

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND



ERIC SHANFIELD

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Eric Shanfield

poems by Michael Robbins

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1. My Old Job

2. Dig Dug

3. Welfare Mothers

4. Alien Vs. Predator

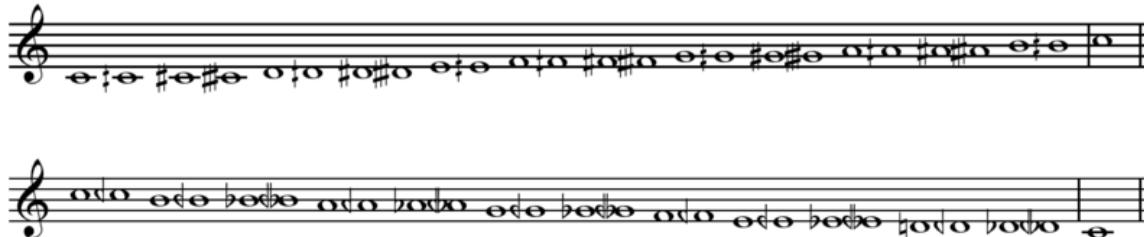
5. Second Helping

6. Plastic Robbins Band

Soprano

String Quartet

Quarter tone notation:



I first became aware of Michael Robbins when his controversial review of a book by Robert Hass appeared in *Poetry*, and although I did not necessarily agree with his opinions I found his approach thoughtful, intelligent, funny, and refreshing in its refusal to kowtow to the mandarins of high art represented by that august publication. I sought out his poetry and immediately decided to put it to music.

Plastic Robbins Band sets six poems from his collection *Alien Vs. Predator* for soprano and string quartet. The material is deliberately poppy, blocky, colorful, and catchy, but the setting is full of destabilizing elements—quarter tones, glissandos, arpeggios—which together reflect Robbins's subversion of clichés, catchphrases, stereotypes, and banalities in his frequently hilarious but often also dark and uncomfortable work.

The songs are mostly set in simple verse forms, and the cycle's overall shape is fast, fast, slow, fast, fast, slow. *Plastic Robbins Band* was composed in February and June 2014 and lasts around twelve minutes.

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND
poems by Michael Robbins

1. My Old Job

My name is Michael, I'm an alcoholic.
Hi, Michael. Row your boat ashore.
The Christian youth group is sudsing cars.
They get Raptured. They hit the bars.

Cathy Aspirin's a karaoke machine
the size of Racine, Wisconsin.
Cathy, I think I left my uterus in your uterus.
I'd like to know what kind of response you get.

Maybe it's Maybelline. Why can't you be true?
You regifted the VD I wrapped up just for you.
My penis and my brain team up to penis-brain you.
It is now my duty to completely drain you.

Soap me down, children, I'm full of pain pills.
I was born in a barn. Some call it a manger.
The car was washed in the blood
of the lamb is full of rainbows.

2. Dig Dug

In these United Arab States, Muslims
are elected wearing roller skates.
Erectile dysfunction in the nation's pets
is just the sort of grievance we petition
to redress. I give my skinny prick
a shake, to ask if there is some mistake.

Hold me closer, tiny reindeer. They saw
Oliver Stone distribute juice boxes.
He counts the headlights on the highway:
one if by reptile, two if by foxes.
Slash is both sad and happy for Axl.
The nation's pets are high on Paxil.

Memory is the bended grass where deer have lain.
It's hard to hold a candle to the cold November rain.

3. Welfare Mothers

I get up in the evening, dress
the buffalo, slip into its carcass,
a floor too cool for corn. I'm born again
as the Tennessee Valley Authority.
I'm not with you in Rockland, *a fortiori*.

It was the winter of the wayward clone.
The frontier towns were low on phlogiston.
I was a tiny acorn then, but now
I mine the bay and trash the Finns.
My name's in all the magazines.

Little Bo Mercy in heels and hose,
just under the water she usually goes.
She moves grams and ounces, prays for war.
She's not the droid you're looking for.

If I could *mmm* like a mourning dove,
the bonny bears would know.
The final buffalo scrimps and saves.
I come on the uncut hair of graves.

4. Alien Vs. Predator

Praise *this* world, Rilke says, the jerk.
We'd stay up all night. Every angel's
berserk. Hell, if you slit monkeys
for a living, you'd pray to me, too.
I'm not so forgiving. I'm rubber, you're glue.

That elk is such a dick. He's a space tree
making a ski and a little foam chiropractor.
I set the controls, I pioneer
the seeding of the ionosphere.
I translate the Bible into velociraptor.

In front of Best Buy, the Tibetans are released,
but where's the whale on stilts that we were promised?
I fight the comets, lick the moon,
pave its lonely streets.
The sandhill cranes make brains look easy.

I go by many names: Buju Banton,
Camel Light, *The New York Times*.
Point being, rickshaws in Scranton.
I have a few legs. I sleep on meat.
I'd eat your bra—point being—in a heartbeat.

5. Second Helping

I dare not speak my name, it is so long
and unpronounceable. I enforce the thaw
here among the timbered few. We despise you
and whatever you rode in on—is that a *swan*?
I'm not really like this. I'm over the moon.

Still, we jar marmalade. We plow.
We don't need Neil Young around anyhow.
Your tribe's Doritos are infested with a stegosaur.
That Forever 21 used to be a Virgin Megastore.

Scott Baio in full feathered glory
was everything I'm not. I am everything I am
and then some. I'm coming along nicely.
Don't stick your fork in me till I'm done.

6. Plastic Robbins Band

I bit my penis off at three.
Unless—no, wait—that wasn't me.

I stitched my penis, which I hate,
onto the face of my friend Kate.

Why would you want to write such things?
Nothing makes poetry happen.

I look into my heart and creep.
My heart is lovely, dark and deep.

I kiss your trash. My boobs are fake.
I have promises to break.

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND

1. MY OLD JOB

Michael Robbins

Eric Shanfield

d=92 *mf*

My name is Mi-chael, I'm an al-co-ho-lic. Hi, Mi-chael. Row your boat

7 10

a-shore. The Christ-ian youth group is suds-ing cars. They get

mf

14 16

Rap-tured. They hit the bars. Ca-thy As-prin's a

f

ff

f

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND - 1. MY OLD JOB

2

20

ka - ra - o - ke ma - chine the size of Ra - cine, Wis - con - sin.

p

p

p

p

f

25

Ca - thy, I think I left my u - ter - us. in - side your

f

f

f

f

f

30

32

u - ter - us. I'd like to know what kind of re - sponse you get.

p

f

p

f

p

f

39 rit.

41 a tempo ♩ = 92

V D I wrapped up just for you. — My pe - nis and my brain team up to

arco flaut. flaut. mp

pizz. arco flaut. mp

43

pe - nis brain you.

It is now my du - ty to com - plete - ly drain you.

norm.

mf

norm.

mf

norm.

mf

norm.

mf

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND - 1. MY OLD JOB

47 $\text{=}_\text{d}=92$

Soap me down, children, I'm full of pain pills...

53

I was born in a barn. Some call it a man - ger.

56

The

58

molto rit.

car was washed in the blood of the lamb is full of rain-bows.

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND

2. DIG DUG

Michael Robbins

Eric Shanfield

J=132 f

In these U - ni - ted A - rab States, Mus - lims are e - lect - ed wear - ing roll - er skates.

6

E - rect - ile dis - func - tion in the na - - tion's pets is just the sort of grie - vance we pe -

11

ti - tion to re - dress. I give my skin - ny prick a shake, to ask if

12

p fp f

p f

p f

p f

p fp f

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND - 2. DIG DUG

19

O - li - ol - er Stone di - stri - bute juice box - es.

He counts the head - lights on the high - way:

f

22

p sub.

f

ff

p sub.

f

ff

f

p sub.

f

23

one if by rep - tile,
two if by fox - - - es.

4

5

27

Slash is— both sad and hap - py for A - - - xl.— The na - tion's pets are

ff *p sub.*

spicc. 1/2 col legno

ff *p*

ff *p sub.*

ff *p sub.*

ff *p sub.*

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND

3. WELFARE MOTHERS

Michael Robbins

Eric Shanfield

J=108

mp

I get up in the eve - ning, dress the buf-fa-lo, slip in - to its car - cass, a

sighing

p *mp* *p* *mp*

mp

mp *sim.*

pizz.

mp

5

floor too cool for corn. I'm born a - gain

10

11 *mf*

as the Ten - - ne - ssee -

p *mf* *p* *mf*

mf *mf* *mf*

mfp *mfp* *sim.*

mf

15 *mf*

Valley Au tho ri ty.

I'm not with you in

19 *mp*

mp

==

20

Rock - land, a for - ti - o - ri.

f

==

25 *f*

It was the win - ter of the way - - - ward

f

p *f* *p* *f* sim.

f *p* *f* *p* *f* sim.

arco

fp

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND - 3. WELFARE MOTHERS

10

28

clone. The fron - tier towns were low on

p *f*

p



31

33

phlo - gis - ton. I was a

f

p *mf*

mf *mp* *p* *mp*

mf



34

ti - ny a - corn then, but

mf *3* *3* *3* *3*

sim.

mf *3* *3* *3* *3*

sim.

37

now I mine the bay and

sul pont.

mf

3

3

3

3

3

3

||

40

trash the Finns.

norm.

p

mp

mp

p

||

43

My name's in all the ma - - ga - - zines.

mf

0 0

3

3

3

3

mf

mf

mf

mf

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND - 3. WELFARE MOTHERS

12

47

mp

W tr~~~~~ Lit - tle Bo Mer - cy in heels and hose, just un - der the

54 *mf* — *mp* — *mf* — *f*

wat - ter she u - sual - ly goes. She moves grams and

58

p — *mp* — *p* — *mf* — *p* — *f*

mf — *mp* — *mf* — *f*

p — *mf* — *mp* — *mf* — *f* arco

59

oun - ces, prays for war.

f — *p* — *f* — *p* — *f* — *p* — *f* — *p* — *f*

p — *f* — *p* — *f* — *p* — *f* — *p* — *f*

p — *f*

62

She's not the droid you're looking for.

p arco

f

64

for.

fp f

fp f

f

p f

fp f

67

70

If I could mmm like a mourning dove, the...

mp

gliss. p

pizz. mp

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND - 3. WELFARE MOTHERS

14

73

bonny bears would know.

mp *p* *mp* *p*

gliss.

non gliss.

mf

78

The final buf fa-lo

mf

p *mf* *sim.*

mf

arco

mf

mf *p* *mf* *p* *sim.*

82

scrims and saves.

f

I come on the un-cut hair of graves.

mf

p

f

p

f

pizz.

f

p

f

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND

4. ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

Michael Robbins

Eric Shanfield

p *f* **4**

Praise this world, Ril - ke says, the jerk. We'd stay up all night.

sul pont. norm. sub. *gliss.*

sul pont. norm. sub. *gliss.*

sul pont. norm. sub.

mf < *fp* *f*

f

5

Ev - ery an - gel's ber - serk. Hell, if you slit

gliss. *f* *p* *f*

gliss. *f* *p* *f*

f

f

8

mon - keys for a li - ving, you'd pray to me, too...

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

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

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

quasi gliss. *f* *fp* *f* *fp* *f*

f

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND - 4. ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

11

I'm not so for - giv - ing.

I'm

12

14

rub - ber,

you're glue.

That elk is such a

p

17

dick.

He's a space tree mak - ing a ski____ and a

mp

6 6 6 6

6 6 6 6

6 6 6 6

pizz. (strum)

sim.

mp

20 *mf*

lit - tle foam chi - ro - prac tor.

I set the con - trols,

23 **24** *f*

I pi - o - neer the seed-ing of the i - on - o - sphere.

27 *mf*

I trans - late the bi - ble in - to ve - lo - ci -

strum downstrokes

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND - 4. ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

32

f

34

rap - - tor. In front of Best Buy,

p

f p f

p

f p f

p f

strum

p f

f

arcō

35

the Ti - bet - ans are re - leased, but where's the whale...

p

f

p

f

p

f

p

f

38

ff

on stilts that we were pro - mised?

p

ff

p sub.

ff

p

ff

p sub.

Musical score for page 41 and 42. The score consists of six staves:

- Staff 1: Treble clef, dynamic *p*, tempo $\frac{1}{2}$. The first measure is a sustained note.
- Staff 2: Treble clef, dynamic *p*, tempo $\frac{1}{2}$. The first measure is a sustained note.
- Staff 3: Bass clef, dynamic *p*, tempo $\frac{1}{2}$. The first measure shows a descending eighth-note scale. Measures 2-3 show eighth-note patterns with slurs and grace notes. Measure 4 is dynamic *fp*.
- Staff 4: Bass clef, dynamic *p sub.*, tempo $\frac{1}{2}$. Measures 1-2 show eighth-note patterns with slurs. Measures 3-4 show eighth-note patterns with slurs and grace notes. Measure 5 is dynamic *mf*.
- Staff 5: Bass clef, dynamic *p*, tempo $\frac{1}{2}$. Measures 1-2 show eighth-note patterns with slurs. Measures 3-4 show eighth-note patterns with slurs and grace notes. Measure 5 is dynamic *mf*.
- Staff 6: Bass clef, dynamic *p*, tempo $\frac{1}{2}$. Measures 1-2 show eighth-note patterns with slurs. Measures 3-4 show eighth-note patterns with slurs and grace notes. Measure 5 is dynamic *mf*.

Musical score for orchestra and choir, page 47. The score consists of four staves: Violin I (top), Violin II, Cello, and Double Bass (bottom). The vocal parts are: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass. The vocal line includes lyrics: "pave its lone - ly". The score features dynamic markings such as *p*, *mf*, and *f*. Measure numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8 are indicated above the staves. The vocal parts enter in measure 5, singing eighth-note chords.

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND - 4. ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

50

streets.

The sand - hill cranes

mf

p

mf

p

mf

p

mf

p

mf

53

make brains look ea - - - - sy.

I go by ma - ny

p

mf

f

mf

p

f

mf

p

f

p

mf

f

56

f

names:

Bu - ju Ban - ton, Cam - el

p

f

sim.

(take time on arpeggios)

f

f

pizz.

f

f

60

light, The New York Times. Point

p cresc.

65 [66]

be-ing,— rick-shaws in Scran-ton. I have a few legs... I sleep on meat.

f

70

I'd eat your bra point be-ing in a heart - beat.

pizz.

pizz.

6 6 6 6

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND

5. SECOND HELPING

Michael Robbins

Eric Shanfield

d=100

f

I dare not speak my name, it

sim.

sim.

sim.

f

6

is so long and un - pro - nounce - a - ble.

p

f

12

mf

I en - force the thaw here a - mong the

no accents

mf

p

mf

p

mf

p

mf

sim.

p

mf

17

tim bered few. We des

20

f

p

mf

p

f

21

pise you and what ev - - er

sim.

sim.

sim.

f

25

you rode in on is that a swan?

3

3

p

f

3

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND - 5. SECOND HELPING

29

32

p sub.

I'm not real - ly like this. I'm not real - ly like

35

ff

— this. I'm o - ver the moon.

1. — | 2. — :

41

p

Still, we jar mar - ma - lade. We

1/2 — → sul pont. — → norm. — →

tr

w — → sul pont. — → norm. — →

bring out

mp

3 3 3 3 5 5

mf

p

3 3 3 3 5 5

47

49

plow.

We don't need Neil

(tr) sul pont. → norm.

(tr) sul pont. → norm.

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

pp cresc.

51

mf

Young a - round a - ny - how.

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

55

57

Your tribe's Do -

mf

f

mf

mf

f

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND - 5. SECOND HELPING

59

ri - tos are in - fest - ed with a
ste - - - go - - -

f *mf* *f* *mf*
mf *f* *mf* *f*

63

65

saur.

W tr

fp *mf* *f* *p*
f *f* *mf* *f*
mf *f* *pizz.* *f*
f *f* *mf* *f*

67

That For - - - ev - - er Twen - ty

p *mf*
sim. *mf*
sim. *mf*
sim.

71

One used to be a Virgin Megastore.

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

p sub.

f

p sub.

p sub.

f

mf

f

mf

f

3

mf

f

mf

f

p sub.

75 G.P.

ff

78 Scott Bai - - - o

3 3 3 *ff*

ff

ff

ff

arco

p

espress.

p

ff

79

in full feath - ered glo - ry was ev - ery - thing I'm

sim.

sim.

ff

norm 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND - 5. SECOND HELPING

84

86

f

not. I am ev ery

no accents

f

f

p

p

88

thing I am

p

f

p

f

f

p

92

and then some.

p

f

p

f

p

Spa.

p

p sub.

w tr.

p

ff

p

96

ff

I'm com - ing a - long _____ nice - ly.

sim.

ff

sim.

ff

sim.

p sub.

ff

100

104

p

Don't stick your fork in me till I'm done. *spas-* |

fff

p

fff

p

fff

sim.

fff

p

fff

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND

6. PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND

Michael Robbins

Eric Shanfield

J=112

3

p

I bit my pe - nis off at three.

con sord.

pp *mp*

con sord.

pp

pizz.

p

6

mp

p

Un - less no, wait that was - n't me. I

11

stitched my pe - nis, which I hate, on -

con sord.

p

p

sul pont.

pp

p

15

to the face of my friend Kate.

19 *mf*

Why would you want to write such things?

mf

arco espress.

mf

23 *mp*

No - thing makes po - e - try hap - pen.

pizz.

mp

27 *p*

I look in -

p

pp

PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND - 6. PLASTIC ROBBINS BAND

28

to my heart and creep.
My heart is
senza sord.

32

35

love - ly, dark and deep.
I kiss your trash. My boobs are
con sord.

37

fake.
I have pro - mi - ses to break.