

Robinsongs

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

A perfectly sane tempo (♩ = 60)

5
 5
 8
 8

p
p
p
p
mp
mp
mp
mf
mf
mf

8^{va}-----
 8^{va}-----
 8^{va}-----
 8^{va}-----

*
 *
 *
 *

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12

mp

mp

mp

mp

mp

17

p

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

p

p

8vb

19

mp

mf

looked a - gain, and found it was A let - ter from his wife. "At length I re - a - lize," he said, "The

mp

mf

8vb

21

bit - ter - ness of life."

f

f

f

(8^{vb})

23

ff

ff

ff

25

p

He

ff

p

p

legato

ff

mp

p

legato

ff

ff

5

28 *cresc. p. a p.* *(mp)*
 thought he saw a Buf - fa - lo Up - on the chim - ney - piece: He

28 *cresc. p. a p.* *(mp)*
Leo. *Leo.*

30 *(mf)*
 looked a - gain, and found it was His Sis - ter's Hus - band's Niece. "Un -

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

30 *(mf)*
Leo. *Leo.* *Leo.*

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

f *f* *f*
Leo. *Leo.* *

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)*

6 6 6 6

40 *f*

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

f *f*

40 *f*

3 3 3 3

42

Greek:

44

46

cresc. *ff*

He looked a - gain, and found it was The Mid - dle of Next Week.

cresc. *ff*

cresc. *ff*

Red. *

The musical score is written for voice and piano. The vocal line begins at measure 42 with the word 'Greek:'. The piano accompaniment features intricate triplet patterns in both hands. At measure 46, the vocal line enters with the lyrics 'He looked a - gain, and found it was The Mid - dle of Next Week.' The piano part continues with complex rhythmic figures. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'cresc.' and 'ff'. The piece concludes with a 'Red.' (Reduction) and an asterisk.

49

mf *mp*

3 6

53

mp *cresc. p. a p.*

"The one thing I re -

cresc. p. a p.

53

cresc. p. a p.

6

55

(mf)

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

(mf)

55

(mf)

*And. And. And. **

57 *f*
speak!"

57 *f* *ff*

59

59 *f* *ff* 8va

62 *mp*
He

62 *p* *mp* 8va

This musical score is for the film 'The Elephant' by John Williams. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The score is divided into three systems, each with a vocal staff, a piano staff, and a grand staff (treble and bass clef).

System 1 (Measures 65-66): The vocal line begins with the lyrics "thought he saw a Ban - ker's Clerk De - scen - ding from the 'bus: He". The piano accompaniment features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with a *mp* (mezzo-piano) dynamic marking.

System 2 (Measures 67-70): The vocal line continues with "looked a - gain, and found it was A Hip - po - pot - a - mus." The piano accompaniment includes a *f* (forte) dynamic marking and a *p* (piano) dynamic marking. The grand staff shows a complex melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with a *Leo.* (Lion) marking.

System 3 (Measures 71-74): The vocal line is silent, and the piano accompaniment continues with a *p* (piano) dynamic marking. The grand staff shows a complex melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with a *Leo.* (Lion) marking.

74 *mf* "If this should stay to

mp *mf*

74 *mp* *mf* 8va

77 *f* *ff* dine," he said, "There won't be much for

f *ff*

77 *ff* 8va

79 *usi''* *pp* *pp* *p* 8va

Allegro academia (♩ = 120)

Voice

Flute

Clarinet in B♭

Piano

mp

Allegro academia (♩ = 120)

mp

legato

f

I give you now Pro-fes - sor

f

f

Red.

20

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

20

22

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

22

24

bun - gles!" And

24

The musical score is written for a voice and piano. The voice part is in the upper staves, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staves. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 12/8. The score is divided into four systems. The first system (measures 20-21) features the voice line starting with 'Twist,' followed by a long note, then 'A con - sci - en - tious sci - en -'. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving lines. The second system (measures 22-23) continues the voice line with 'tist, Trus - tees ex - claimed, "He ne - ver'. The piano accompaniment includes a wavy line in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The third system (measures 24-25) shows the voice line with 'bun - gles!"' followed by a long rest, then 'And'. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and moving lines. The fourth system (measures 26-27) shows the piano accompaniment continuing with chords and moving lines. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings like 'f' (forte).

27

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



31

f *p*

f *p* *legato*

Red. *



35

f **Camped**

f



38

on a tro - pic ri - ver - side, One day he missed his lov - ing

f

f

Reo.

41

bride. She had, the guide in-formed him la - ter, Been

f

Reo.

Reo.

*

44

eat - en by an al - li - ga - tor.

ff

ff

ff *dim. p. a p.*

ff *dim. p. a p.*

ff *dim. p. a p.*

Reo.

This musical score page contains measures 47 through 53. It features three systems of staves, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part is written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).

Measure 47: The vocal line is silent. The piano accompaniment begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The right hand plays a series of eighth notes, while the left hand plays a bass line with some rests. Dynamics change to mezzo-forte (*mf*) in the second half of the measure.

Measure 49: The vocal line is silent. The piano accompaniment continues with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with some ties, and the left hand continues the bass line. Dynamics change to piano (*p*) in the second half of the measure.

Measure 53: The vocal line is silent. The piano accompaniment continues with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line, and the left hand continues the bass line. Dynamics change to piano (*p*) in the second half of the measure.

Rehearsal marks (Reo.) are placed below the piano part at the beginning of measures 47, 49, and 53. A multi-measure rest for 3 measures is indicated at the end of measure 53 in the piano part.

59

mp

mp

67

mp

70

f

Pro - fes - sor Twist could not but

f

73

ff *f*

smile but smile but smile but smile but smile but

f *ff* *f*

73

f

76 *rit.* *a tempo*

smile but smile. "You

mf *mp* *p*

76 *rit.* *a tempo*

mf *mp* *p*

79

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

p

79

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♭

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. *

Rec. *

8

f

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

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

12

f

The musical score for the vocal and piano parts of the song "In my". The vocal part is written in a single staff with a treble clef. The piano part is written in two staves, treble and bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked "Allegretto". The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *p* (piano). The vocal part has lyrics "In my" under the final notes. The piano part features complex chordal textures and melodic lines, including a section marked "Rea." and a final asterisk symbol.

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

20

21

22

Father William

21

21

now that I'm per - fect - ly sure I have none, Why, I do it a - gain and a - gain. Why, I

ff

ff

21

ff

23

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

23

Reo. Reo. Reo. sim.

25

do it a - gain and a - gain."

ff

25

ff

* 26

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* *mf*

Red. *

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

f *p* *f* *p* *f*

Red. *

35

door

36

Pray what is the rea - son of

38

that?"

mf

40

p

p

40

p

43

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

"In my youth," said the sage, as he shook his grey locks, "I

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

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

43

cresc. p. a p.

Leo. *

46

(mf)

kept all my limbs ve - ry sup - ple By the

(mf)

(mf)

46

(mf)

[illegible]

The image displays a musical score for the song "The Rose Tree". It consists of three systems of staves. The first system includes a vocal line (soprano) and two piano accompaniment staves (treble and bass). The second system continues the vocal and piano parts. The third system features a grand staff (treble and bass clef) for the piano accompaniment. The music is written in 3/4 time and includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *mp* and *p*. The lyrics "The Rose Tree" are written below the vocal line.

54 *mf*

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

p

54 *mf*

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

p *mp*

61

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

f

63

And the muscular strength, which it gave to my

ff

f

ff

63

ff

63

jaw, Has las - ted the rest of my

65

Teo. Teo. Teo. *

[illegible]

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

73

77

Yet you ba-lanced an eel on the end of your nose - What

pp

77

80

made you so aw-ful-ly cle-ver?"

pp

80

83

83

f

ff

84

84

ff

ff

86

86

ff

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

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!"

f *mp* *pp*

ff *f* *mp* *pp*

f, *mp*, and *pp*. The left hand (bass clef) also builds, marked with *ff*, *f*, *mp*, and *pp*. The system ends with a double bar line. The key signature and time signature remain the same."/>