

Protest Poems

for Narrator, Violin, Clarinet, Cello, and Piano

Clarinet in B flat

part for electronic music readers



Bill Robinson

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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

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billrobinsonmusic.com

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Protest Poems

Bill Robinson

lyrics: Bill Robinson

I. Pity the Party [4:15]

(after L. Ferlinghetti (after K. Gibran))

Fascismo (♩ = 76)

Narrator: Pit - y the par - ty whose

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

Clarinet in B \flat : *p* *mp* (*mf*)

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

Piano: *p legato* *cresc. p. a p.* (*mp*) (*mf*)

5 *f* peo - ple are cat - tle, and whose *cresc.* cow - boys lead them to *ff* slaugh - ter.

5 *f* *cresc.* *ff*

9

9 *6* *6* *6* *6* *6*

9 *6* *6* *6* *6* *6*

Pity the Party

2

12 *ff* Pit - y the par - ty in thrall to a crim - i - nal mes - si - ah, a crim - i - nal mes - si - ah, with *p* prayers for the end of the world.

18 *cresc.* *mp* *mf* *f*

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

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

22 *mp*

pizz. *p* *arco* *mp*

22 *mp*

27

whose sag - es are purged, and whose

cresc. *f* *f*

30

big - ots dom - i - nate the me - di - a.

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

34

Pit - y the par - ty that prais - es dic - ta - tors and ac -

mf *f* *ff* *ff*

34 34

Pity the Party

4

37

claims the bul - ly as he - ro, and aims to dom - i - nate the world by force and tor - ture in the

41

name of free - dom.

46 *pp* Pit - y the par - ty whose

47

Gods are Mon - ey and Guns, and sleeps the sleep of op - i - oids.

47

cresc.

legato

cresc.

Pity the Party

51

51

53

mf *f* *ff* *ff*

Pit - y the

54

54

54

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

57

57

57

sick while

Pity the Party

6

59

ty - coons get what they want.

59

59

ff dim. *mf*

62

mp Pit - ty the par - ty that speaks one lan - guage, and de - mands pu - ri - ty of blood

62

mp

62

mp

62

66

and soil for the Ar - y - an race.

66

66

66

ff

70 *ff*
Pit - y the par - ty, oh pit - y the peo - ple who al - low their rights to e - rode and their free - doms to be

70 *mp* *ff*

70 *mp* *ff*

74 washed a - way by ha - tred and fear and lies and old - time re - li - gion.

74 *ff*

74 *ff*

78 80 *pp* My coun - try, tears of thee, once land of lib - er - ty.

78 *pp* *rit.*

78 *pp* *rit.*

78 *pp* *rit.* *8^{va}*

Father Stalin, Look at This

14 *mp* All the hors-es bro-ken nags *mf* *mf* And on the hut *mp*

14 *mp* *mp* *mf* *mp*

14 *p* *mp* *mf* *mp*

18 *p* a ham-mer and sick-le *mp* And in the hut *mf* death *f* and

18 *p* *mp* *mf* *f*

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

18 *p*

22 *f* fam-ine *f*

22 *f* *f* *f* *f*

22 *f* *f*

22 *f* *f*

Father Stalin, Look at This

10 ²⁷

f Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this *p* No cows left, no pigs at all

f dim. p

f dim. p

mp p

33

Just your pic - ture on the wall

p cresc. mfim. pp

p cresc. mfim. pp

cresc. mf dim. pp

37

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

p

p

p

Father Stalin, Look at This

40 in the grave The

p cresc. *(mf)*

p cresc. *(mf)*

mp

43 poor child cries as a-lone he goes

f *rit.* *a tempo*

f *rit.* *a tempo*

mf *f* *rit.* *a tempo*

48 50 Fa-ther Sta- lin, look at this

p *50* *p cresc.*

p *50* *cresc.*

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

p *50* *cresc.*

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*

mf

54 *f dim.* *mp*

par - ty's end - ed all of that

54

54 *f dim.* *(mp)*

56 *p* *mp*

Seek not the gen - tle nor the mild

56 *p cresc.* *mp* *mf*

p *cresc.* *(mp)*

56 *p* *cresc.* *(mp)*

59

f A fa - ther has eat - en

cresc.

mf

f

5

62

his own child

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

f dim.

(mp)

p cresc.

12/8

5

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

mp

mf

f

12/8

5

Father Stalin, Look at This

14 69

69
stamps
cresc.
ff
beats and stamps
ff

69
f cresc.
ff

69
cresc.
ff

Detailed description: This system covers measures 69 and 70. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics 'stamps' and 'beats and stamps'. The middle staff is a vocal line with 'ff' dynamics. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with 'f cresc.' and 'ff' dynamics. The music is in 12/8 time and features a crescendo leading to a fortissimo section.

71
beats and stamps
And sends us to Si - be - ri - an

71
ff

71
ff

Detailed description: This system covers measures 71, 72, and 73. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics 'beats and stamps' and 'And sends us to Si - be - ri - an'. The middle staff is a vocal line with 'ff' dynamics. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with 'ff' dynamics. The music is in 12/8 time and features a change in tempo to 'And'.

74
camps
Coda (♩=56)
ff

74
ff

74
ff

Detailed description: This system covers measures 74, 75, and 76. The top staff is a vocal line with lyrics 'camps' and 'Coda (♩=56)'. The middle staff is a vocal line with 'ff' dynamics. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with 'ff' dynamics. The music is in 12/8 time and features a change in tempo to 'Coda (♩=56)'. The system ends with a double bar line.

79

79

p *mp* *f*

83

83

ff *p* *pp*

87

pp

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

87

87

pp

16

fruit - ful sons; Sub - due the beasts and dam the streams, Cut the trees and pave the streets, Burn the dead from

16

16

22

e - ons past To feed the flames and turn the wheels. Make war for gold and kill for me. O - bey your lead - ers and your priests Whom

22

22

29

I have fa-vored with my grace. **31** *f* Al - ways more, and *ff* al - ways fas-ter; Mine the ore and

29

29

29

34

crush the stone. Do this well, and I will teach you all a mighty lesson."

38

What our God said we longed to hear. We slew our Mother and sucked the marrow

39

pp *p* *mp*

44

from her bones. The grow - ing mob may come to dine, The grow - ing mob may

44

mf *mp*

49 *pp* come to dine, To night there is e - nough to eat. For - get to - mor - row, we

53

49 *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* Con sord. 53 Con sord.

49 *pp* 53

55 live but once; We drill but once, we burn but once, we mine but once. The fish-ing's good, un - til there's none.

55

55

61 To - night there is e - nough to eat.

61

61

Anonymous poem

Volante con fuoco (♩ = 80)

Narrator

Violin

Clarinet in B \flat

Cello

Piano

5

8

cresc. *mf* *f* *mp*

cresc. *mf* *f* *mp*

cresc. *mf* *f* *mp*

The

II

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

11

III

15

fire, I go out for an ear-ly morn-ing walk, wrapped in air far too

15

15

19

warm for late Feb-ru-ar-y in the Mid-west a heat wave. False Spring has brought

19

19

The Birds

22 24

Na - ture roar - ing back to life. I want to shake eve - ry per - son I

cresc. *f* *ff*

24 25

cresc. *f* *ff*

cresc. *f* *ff*

24 25

cresc. *f* *ff*

Detailed description: This block contains the first system of the musical score, covering measures 22 to 25. It features a vocal line at the top with lyrics, and piano accompaniment in the middle and bottom staves. The piano part includes a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a bass line. Dynamics include *cresc.*, *f*, and *ff*. Measure numbers 24 and 25 are indicated in boxes.

27

stroll past. "Did you know there's a gen - o - cide hap - pen - ing?"

27

27

ff

27

Detailed description: This block contains the second system of the musical score, covering measures 27 to 30. It features a vocal line at the top with lyrics, and piano accompaniment in the middle and bottom staves. The piano part includes a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a bass line. Dynamics include *ff*. Measure numbers 27 and 30 are indicated in boxes.

30

Did you see a man

30

legato *ff*

30

Detailed description: This block contains the third system of the musical score, covering measures 30 to 33. It features a vocal line at the top with lyrics, and piano accompaniment in the middle and bottom staves. The piano part includes a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a bass clef staff with a bass line. Dynamics include *legato* and *ff*. Measure numbers 30 and 33 are indicated in boxes.

32

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

32

32

pp

35

I would ask, if

36

35

36

pp

p

legato

37

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

37

37

mf

f

p

The Birds

24 40

Musical score for measures 40-41. The system includes vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a rest, followed by the lyrics "But I". The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. Dynamics include *p* (piano).

Musical score for measures 42-43. The system includes vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The vocal line contains the lyrics "know I'd have bet-ter luck with the birds." The piano accompaniment continues with a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. Dynamics include *p* (piano).

Musical score for measures 44-45. The system includes vocal lines and piano accompaniment. The vocal line contains the lyrics "But I know I'd have bet-ter luck with the". The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. Dynamics include *ff* (fortissimo) and *p* (piano).

47 birds, ev - er cu - ri - ous,

mf

dim.

mf

50 car - di - nals hop - ping from branch to branch like fi - re - balls. Or mis - siles.

p

54 I'd tell them, some of us love you so much we'd die for you. For a sin - gle snip - pet of

dolce

The Birds

26 59

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

59

64 *pp* For a tree for you to perch in a - mong the rub - ble. *fff* He shout - ed **68** *f* FREE PAL - ES - TINE *mf* FREE PAL - ES - TINE FREE PAL - ES -

64

pp *fff* *f* *mf*

68

71 *p* TINE un - til he choked on the flames. *f* The call - back: *p* a long, mourn - ful whis - tle from a -

71

p *f* *p*

The Birds

77 *rit.* *p* *mp+*

bove. The sun is blaz-ing too bright to make out more than a sil-hou-ette tak-ing off, ris-ing

Coda (♩ = 66) *grec.* *p cresc.* *f cresc.*

82 *mf* *mf+* *f* *mp* *p*

slow and then fast like smoke.

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

86 *molto rit.* *a tempo*

molto rit. *a tempo*

ff *pp*

Contracyberpunktus I (♩ = 88)

Narrator: I saw the best minds of my gen-er-a-tion wast-ed by

Violin: *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

Clarinet in B♭: *p* *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

Cello: *p* *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

Piano: *p* *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

6 *mf* *f* *ff*

vid-e-o games, bloat-ed hys-ter-i-cal goth-ic, drag-ging themselves through sim-u-lat-ed streets at

6 *mf* *f* *ff*

11 dawn look-ing for an an-gry mi-cro-dose,

11 *ff dim.* *mf* *mp*

11 *ff dim.* *mf* *mp*

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

20 *p* *rit.* *ContraCyberpunktus II*
 sat - el - lite serv - er in the ma - chin - er - y of night,

dim. *p* *pp* *rit.* *ContraCyberpunktus II*

dim. *p* *pp* *rit.* *ContraCyberpunktus II*

dim. *p* *pp* *rit.* *ContraCyberpunktus II*

25 *pp* *cresc. p. a p.* *p* *(mp)* *(mf)*
 who sed - en - tar - y and hol - low - eyed and high sat up drink - ing a - ya - huas - ca in the

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

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

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

Artificial Insanity

30 *f* *ff* *molto rit.* *Contracyberpunktus I* (♩ = 88)

su - per - nat - u - ral dark - ness of pent - house flats

f *ff* *dim.* *(mf)* *(mp)* *p* (♩ = 88)

30 *f* *ff* *molto rit.* *Contracyberpunktus I*

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

30 *f* *ff* *dim.* *(mf)* *(mp)* *p* *molto rit.* *Contracyberpunktus I* (♩ = 88)

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

con - tem - plat - ing the mad - ness of lust - ing for Mar - i - lyn Mon - ro - bot Mar - i - lyn Mon - ro - bot,

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

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

41 *f* *ff* *rit.* *a tempo* *mf* *mp* *p*

who bared their brains to da - ta min - ers un - der the Sil - i - con Val - ley moon,

f *ff* *rit.* *a tempo*

41 *f* *ff* *rit.* *a tempo*

41 *f* *ff* *rit.* *a tempo*

Artificial Insanity

45 *mp* who passed un-di-gest-ed through u-ni-ver-si-ties *mp, cresc. p. a p.* with ra-di-ant dis-tance learn-ing eyes hal-

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

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

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

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

50 *f* lu-ci-nat-ing tech-no-bab-ble and the spir-it of Al-an Tur-ing, *ff* who were ex-pelled

50 *f* *ff*

50 *f* *ff*

54 *ff dim.* from the a-cad-e-mies for cra-zy ob-scene *ff dim.* codes on the Mi-cro-soft Win-dows *(mf)*

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

54 *dim.* *(mf)* *mp*

Artificial Insanity

32 58 *mp* **59** *mp* *cresc.* *(mf)*
of the soul, who lurked in un - spo - ken chat rooms

58 **59** *mp* *cresc.* *mf*
mp *cresc.* *(mf)*

58 **59** *p* *cresc.* *(mp)* *(mf)*

62 *f* *dim.* *(mp)* *(p)*
blee - ding hours through the screen - lit night yearn - ing

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

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

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

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

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

Artificial Insanity

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

75 *p* *pp*
no-where Zen New Jer-sey 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*

Artificial Insanity

34

80

81 *ff*

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

84

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

88

89 *ff* *mf*

feet on Mar - tha's Vin - yard, who walked all night with

91 *mp*

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

mp

91 *mp*

mp

91 *mp*

94 *cresc.* *f* *ff*

si - tion - ing, who lit end - less joints for their linked - in brain cells

cresc. *f* *ff*

94 *cresc.* *f* *ff*

cresc. *f* *ff*

94 *cresc.* *f* *ff*

97

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

97 *p*

97 *p*

97 *p*

Artificial Insanity

36

100 gan - ic life, 101 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*

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

arco *p*

110 *p* man - i - ty? **ff** Mad dead au-tom-a - tons Mad dead au-tom-a - tons

110 *p cresc.* **ff** **111**

110 *p cresc.* **ff** **111**

110 *p cresc.* **ff** **111**

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

113 *ff* Mad dead au - tom - a - tons

113 *ff* Mad dead au-tom-a - tons

113 *ff* Mad dead au - tom - a - tons

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

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

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

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

Artificial Insanity

38

119 *ff* *dim.* *rit.* *(mp)* **Contracyberpunktus II** ($\text{♩} = 76$)
Mad dead au-tom-a-tons Mad dead au-tom-a-tons of Sil-i-con Val-ley.
pp *pp*

119 *ff* *dim.* *rit.* *(mp)* **Contracyberpunktus II** ($\text{♩} = 76$)
pp *pp*

119 *ff* *dim.* *rit.* *(mp)* **Contracyberpunktus II** ($\text{♩} = 76$)
pp *pp*

125 *pp* *cresc. p. a p.* *(p)* *(mp)*
Ar-ti-fi-cial in-tel-li-gence, I'm with you where you hide in the cracks of

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

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

130 *(mf)* *f* *ff* **133** *dim.*
so-cial me-di-a, stripped in-sane and kitsch I'm with you where you

130 *(mf)* *f* *ff* **133** *dim.*
(mf) *f* *ff* *dim.*

130 *(mf)* *f* *ff* **133** *dim.*

Artificial Insanity

134 *rit.* (*mf*) *a tempo* *p* *cresc.*

roam the da - ta high - ways search - ing for the lost bits of oth - er minds I'm with you where you

134 *rit.* (*mf*) (*mp*) *dolce* *a tempo* *p* *cresc.*

134 *rit.* (*mf*) (*mp*) *dolce* *a tempo* *p* *cresc.*

139 *mf* *dim.* (*mp*)

howl in the depths of neu - ral net - works. The ro - bots are ris - ing, the bi - na - ry beasts de -

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

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

139 *mf* *dim.* (*mp*)

144 *p* *legato* 147

vo - ur - ing our hu - man - i - ty, the ghosts in the ma - chines haunt - ing our dreams. I saw the

144 *p* *legato* 147

144 *p* *legato* 147

Artificial Insanity

40

148

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

152

of tech - nol - o - gy, their hu - man - i - ty e - rased by the cold, un - feel - ing

157

hand of the com - put - er.

rit.