

Admirable Eccentrics

- I. *Epitaph* (Ben Franklin) – page 1
- II. *Advice* (Bill Holm) – page 7
- III. *Music Is...* (Eric Stokes) – page 19

soprano
(tambourine)

Bb Clarinet
(chain for preparing piano; hand percussion)

percussion I
(low/medium/high suspended cymbal, discs (unpitched cup chimes), low/medium/high woodblocks, marimba, high-hat, castanets, small maraca, doumbek)

percussion II
(low/medium tam-tams, temple blocks, vibraslap, small maraca, low suspended cymbal, bell tree, glockenspiel, steel drum, bass drum, 5 toms, snare drum, tenor drum)

piano
(bamboo wind chimes, guiro, hand percussion)

total duration: c. 16:00

Written for Zeitgeist, remembering Eric Stokes and Bob Samarotto.

Admirable Eccentrics is a modest homage to two former Zeitgeistigen Menschen: Bob Samarotto (1933-2000), reed player/composer/poet; and Eric Stokes (1930-1999), composer/trusted advisor/poet/ friend.

Eric's "Music is..." a whimsical manifesto of his populist view of music and life, inspired me to add a singer to the ensemble, which in turn led to a search for other texts by strong, independent free-thinkers. Ben Franklin's own epitaph joined the mix, as did Bill Holm's "Advice." Wishing to step into a world that both Bob and Eric inhabited with joy, I included improvisatory sections. And since "music is for the people – for all of us," we all get to improvise. Enjoy!

Performance note: The third movement improv section (m. 95-105) should keep the rhythm going with a bang on every beat by somebody. Hint of a march cadence? Other than that, maybe a feeling of building, as the audience gets into it. I'm thinking that the audience would mostly just bang or clasp in rhythm, like audiences everywhere. I think of them continuing through m. 135, led, and stopped, by the soprano, so that the last four words come through loud and clear. Audience instruments? Lots of tambourines and other handheld skins. Maracas might be fun. Maybe not so many ringing things.

The Body
of
Benjamin Franklin, Printer
(Like the cover of an old book,
Its contents torn out,
And stripped of its lettering and gilding)
Lies here food for worms.
Yet the work itself shall not be lost,
For it will (as he believes) appear once
more
In a new
And more beautiful Edition
Corrected and Amended
By
The Author.

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Advice

Someone dancing inside us
has learned only a few steps:
the “Do-Your-Work” in 4/4 time,
and the “What-Do-You-Expect” waltz.
He hasn’t noticed yet the woman
standing away from the lamp,
the one with black eyes
who knows the rumba
and strange steps in jumpy
rhythms from the mountains of Bulgaria.
If they dance together,
something unexpected will happen.
If they don’t, the next world
will be a lot like this one.

Bill Holm, from *The Dead Get By With Everything* (1990)

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Music is for the people.
For all of us:
the dumb, the deaf, the dogs and jays, handclappers, dancing moon watchers,
brainy puzzlers, abstracted whistlers, finger-snapping time keepers, crazy, weak, hurt,
weed keepers, the strays.
The land of music is everyone’s nation--her tune, his beat, your drum--
one song, one vote.

Eric Stokes