

STRANGE SONGS

for Baritone, SATB Chorus,
and Piano Quintet

1979—Sept. 9, 2010; March 19–April 19, 2012
Arranged for Piano Quintet Feb. 15—March 11, 2024
Corrected to January 14, 2026
Duration: 19 minutes

This is a collection of four vocal works; these are much expanded from original chamber versions during the summer of 2010 and spring of 2012, then revised in 2024.

In 2004, as I was about to graduate with a BS in physics from NCSU, I wrote an odd little poem called *I'm a Physicist and That's Just Fine*. Not long after, I set it for baritone and piano. The arrangement here is much longer and more complex than the original song.

I attended a macrobiotic meeting in Boston in 1979 where there was to be an entertainment at the end given by attendees. I quickly wrote *Little Miss Nonfat* as a composition that anyone who could read music could perform; it was for spoken chorus in four parts. However, my search for performers was in vain. This version is far longer and more involved than the very simple original, which was under two minutes long.

Until February 2015, *Strange Songs* included *Der Jammerwock*, a setting of Robert Scott's 1872 translation of *Jabberwocky* into German. That is now withdrawn.

Math Class: or, Does the Zero Have Buddha-Nature™? started off in 1982 as a companion spoken chorus piece to *Little Miss Nonfat*, also in four parts, written after a year as a physics and math major at North

Texas State University. It also is much expanded in this version for chorus and orchestra. I added this to the first edition in 2012.

In the summer of 2003, I was doing physics at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and decided to write a satirical song about the decades of rejection I had suffered from musicians. Thus, I dedicated *What I Hear After Submitting A Score* to the many musicians who gave me so much material from 1984 through 2005 by turning down my music because it was too easy, too hard, too long, too brief, too classical, too popular, too modern, too old-fashioned, too secular, too religious, too fast, too slow, too serious, too humorous, they're busy playing something else, or in short, *because I wouldn't give them money*. Thankfully, since 2006 things are much better and I have found some wonderful performers.

Strange Songs as completed in 2012 is for either full orchestra or two pianos, baritone and SATBariB chorus. Neither was performed by 2024. I made this version for piano quintet, baritone, and SATB chorus (one singer on a part) in preparation for a concert in January 2025 marking my 70th birthday, and finally bring this music to the stage and have a recording.

Commissioned *inscientibus, ex post facto, sub rosa* by
Stephen Reynolds and Susan Osborne, July 2020

Bill Robinson

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Cover photo by Lon Cooper, 1975, of me in front of the NTSU library