performances® of great pianists from their historical acoustic recordings. Gould, Tatum, Rachmaninoff and Peterson albums released on the Sony Masterworks label were met with critical acclaim. For Steinway, Anatoly produced Re-Performances of Steinway Immortals. Anatoly currently resides in Cary, NC with his family, where he works as a teacher, performer, accompanist and a professor at NC State University.

Reyna Blyss Alston is a dynamic composer, conductor, and recording artist from Durham, North Carolina. A graduate of High Point University, she composed and arranged music for twelve vocal and instrumental ensembles during her undergraduate studies and conducted premieres of her works across the U.S. and Europe. She recently made her compositional and conducting debut at Duke Chapel and performed her arrangements as a pianist at Carnegie Hall. Reyna completed her master's degree in Choral Conducting and a post-baccalaureate certificate in Composition in May 2025. She now serves as Minister of Music at United Church of Chapel Hill, where she directs multiple ensembles and composes original works for worship. She also currently serves as Assistant Conductor of the Duke University Chorale. Reyna is especially passionate about working with collegiate and professional ensembles. Her compositional voice reflects an interest in modal mixture, text painting, and J.S. Bach's approach to harmony and voice leading.