

Protest Poems

for Narrator, Violin, Clarinet, Cello, and Piano

Violin

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.* (The concert had to be delayed a year.) 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 Ukranian 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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Bill Robinson

lyrics: Bill Robinson

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

I. Pity the Party [4:15]

[illegible]

28

whose *f* sag - es are purged, and whose big - ots dom - i - nate the me - di - a.

28

f

31

Pit - y the par - ty that *mf* prais - es *f* dic - ta - tors *ff* and ac -

31

34

mf cresc. *f* *ff*

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

37

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

37

37

(817)-----

cres

53

54

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

54

57

sick while ty - coons get what they

57

60

want.

60

mp Pit - y the par - ty that speaks one lan - guage,

62

mp

ff dim. *(mf)* *mp* *62* *mp*

64

and de - mands pu - ri - ty — of blood and soil for the

64

mp

67

Ar - y - an race.

67

ff

ff

70

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

mp *ff*

70

mp

74

washed a - way by ha - tred and fear and lies and old - time re -

74

74

77

li - gion. *pp* My coun - try, tears of thee, once —

77

ff *pp* 80

77

82

land of lib - er - ty.

82

rit.

82

rit. *8va*

82

II. Father Stalin, Look at This [5']

Ukrainian children's song, 1933

Narrator

Holodomoderato (♩.=68)

Violin

pp *p*

Clarinet in B♭

pp *p*

Cello

p

Piano

Holodomoderato (♩.=68)

p

7

7

p

Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this Col -

11

lec - tive farm - ing is such bliss The hut's in ru - ins, the barn's all sagged

11

mp

p

The musical score is written for five parts: Narrator, Violin, Clarinet in B♭, Cello, and Piano. The tempo is marked 'Holodomoderato' with a quarter note equal to 68 beats per minute. The key signature has one flat (B♭ major or D minor). The time signature is 12/8. The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-6) features the Violin, Clarinet, and Cello with dynamics *pp* and *p*. The Piano part enters in measure 5 with a *p* dynamic. The second system (measures 7-10) includes vocal lines for the Narrator and Violin. The Narrator's line starts with 'Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this' and 'Col -'. The Violin part continues with a melodic line. The Piano part continues with a rhythmic accompaniment. The third system (measures 11-14) includes vocal lines for the Narrator and Violin. The Narrator's line starts with 'lec - tive farm - ing is such bliss' and 'The hut's in ru - ins, the barn's all sagged'. The Violin part continues with a melodic line. The Piano part continues with a rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamics include *pp*, *p*, *mp*, and *p*.

15 *mp* All the hors-es bro-ken nags *mf* And on the hut *mf* *mp* a ham-mer and sick-le—

15 *mp* *mf* *mp* *p*

19 *mp* And in the hut *mf* death *f* and *f* fam-ine 12

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

23 12 6 9 23 *f* *f* *f*

27

f Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this

f dim. p

f dim. p

mp p

32

p No cows left, no pigs at all Just your pic - ture on the wall

p cresc. p cresc. p cresc. cresc.

35

mf dim. pp p

mf dim. pp p

mf dim. pp p

Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this

38

Dad - dy and Mom - my are in the

38

41

grave

The poor child cries

41

p cresc. *(mf)* *f*

p cresc. *(mf)* *f*

p cresc. *(mf)* *f*

41

mp *mf* *f*

45

as a - lone he goes

45

rit. *a tempo* *f* *dim.* *(mp)*

45

rit. *a tempo*

g^{na}

Father Stalin, Look at This

12

p Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this

50

p *cresc.* *mp*

p *cresc.* *mp*

p *cresc.* *mp*

50

p *cresc.* *(mp)*

gtr

53 *mf* *cresc.* There's no bread and there's no fat The *f* *dim.* par - ty's end - ed all of that *mp*

53

53 *legato* *(mf)* *f* *dim.*

55 *p* Seek not the gen - tle nor the mild *mp*

55

p *cresc.* *mp*

p *cresc.* *mp*

p *cresc.*

55

(mp) *p* *cresc.*

58

58

mf *cresc.* *f*

A fa - ther

61

61

has eat - en his own child

f dim.

64

64

Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at

mp *p cresc.* *mp*

66

Father Stalin, Look at This

14 67

mf
this

f
The

par - ty man he beats and

67

mf

f

67

mf

f

69

stamps

beats and stamps

69

cresc.

ff

f *cresc.*

ff

69

cresc.

ff

71

beats and stamps

And

sends us to Si - be - ri - an

71

71

74

camps

74

Coda (♩=56)

ff *p*

74

Coda (♩=56)

79

79

p *mp* *f* *ff*

79

85

pp

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

85

87

p *pp*

85

87

pp

The musical score is for a piece titled "Allegro apocalypso" with a tempo of quarter note = 76. It is arranged for five instruments: Narrator, Violin, Clarinet in B $\flat$, Cello, and Piano. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes staves for the Narrator, Violin, Clarinet in B $\flat$, and Cello. The second system includes staves for the Piano and continues the Narrator part. The tempo is marked as "Allegro apocalypso" with a quarter note equal to 76 beats. The key signature is one flat (B $\flat$). The time signature is 3/4. The score includes various musical notations such as rests, notes, beams, and dynamic markings like *mp*, *cresc.*, *mf*, and *f*. The Piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed sixteenth notes. The Narrator part consists of a series of rests followed by a single note in the final measure of the first system.

[illegible][illegible]

11 *cresc.* *(mf)* *f*
break the sod," said our God, "The world is here for you to own. Go forth and spread your fruit - ful sons; Sub-

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

11 *cresc.* *(mf)* *f*

17 due the beasts and dam the streams, Cut the trees and pave the streets, Burn the dead from

17

17

22 e - ons past To feed the flames and turn the wheels. Make war for gold and kill for me. O -

22

22

27 *f*

bey your lead - ers and your priests Whom I have fa - vored with my grace. Al - ways more, and

27 31 *f*

32 *ff*

al - ways fas - ter; Mine the ore and crush the stone. Do this well, and I will teach you all a

32 *ff*

37 *pp*

migh - ty les - son." What our God said we longed to hear. We

37 39 *pp*

42 *p* slew our Mo-ther and *mp* sucked the mar-row from her bones.

42 *p* *mp*

42 *p* *mp*

42 *p* *mp*

45

mf

The grow - ing mob may come to dine, The

45

mf

mp

mf

mp

45

mf

mp

48

grow - ing mob may come to dine, To night there is e - nough to eat.

48

pp

For - get to - mor - row, we live but once; We drill but once, we

53 Con sord.

53

burn but once, we mine but once. The fish - ing's good, un til there's none.

57

57

To - night there is e - nough to eat.

62

62

Narrator

Violante con fuoco (♩ = 80)

Violin

Clarinet in B $\flat$

Cello

Piano

Anonymous poem

5

5

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

9

9

mf *f* *mp*

The day af-ter Aa - ron Bush - nell

11

11

The Birds

22 13

set him self on fire, I go out for an ear-ly morn-ing

13

mf

mf

mf

17

walk, wrapped in air far too warm for late Feb-ru-ar-y

17

20

in the Mid-west a heat wave. False Spring has brought

20

24 *cresc.* Na - ture roar - ing back to life. *f* I want to *ff* shake eve - ry per - son I

24 *cresc.* *f* *ff*

24 *cresc.* *f* *ff*

24 *cresc.* *f* *ff*

25

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

27 *ff*

27

30 Did you see a man

30 *legato* *ff*

24 ³²

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

32

pp

35

p I would ask, if on - ly I could count on a re sponse that is - n't

36

mf *f*

35

pp *p* *mf* *f*

35

p legato *mf* *f*

39

p dead-eyed. But I

39

p *p*

39

p

42

know I'd have bet - ter luck with the birds.

42

42

44

But I know I'd have

44

45

ff

p

44

46

bet - ter luck with the birds, ev - er

46

mf

dim.

46

The Birds

26 49

49

cu - ri - ous, car - di - nals hop - ping from branch to branch like

(mf) *p*

49

(mf) *p*

49

(mf) *p*

49

(mf) *p*

52

fi - re - balls. Or mis - siles. I'd tell them, some of us love you

52

52

52

52

56

so much we'd die for you. For a sin - gle snip - pet of bird - song. For a

56

dolce

56

dolce

56

dolce

56

dolce

The Birds

pp 27

60

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

60

pp

pp

pp

8m

[illegible][illegible]

The Birds

28 74

74

p a long, mourn - ful whis - tle from a -

p

p

p

74

p

p

p

77

bove. The sun is blaz - ing too bright to make out more than a

rit.

77

rit.

77

rit.

80

sil - hou - ette tak - ing off, ris - ing slow and then

mp *mf* *mf*

80 Coda (♩ = 66)

p cresc. *(mf)*

p cresc. *(mf)*

p cresc. *(mf)*

80 Coda (♩ = 66)

p cresc. *legato* *(mf)*

83 *f* fast like *mp* *p* smoke.

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

85 *pp* *molto rit.*

85 *pp* *molto rit.*

88 *a tempo*

88 *a tempo* *a* *pp*

Contracyberpunktus I

mp *cresc. p. a p.*

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

mp *cresc. p. a p.*

Violin

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

Clarinet in B $\flat$

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

Cello

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

Contracyberpunktus I ($\text{♩} = 88$)

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

Piano

6 (*mf*) 3 *f* *ff*

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

(mf) *f* *ff*

6

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

ff dim. *(mf)* *mp*

ff dim. *(mf)* *mp*

11 *8^{va}* *mp*

mp

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

16

mp

16

20

sat-el-lite serv-er in the ma-chin-er-y of night,

p *rit.* $(\text{♩} = 76)$ *pp* *cresc. p. a p.*

who sed-en-tar-y

dim. *(p)* *pp* *pp cresc. p. a p.*

20

dim. *(p)* *pp* *cresc. p. a p.*

Contracyberpunktus II $(\text{♩} = 76)$

26

and hol-low-eyed and high sat up drink-ing a - ya-huas-ca in the su - per - nat - u - ral dark-ness

(p) *(mp)* *(mf)* *f*

(p) *(mp)* *(mf)* *f*

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

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

26

(p) *(mp)* *(mf)* *f*

36

p con - tem - plat - ing the mad - ness of *cresc. p. a p.* lust - ing for Mar - i - lyn Mon - *(mp)* ro - bot Mar - i - lyn Mon - *(mf)* ro - bot,

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

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

[illegible]

p moon, *mp* who passed un - di - gest ed through u - ni - ver - si - ties *mp+* with

44 *a tempo*

mp *cresc. p. a p.*

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

a tempo *cresc. p. a p.*

48 *cresc. p. a p.* ra-di-ant dis-tance learn-ing *(mf)* eyes hal-lu-ci-nat-ing *f* tech-no-bab-ble and the spir-it of

(mf) *f*

(mf) *f*

(mf) *f*

52 *ff* Al-an Tur-ing, *ff* who were ex-pelled from the a-cad-e-mies for

ff *ff*

ff *ff*

55

cra - zy ob - scene codes on the Mi - cro - soft Win - dows of the soul,

ff dim. *mp*

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

ff dim. *(mf)* *mp*

55

ff dim. *(mf)* *mp*

59

who lurked in un - spo - ken chat rooms

mp+ cresc. *(mf)*

p *mf cresc.*

mp cresc. *mf*

59

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

62

blee - ding hours through the screen - lit night yearn - ing

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

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

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

62

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

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

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

67 *ff*

69 or drank tur - pen - tine in cor - po - rate caf - e - te - ri - as, who chained them - selves to

f *dim. p. a p.* *(mf)*

f *dim. p. a p.* *(mf)*

69 *f* *dim. p. a p.* *(mf)*

72 rout - ers to mine for im - ag - i - nar - y mon - ey, who dis - ap - peared in - to

(mp) *(mp)* *(mp)*

72 *(mp)*

75

p no - where Zen New Jer - sey *pp* leav - ing noth - ing but the shad - ows of their

p *pp*

75

p *pp*

80

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

81

ff

80

81

ff

84

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

84

88 *ff* *mf* *mp*

feet on Mar - tha's Vin - yard, who walked all night with shoes full of blood on the

89 *ff* *mf* *mp*



92 *cresc.* *f*

snow - bank docks mis - led by glob - al po - si - tion - ing, who lit end - less joints for their

92 *cresc.* *f*



96 *ff*

linked - in brain cells float - ing a - cross the tops of cit - ies

96 *ff*



cel - e - bra - ting the end of or - gan - ic life, who tuned in to te - le - van - gel - ists, and

101

reached be - hind that T - V set to FEEL the POW - ER. What

103

non stacc.

pizz.

p

sphinx of in - te - grat - ed cir - cuit - ry bashed o - pen their skulls and ate up their hu - man - i - ty?

107

arco

p

p cresc.

p cresc.

arco

p cresc.

116

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

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

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

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

116

119 *rit.* *ff* *dim.* *mp* *p* *pp*

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

119 *rit.* *ff* *dim.* *mp* *p* *pp*

Contracyberpunktus II (♩ = 76)

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

Ar - ti - fi - cial in tel - li - gence, I'm with you where you hide in the cracks of so - cial me - di - a, stripped in - sane and

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

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

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

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

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

133 *rit.* *a tempo dolce* *p*

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

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

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

133 *rit.* *a tempo dolce* *p*

137 *cresc.* (*mf*) (*dim.*) (*mp*) (*p*)

minds I'm with you where you howl in the depth of neu - ral net - works the ro - bots are ris - ing, the bi - na - ry beasts de -

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

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

137 *legato* (*mf*) (*dim.*) (*mp*) (*p*)

144 *p* vo-ur-ing our hu-man-i-ty, the ghosts in the ma-chines haunt-ing our dreams. I saw the best minds of our time de-stroyed by

147



150 mad-ness, and now they wan-der through the waste-land of tech-nol-o-gy, their hu-man-i-ty e-rased

150



155 *pp* by the cold, un-feel-ing hand of the com-puter. *rit.*

155

