

Robinsons

for Mezzo-Soprano, Flute,
Clarinet, and Piano



Bill Robinson

Robinsongs

for Mezzo-Soprano, Flute, Clarinet in B flat, 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 principal 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. In October 2022, I converted the legal-size format to letter-size.

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.

Bill Robinson

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billrobinsonmusic.com

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

Red.

8va

5

5

mp

mp

mp

8

8

mf

mf

mf

8va

Red.

12

mp

mp

mp

mp

17

p

He thought he saw an El - e - phant, That prac - ticed on a fife: He

p

p

19

mp

looked a - gain, and found it was A let - ter from his wife. "At

mf

length I re - a - lize," he said, "The

mp

mf

(8^{vb})

Some Hallucinations

4

21 *f*
bit - ter - ness of life."
f
f
21 *f*
(8^{vb})

23 *ff*
ff
23 *ff*
ff

25 *p*
He
ff *p*
ff
25 *ff* *mp* *p* *legato*
Leo.

Some Hallucinations

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*)

Leg. *Leg.*

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*)

Leg. *Leg.* *Leg.* *Leg.*

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

f *f* *f*

32 *f*

Leg. *Leg.* *

Some Hallucinations

6

34 *ff*

licel!"

ff *p* *cresc. p. a p.*

ff *mf* *p* *cresc. p. a p.*

38

(mp) *(mf)*

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

38 *(mp)* *(mf)*

40 *f*

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

f *f*

40 *f*

42

Greek:

Musical score for measures 42-43. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a fermata over the first measure. The piano accompaniment features several triplet figures and slurs across both staves.

44

Musical score for measures 44-45. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a fermata over the first measure. The piano accompaniment features several triplet figures and slurs across both staves.

46

cresc. He looked a - gain, and found it was The Mid - die of Next Week. *ff*

Musical score for measures 46-47. The system includes a vocal line with lyrics and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a fermata over the first measure. The piano accompaniment features several triplet figures and slurs across both staves. Dynamics include *cresc.* and *ff*. There are also some handwritten markings like 'Red.' and '*' at the bottom.

Some Hallucinations

8

49

49

mf

mp

mf

mp

3

6

Detailed description: This system contains measures 49 through 52. It features a vocal line at the top, which is mostly silent. Below it are two piano staves. The upper piano staff has a treble clef and contains a melodic line with a *mp* dynamic marking. The lower piano staff has a bass clef and contains a more complex accompaniment with a *mf* dynamic marking. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' and a sixteenth-note figure is marked with a '6'.

53

mp *cresc. p. a p.*

"The one thing I re -

cresc. p. a p.

6

3

6

Detailed description: This system contains measures 53 through 54. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "The one thing I re -". The piano accompaniment continues with a treble staff featuring a triplet of eighth notes and a sixteenth-note figure, and a bass staff with a sixteenth-note figure. Dynamics include *mp* and *cresc. p. a p.*

53

cresc. p. a p.

6

Detailed description: This system contains measures 53 through 54, continuing the piano accompaniment from the previous system. The bass staff features a sixteenth-note figure. Dynamics include *cresc. p. a p.*

55

(mf)

gret," he said, "Is that it can - - - not

(mf)

Detailed description: This system contains measures 55 through 56. The vocal line continues with the lyrics "gret," he said, "Is that it can - - - not". The piano accompaniment consists of a treble staff with a *(mf)* dynamic marking and a bass staff with a *(mf)* dynamic marking.

55

(mf)

And. *And.* *And.* *

Detailed description: This system contains measures 55 through 56, continuing the piano accompaniment from the previous system. The bass staff features a *(mf)* dynamic marking. The system concludes with three *And.* markings and an asterisk.

57 *f*
speak!"

f *ff*

59

p *ff* 8va

62 *mp*
He

p *mp*
He

65
thought he saw a Ban - ker's Clerk De - scen - ding from the 'bus: He

65

67 *f*
looked a - gain, and found it was A Hip - po - pot - a - mus.

67

71

71

74 *mf* *mp* *mf*

"If this should stay to

74 *mp* *mf*

77 *f* *ff*

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

77 *ff*

79 *pp* *pp* *p*

usi"

II. The Purist [3']

lyrics by Ogden Nash
music by Bill Robinson

Allegro academia (♩ = 120)

Voice

Flute

Clarinet in B \flat

Piano

mp

Allegro academia (♩ = 120)

mp

8

legato

16

f

I give you now Pro-fes - sor

f

f

16

f

Reo.

20

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

22

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

22

24

bun - gles!" _____ And

24

The Purist

14

27

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

31

31

f *p*

f *p* *legato*

ped. *

35

f **Camped**

f

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.

47

Musical score for measures 47-48. The system includes a vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves. The vocal line is mostly silent. The piano accompaniment features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *f* and *(mf)*. The word *Rec.* is written below the bass line in the piano part.

49

Musical score for measures 49-52. The system includes a vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves. The vocal line has a melody in the right hand. The piano accompaniment features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *(mp)* and *p*. The word *Rec.* is written below the bass line in the piano part.

53

Musical score for measures 53-56. The system includes a vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves. The vocal line is mostly silent. The piano accompaniment features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *(mp)* and *p*. The word *Rec.* is written below the bass line in the piano part. A small asterisk is placed below the first measure of the piano part.

59

mp

mp

67

mp

70

f

Pro - fes - sor Twist could not but

f

The Purist

73

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

ff *f*

76

smile but smile.

mf *mp* *p*

rit. *a tempo*

76

mf *mp* *p*

rit. *a tempo*

79

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

p

79

p

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

19
lyrics by Lewis Carroll
music by Bill Robinson

Guano ma non troppo (♩ = 65)

Voice

Flute

Clarinet in B \flat

Piano

mp

"You are

p *mp*

Guano ma non troppo (♩ = 65)

p

5

mf *f*

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

mf *f*

5

mp *mf*

Rec. *

8

f *f*

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

f *f*

8

f

Rec. *

Father William

20

12

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

f

f

14

mp "In my

p

mp

p

p

mp

mp

mp

19

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

f

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

23

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

25

do it a - gain and a - gain."

Father William

22

27 *mp*
"You are

p *mp*

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

mf *mp*

Red. *

31 *f*
fat; Yet you turned a back - som - er - sault in at the

f *p* *f*

Red. *

35

door

36

Pray what is the rea - son of

38

that?"

mf

Father William

24

Musical score for measures 40-42. The system includes a vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves. The vocal line begins with a rest in measure 40, followed by the lyrics "In my youth," in measure 41. The piano accompaniment features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, both marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The time signature changes from 6/8 to 4/4 between measures 41 and 42.

Musical score for measures 43-45. The system includes a vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves. The vocal line contains the lyrics: "In my youth," said the sage, as he shook his grey locks, "I". The piano accompaniment continues with a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *p*, *cresc. p. a p.*, and *(mp)*. The time signature changes from 6/8 to 4/4 between measures 44 and 45.

Musical score for measures 43-45, piano accompaniment. The system includes two piano staves. The right hand plays chords and the left hand plays a bass line. A dynamic marking of *cresc. p. a p.* is present. A rehearsal mark "Leo." with an asterisk is located at the beginning of the system.

Musical score for measures 46-48. The system includes a vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves. The vocal line contains the lyrics: "kept all my limbs ve - ry sup - ple By the". The piano accompaniment continues with a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Dynamics include *(mf)*. The time signature changes from 6/8 to 4/4 between measures 47 and 48.

Musical score for measures 46-48, piano accompaniment. The system includes two piano staves. The right hand plays chords and the left hand plays a bass line. A dynamic marking of *(mf)* is present.

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

f *ff*

f *ff*

48 *f* *ff*

Reo. Reo. Reo. sim.

50

mp *p*

50

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

p *mf*

54

Father William

26

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

58 *p* *mp*

61

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

61 *f*

63

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

ff

f

ff

65

jaw, Has las - ted the rest of my

ff

68

life." "You are

mf

p

mf

Father William

28

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

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

83

f

ff

Detailed description: This system contains measures 83 and 84. The vocal line (top staff) has a rest in measure 83 and begins in measure 84 with a melodic line. The piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves) features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand. Dynamics include *f* and *ff*.

84

ff

ff

"I have

84

ff

Detailed description: This system contains measures 84 and 85. The vocal line (top staff) continues the melody from measure 84, with the lyrics "I have" appearing in measure 84. The piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves) continues with the same rhythmic pattern. Dynamics include *ff*.

86

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

86

Detailed description: This system contains measures 86 and 87. The vocal line (top staff) has the lyrics "an - swered three ques - tions, and that is e - nough," Said the fa - ther. "Don't give your - self airs! Do you". The piano accompaniment (middle and bottom staves) continues with the same rhythmic pattern. Dynamics include *ff*.

Father William

30

88

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

90

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

92

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