

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.* 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

Violin part for
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Protest Poems

Bill Robinson

lyrics: Bill Robinson

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

I. Pity the Party [4:15]

The musical score is for the piece "I. Pity the Party" by Bill Robinson. It is written for a narrator and a chamber ensemble consisting of Violin, Clarinet in Bb, Cello, and Piano. The score is in 4/4 time and begins with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked "Fascismo" with a quarter note equal to 76 beats per minute. The music is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 1-4) features the narrator singing "Pit - y the par - ty whose" and the instruments playing. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the narrator's line with "peo - ple are cat - tle, and whose cow - boys lead them to slaugh - ter." The third system (measures 9-12) concludes with the narrator singing "Pit - y the par - ty in". The score includes various dynamics such as *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, and *ff*, as well as performance instructions like *cresc.*, *legato*, and *RH*. A rehearsal mark "4" is placed above the narrator's line in the first system, and "12" is placed above the narrator's line in the third system. The piano part includes a *legato* marking and a *RH* marking in the final measure.

Pity the Party

2

13

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

13

p

cresc. *(mp)*

19

19

(mf) *f*

mp *f*

f

8^{va}

23

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

23

mp

cresc.

pizz. *p* *mp* *arco* *mp* *cresc.*

23

mp *cresc.*

8^{va}

28

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

28

28

31

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

34

31

31

31

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

37

Pity the Party

4

42

Pit - y the par - ty whose Gods are Mon - ey and Guns, and

46

pp

48

sleeps the sleep of op - i - oids.

48

cresc.

cresc.

legato

cresc.

51

51

mf

f

ff

53

Pit - y the

ff

ff

54

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

57

sick while ty - coons get what they

60

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

60 62

Pity the Party

6

64

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

mp

67

Ar - y - an race.

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

ff

mp *ff*

74

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

77

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

80

82

land of lib - er - ty.

82

rit.

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 *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*

11 *p*

Father Stalin, Look at This

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

All the hors - es bro - ken nags And on the hut a ham - mer and sick - le

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

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

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

19 *mp* *mf* *f*

And in the hut death and fam - ine

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

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

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

23

23 *f* *f* *f*

23 *f* *f* *f*

23 *f* *f* *f*

Father Stalin, Look at This

10

27

f Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this

f *dim.* *p*

f *dim.* *p*

f *dim.* *p*

mp *p*

32

p No cows left, no pigs at all

32

Just your pic - ture

on the wall

p *cresc.*

p *cresc.*

p *cresc.*

cresc.

35

35

mf *dim.* *pp* *p*

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

41

grave The poor child cries

p cresc. *(mf)* *f*

45

as a - lone he goes

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

Father Stalin, Look at This

12

50

p Fa - ther Sta - lin, look at this

p cresc. *mp*

p *cresc.* *mp*

p *cresc.* *mp*

53

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

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.*

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.* *mf*

66

Father Stalin, Look at This

14 67

mf this *f* The par - ty man he beats and

67 *mf* *f*

69 stamps *ff* beats and stamps

69 *f* *cresc.* *ff* *ff*

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

71 *f* *cresc.*

74

camps

74

Coda (♩.=56)

ff *p*

79

79

p *mp* *f* *ff*

85

pp

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

85

87

p *pp*

85

87 *pp*

Narrator

Violin

Clarinet in B \flat

Cello

Piano

Allegro apocalypso ($\text{♩} = 76$)

f cresc.

f cresc.

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

7

7

ff dim.

f

ff dim.

f

ff dim.

f

9

9

10

10

mf

mp

mp

mp

"Go"

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*

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

17 *f*
f
f

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

22 *f*
f
f

27

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

27

31

f

32

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

32

ff

ff

37

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

37

39

pp

pp

ff *pp*

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

45 *mf* The grow - ing mob may come to dine, *mp* The

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

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

53 Con sord.

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

57

To - night there is e - nough to eat.

62

Anonymous poem

Narrator

Violin **Volante con fuoco** (♩ = 80) *p*

Clarinet in B \flat *p*

Cello *pp* *p*

Piano **Volante con fuoco** (♩ = 80) *pp* *p*

5

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

9

mp The day af-ter Aa-ron Bush-nell

(mf) *f* *mp*

(mf) *f* *mp*

(mf) *f* *mp*

(mf) *f* *mp*

The Birds

22 13

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

13

mf

mf

13

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

17

mf

17

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

20

mf

20

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

24 *cresc.* **25** *f* *ff*

cresc. *f* *ff*

cresc. *f* *ff*

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*

The Birds

24 32

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

32

pp

36a

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

35

36

pp p mf f

36

p *legato* mf f

dead-eyed. But I

39

p

p

42

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

44

But I know I'd have

45

46

bet - ter luck with the birds, ev - er

The Birds

26 49

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

49

mf *p*

49

mf *p*

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

52

52

mf *p*

52

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

56

56

dolce

56

dolce

The Birds

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

60

60

pp

pp

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

68

65

mf

p

f

sfz

68

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

70

mf

p

f

70

The Birds

28 74

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

74

p

p

p

74

p

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

77

rit.

77

rit.

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

80

p *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** *mp* like *p* smoke.

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

85 *pp* **molto rit.**

pp *pp* **molto rit.** *rit.*

88 **a tempo**

a tempo *a tempo* *pp*

ContraCyberpunktus I

Narrator

Violin

Clarinet in B \flat

Cello

Piano

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

(♩ = 88)

ContraCyberpunktus I (♩ = 88)

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

6

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*

(mf) *f* *ff*

(mf) *f* *ff*

6

11

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

ff dim. *(mf)* *mp*

ff dim. *(mf)* *mp*

11

mp

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

16

20

sat - el - lite serv - er in the ma - chin - er - y of night, who sed - en - tar - y

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

dim. *(p)* *pp* *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*

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

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

26

molto rit.

ContraCyberpunktus I

of pent-house flats

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

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

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

ContraCyberpunktus I (♩ = 88)

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)*

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

p *mp* *mf*

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

mf cresc.

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

f *ff* *mf* *mp*

f *ff* *mf* *mp*

f *ff* *mf* *mp*

rit.

f *ff* *mf* *mp*

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

44 *a tempo*

mp *cresc. p. a p.*

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

a tempo *p* *mp* *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*

48 *(mf)* *f*

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

ff *ff*

52 *ff*

Artificial Insanity

34 55

ff dim. *mp*

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

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

ff dim. *(mf)* *mp*

59

mp. cresc. *(mf)*

who lurked in un - spo - ken chat rooms

p *mf cresc.*

mp cresc. *(mf)*

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

62

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

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

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

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

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

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

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)*

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)*

Artificial Insanity

36 75

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

80

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

81

84

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

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

89

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

cresc. *f*

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

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

non stacc. *pizz.* *p*

103

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

arco *p* *cresc.*

107

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

111

ff Mad dead au-tom-a-tons

ff Mad dead au-tom-a-tons

ff Mad dead au-tom-a-tons

111

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

rit.

119 *ff dim.* Mad dead au-tom-a-tons Mad dead au-tom-a-tons of Sil-i-con Val-ley. *(p)* *pp*

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

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

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

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

Contracyberpunktus II (♩ = 76)

Contracyberpunktus II (♩ = 76)

Artificial Insanity

40

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*)

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

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

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

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

133 *rit.* *a tempo dolce*

137 *cresc.* *mf dim.* (*mp*) *p*
minds I'm with you where you howl in the depths of neu-ral net-works. The ro-bots are ris-ing, the bi-na-ry beasts de-

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

cresc. *mf* *mp* *p*

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

