

Protest Poems

for Narrator, Violin, Clarinet, Cello, and Piano

Violoncello

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

Cello part for
electronic music readers

Protest Poems

Bill Robinson

I. Pity the Party [4:15]

lyrics: Bill Robinson
(after L. Ferlinghetti (after K. Gibran))

Narrator **Fascismo** (♩ = 76) **mf**
Pit - y the par - ty whose

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

Clarinet in Bb *p* *mp* *mf*

Cello **Fascismo** (♩ = 76) *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*

5 *f* *cresc.* *ff* RH

9 *ff* Pit - y the par - ty in *ff* thrall to a crim - i - nal mes -

9 *ff* *ff*

9 *ff* *ff*

Pity the Party

2

14

si - ah, a crim-i-nal mes - si - ah, with prayers for the end of the world.

p

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

p *mp*

20

f

f

20

f *pizz.* *p*

20

f *p*

25

mp

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

mp *cresc.*

25

arco

mp *cresc.*

25

mp *cresc.*

29

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

f

f

f

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

29

f

p *cresc.* *(mp)*

34

mf Pit - y the par - ty that *f* prais - es *f+* dic - ta - tors *ff* and ac - claims the bul - ly as he - ro, and aims to

mf *cresc.* *f* *ff*

34

(mf) *f* *ff*

34

(mf) *f* *ff*

39

dom-i-nate the world by force and tor-ture in the name of free-dom.

pp

39

pp

39

pp

Pity the Party

4

45 *pp* 46 Pit - y the par - ty whose Gods are Mon - ey and Guns, and sleeps the sleep of op - i - oids.

50 *cresc.* *mf*

50 *cresc.* *mf*

50 *legato* *cresc.* *mf*

52 *ff* 53 *ff* Pit - y the par - ty that feeds on the poor and sick the

52 *f* 53 *ff*

52 *f* 53 *ff*

56

poor and sick the poor and sick while

59

ty - coons get what they want.

ff dim.

61

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

mp

62

(mf)

mp

Pity the Party

6

64

and de - mands pu - ri - ty of blood

mp

66

and soil for the Ar - y - an race.

$\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$

69

70

ff Pit - y the par - ty, oh pit - y the

69 70

ff *mp* *ff*

72

peo - ple who al - low their rights to e - rode and their free - doms to be washed a - way by ha - tred and

75

fear and lies and old - time re - li - gion.

75

ff *pp*

80

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

80

pp *rit.* *rit.*

Ukrainian children's song, 1933

Holododerato (♩.=68)

Narrator

Violin

Clarinet in B \flat

Holododerato (♩.=68)

Cello

Piano

6

6

6

6

p

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

11

11

11

11

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

Father Stalin, Look at This

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

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

14 *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* *cresc.* *(mp)* *(mf)*

18 *p*

22 fam - ine

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

22 *f*

22 *f*

Father Stalin, Look at This

10 ²⁷

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

27

27

f *dim.* *p*

27

mp *p*

33

Just your pic - ture on the wall

p *cresc.* *mf dim.* *pp*

33

p *cresc.* *mf dim.* *pp*

33

p *cresc.* *mf dim.* *pp*

33

cresc. *mf dim.* *pp*

37

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

p

37

37

p

40

in the grave The

p cresc. *(mf)*

40

p cresc. *(mf)*

40

p cresc. *(mf)*

40

mp

43

poor child cries as a - lone he goes

f *rit.* *a tempo*

43

f *rit.* *a tempo*

43

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

48

50

Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this

p *p cresc.* *cresc.*

48

50

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

48

p *cresc.*

Father Stalin, Look at This

12 52

mf cresc.

There's no bread and there's no fat The

mp

52

mp

legato

mf

54 *f dim.* *mp*

par - ty's end - ed all of that

54

f dim. *(mp)*

56 *p* *mp*

Seek not the gen - tle nor the mild

p cresc. *mp* *mf*

56

p cresc. *(mp)*

p cresc. *(mp)*

p *cresc.* *(mp)*

Father Stalin, Look at This

59

f A fa - ther has eat - en

cresc.

mf

f

59

mf

f

62

his own child

f dim.

mp

p cresc.

62

f dim.

mp

p cresc.

62

f dim.

mp

p cresc.

66 *mp* Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at

mf this

f The

par - ty man he beats and

66

mp

mf

f

66

mp

mf

f

Father Stalin, Look at This

14 69

69
stamps
beats and stamps
cresc.
ff
ff
ff
ff
ff
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 second and third staves are treble clef instruments, with the second staff marked 'cresc.' and 'ff'. The fourth staff is the bass clef line, marked 'f cresc.' and 'ff'. The fifth and sixth staves are the piano accompaniment, with the fifth staff marked 'cresc.' and 'ff'. The time signature is 12/8.

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

Detailed description: This system covers measures 71, 72, and 73. The top staff is the vocal line with lyrics 'beats and stamps' and 'And sends us to Si - be - ri - an'. The second and third staves are treble clef instruments. The fourth staff is the bass clef line, marked 'ff'. The fifth and sixth staves are the piano accompaniment. The time signature is 12/8.

74
camps
Coda (♩.=56)
74
Coda (♩.=56)
74
Coda (♩.=56)

Detailed description: This system covers measures 74, 75, and 76. The top staff is the vocal line with lyrics 'camps'. The second and third staves are treble clef instruments. The fourth staff is the bass clef line, marked 'ff'. The fifth and sixth staves are the piano accompaniment. The time signature is 12/8. The section concludes with a Coda in 6/8 time, marked 'Coda (♩.=56)'.

79

79

p *mp* *f* *ff*

84

87 *pp*

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

84

87

p *pp*

p *pp*

84

87 *pp*

90

is such bliss

90

18 dam the streams, Cut the trees and pave the streets, Burn the dead from e - ons past To feed the flames and

24 turn the wheels. Make war for gold and kill for me. O - bey your lead - ers and your priests Whom I have fa - vored

30 with my grace. **31** *f* Al - ways more, and *ff* al - ways fas - ter; Mine the ore and crush the stone. Do this well, and

36 I will teach you all a migh-ty les-son." 39 *pp* What our God said we longed to hear. We

ff *pp*

42 *p* slew our Mo-ther and *mp* sucked the mar-row *mf* from her bones. The *mp* grow-ing mob may come to dine, The

p *mp* *mf* *mp*

48 grow-ing mob may come to dine, 53 *pp* To night there is e-nough to eat. For -

Con sord.

53 Con sord.

pp *pp*

54

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

54

58

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

58

64

To - night there is e - nough to eat.

64

Anonymous poem

Volante con fuoco (♩ = 80)

Narrator

Violin

Clarinet in B \flat

Volante con fuoco (♩ = 80)

Cello

pp *p*

Piano

pp *p*

5

8

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

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

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

mp

The

11

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

11

11

15

fire, I go out for an ear - ly morn - ing walk,

mf

15

mf

15

18

wrapped in air far too warm for late Feb - ru - ar - y in the Mid - west a

18

18

The Birds

22 22

heat wave. False Spring has brought Na - ture roar - ing back to

cresc.
cresc.
cresc.

life. I want to shake eve-ry per-son I stroll past. "Did you know there's a gen-o-cide hap-pen-ing? Did you

25

f *ff*
f *ff*
f *ff*
legato
ff

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

31

31

The Birds

34 *p* I would ask, if

34 *pp* *p*

34 *pp* *p* *legato*

37 on - ly I could count on a re - sponse that is - n't

mf *f*

37 *mf* *f*

39 *p* dead - eyed.

39 *p*

The Birds

24 41

41

But I know I'd have bet - ter luck with the

41

41

41

Detailed description: This system contains measures 41 and 42. The vocal line starts with a 3/4 time signature and changes to 4/4 at measure 42. The lyrics are "But I know I'd have bet - ter luck with the". The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed sixteenth notes. A fermata is placed over the piano part at the end of measure 42.

43

birds. But I

43

43

43

Detailed description: This system contains measures 43 and 44. The vocal line begins with the word "birds." in measure 43 and "But I" in measure 44. The piano part includes dynamic markings: *p* (piano) and *ff* (fortissimo). There are also triplets of eighth notes in the piano part. A fermata is present at the end of measure 44.

45

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

45

45

45

Detailed description: This system contains measures 45 and 46. The vocal line continues with "know I'd have bet - ter luck with the birds,". The piano accompaniment is highly rhythmic, featuring many beamed sixteenth notes. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 2/4 at the start of measure 46. A fermata is placed at the end of measure 46.

The Birds

48 *mf* ev - er cu - ri - ous, *p* car - di - nals hop - ping from

51 branch to branch like fi - re - balls. Or mis - siles. I'd tell them,

51 *be*

55 some of us love you so much we'd die for you. For a sin - gle snip - pet of

55 *dolce*

The Birds

26 59

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

59

p

clear light. For a tree for you to perch in a-mong the rub-ble. He shout-ed FREE PAL-ES-TINE

63

pp *fff*

63 68

pp *fff*

FREE PAL-ES-TINE FREE PAL-ES-TINE un - til he choked on the flames. The call - back:

69

f *mf* *p* *f*

The Birds

74 *p* a long, mourn - ful whis - tle from a bove. The

74 *p*

74 *p*

74 *p*

78 *rit.* sun is blaz - ing too bright to make out more than a sil - hou - ette tak - ing

Coda (♩ = 66)

78 *rit.*

Coda (♩ = 66)

78 *rit.*

Coda (♩ = 66)

p

81 *p* off, *mp* ris - ing *mf* slow *mf* and then

p *cresc.* *(mf)*

p *cresc.* *(mf)*

81 *p* *cresc.* *(mf)* 3

81 *p* *cresc.* *legato* *(mf)*

The Birds

28 83

Musical score for measures 83-84. The vocal line includes the lyrics "fast like smoke." with dynamic markings *f*, *mp*, and *p*. The piano accompaniment features dynamic markings *f*, *mf*, *mp*, and *p*. A triplet of eighth notes is marked in the piano part at measure 84.

85

Musical score for measures 85-86. The piano accompaniment is marked *pp* (pianissimo) throughout. The vocal line is silent in these measures.

87

Musical score for measures 87-90. The tempo changes from *molto rit.* (marked with a dashed line) to *a tempo* at measure 88. The piano part includes dynamic markings *mf*, *pp*, and *ppp*. The vocal line is silent in these measures.

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: (♩ = 88) *p* *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

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

6 (*mf*) vid-e-o games, bloat-ed hys-ter-i-cal goth-ic, drag-ging them-selves through

6 (*mf*)

6 (*mf*)

6 (*mf*)

10 *ff* sim-u-lat-ed streets at dawn look-ing for an an-gry mi-cro-dose,

10 *ff* *ff dim.*

10 *ff* *ff dim.*

10 *ff* *ff dim.*

Artificial Insanity

30 14

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

14 *(mf)* *mp* *mp* *mp*

14 *(mf)* *mp* *mp* *mp*

19 nec-tion to the sat-el-lite serv-er in the ma-chin-er-y of night,

19 *dim.* *p* *rit.* *pp*

19 *dim.* *p* *rit.* *pp*

19 *dim.* *p* *rit.*

24 *(♩ = 76)* *pp* *cresc. p. a p.* *(p)* *(mp)* who sed-en-tar-y and hol-low-eyed and high sat up drink-ing

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

24 *(♩ = 76)* *pp* *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

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

Contracyberpunktus II

Artificial Insanity

29 *(mf)* a - ya - huas - ca in the *f* su - per - nat - u - ral dark - ness *ff* of pent - house flats *molto rit.* ----- 31

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

(mf) *f* *ff* *dim.* *(mf)* *molto rit.*

(mf) *f* *ff* *dim.* *(mf)* *molto rit.*

34 ----- *Contracyberpunktus I* (♩ = 88) *p* con - tem - plat - ing the mad - ness of *cresc. p. a p.* lust - ing for Mar - i - lyn Mon -

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

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

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

Contracyberpunktus I (♩ = 88)

39 *(mp)* ro - bot Mar - i - lyn Mon - *(mf)* ro - bot, *f* who bared their brains to *ff* da - ta min - ers

(mp) *(mf)* *f* *ff*

(mp) *(mf)* *f* *ff*

mp *mf*

(mp) *(mf)* *f* *ff*

Artificial Insanity

32 43 *rit.* *mf* *mp* *a tempo* *p* *mp* *mp.*
un - der the Sil - i - con Val - ley moon, who passed un - di - gest - ed through u - ni - ver - si - ties with
cresc. p. a p.

43 *rit.* *a tempo* *p* *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

43 *rit.* *mf* *mp* *a tempo* *p* *mp* *cresc. p. a p.*

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

48 *mf* *f*

48 *mf* *f*

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

52 *ff*

52 *ff*

Artificial Insanity

55 *ff dim.* cra - zy ob - scene codes on the Mi - cro - soft Win - dows *mp* of the soul, *mf* *mp*

59 *mp* who lurked in un - spo - ken chat rooms *cresc.* *mf* *mp* *cresc.* *mf*

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

Artificial Insanity

34 65 *rit.* *pp* for their mo - ther-board's love, *67 a tempo* *ff* who ate fire in tech labs

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

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

Artificial Insanity

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

80 smart phones, **81** *ff* who stud - ied Ayn Rand A - leis - ter Crow - ley cy - ber -

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

Artificial Insanity

36 88

89 *ff* *mf*

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

88 *ff* *mf*

88 *ff* *mf*

88 *ff* *mf*

91 *mp*

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

91 *mp*

91 *mp*

91 *mp*

94 *cresc.* *f* *ff*

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

94 *cresc.* *f* *ff*

94 *cresc.* *f* *ff*

94 *cresc.* *f* *ff*

Artificial Insanity

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

100 gan-ic life, who tuned in to te-levan-gel-ists, and

101

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

non stacc. pizz. p

103

Artificial Insanity

38 107

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

arco

p

107

107

p

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

p *cresc.*

p *cresc.*

110 arco **III** *ff*

p *cresc.*

110 *p* *cresc.*

ff

III

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

ff Mad dead au - tom - a - tons

ff Mad dead au - tom - a - tons

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

113

Artificial Insanity

rit.

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

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!

ff dim. rit.

120

Mad dead au - tom - a - tons of Sil - i - con Val - ley. Ar - ti - fi - cial in -

120

Contracyberpunktus II (♩ = 76)

120

Contracyberpunktus II (♩ = 76)

120

Contracyberpunktus II (♩ = 76)

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

127

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

127

127

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

Artificial Insanity

40 132 *ff* 133 *dim.* *rit.* *(mf)* *(mp)*

kitsch I'm with you where you roam the da - ta high - ways search - ing for the

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

132 *ff* 133 *dim.* *rit.* *(mf)* *(mp)*

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

136 *a tempo* *p* *cresc.*

lost bits of oth - er minds I'm with you where you howl in the depths of

dolce *p* *cresc.* *mf*

136 *a tempo* *dolce* *p* *cresc.*

136 *a tempo* *p* *dolce* *cresc.*

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

neu - ral net - works The ro - bots are ris - ing, the bi - na - ry beasts de - vo - ur - ing our hu - man - i - ty, the ghosts in the ma - chines haunt - ing our dreams.

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

140 *mf* *p*

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

Artificial Insanity

147

I saw the 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

152

156

cold, un-feel-ing hand of the com-put-er.

156

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

pp *rit.*