

A Respectable Bird
3-part treble choir, B \flat clarinet, and piano
JH - GRL02

Suzy Johnson

pdf - \$1.95
printed - \$3.75

A Respectable Bird

Suzy Johnson

for 3-part treble choir, B \flat clarinet, and piano



COMPOSE
LIKE A GIRL

Illustration: KT Thompson

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Text:

The turkey is a respectable bird.
No kidding, Ben Franklin penned this word.
They gobble and putt and bobble and strut,
A native American bird.

They cannot smell things well but have an awesome sense
of taste.
Their hearing and their eyesight are quite keen.
They run away or fly away escaping you in haste.
But watch out! You'll get spurred if you are mean!

The turkey is a respectable bird.
No really, you must please take my word.
She cackles and purrs, he tackles with spurs,
Courageous American bird!

Flocks of them are gathered and are scratching in the dirt.
So many of them pecking on the ground.
Gobbling up the bugs and seeds, always on alert,
Running willy nilly at a sound!

The turkey is a respectable bird.
Believe me, it's really not absurd!
With wattles and snood, they have attitude,
A quirky American bird.

- Suzy Johnson, inspired by Benjamin Franklin

Choreography:

Try having the singers jut their heads forward like turkeys during the two measures before singing at rehearsal letters A, B, C, and E. Perhaps invite a couple to tango in measures 1-8, 31-38 and 95-end.

From the Composer:

I have been observing wild turkeys for more than 25 years from the windows of my country home. Sometimes we see up to fifty at a time in our yard or field! Many of us only think about turkeys around Thanksgiving Day, but their endearing qualities inspired me to find out more about them. I had heard Benjamin Franklin proposed the turkey as our national bird, but soon discovered this to be a myth. Although he never actually recommended this noble fowl instead of the eagle, he did respect them.

In 1784 he wrote:

"For my own part I wish the bald eagle had not been chosen as the representative of our country..." Later he adds that the eagle is a "bird of bad moral character" that "does not get his living honestly." In a subsequent paragraph he extols the turkey with these words--"For the Truth the Turkey is in Comparison a much more respectable Bird, and withal a true original Native of America... He is besides, though a little vain & silly, a Bird of Courage, and would not hesitate to attack a Grenadier of the British Guards who should presume to invade his Farm Yard with a red Coat on."

I handpicked these historic words, paired them with personal observations, sprinkled in scientific terms and facts, and drizzled it with a dash of humor to create a year round musical main dish for this underappreciated bird. I hope you enjoy it!

- Suzy Johnson

Dear conductor,

You can support these composers, diversify your concerts, and push towards equality by programming music from the #ComposeLikeAGirl series. Inviting the composer into the rehearsal process through a zoom or in-person workshop or Q & A session is an incredible experience for all involved. Be sure to notify and invite the composer to any performances of the work, and submit a PDF of the concert program to JH Music to ensure the composer receives performances royalties from ASCAP. Thank you!

~ Jocelyn Hagen



Suzy Johnson has been a choral conductor and music educator for more than 25 years. In 1996, she founded a children's choir program, RAACHE Choirs, and continues to serve as artistic director and ensemble conductor of one of the four ensembles. More recently, her passion to use music to tangibly improve people's lives led her to join the team that founded Resounding Voices in Rochester, MN, a chorus for individuals with dementia or memory impairment and their support partners. Suzy is artistic director and conductor for this organization as well.

Drawing on her years of choral experience, Suzy recently discovered the delight and challenge of composing and arranging to create music that brings joy to singers of all ages and has had several of her songs performed by the two ensembles she leads. In August of 2021 she received a Minnesota Music Creator Award from the American Composers Forum with funding from the Jerome Foundation and looks forward to future opportunities to create music for choirs and instrumentalists of all ages and backgrounds.

A Respectable Bird

for 3-part treble choir, piano, and B \flat clarinet

Lyrics inspired by Benjamin Franklin

Suzy Johnson

a tango ♩ = 116

Clarinet in B \flat

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6

Cl.

10

Cl.

unison f

The tur-key is a re-spect-a-ble bird. No

10

mf

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13

kid - ding, Ben Frank - lin penned this word. They gob - ble and putt and

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16

bob - ble and strut, A na - tive A - mer - i - can bird.

Cl.

19

They can - not smell things well but have an

mf

19

f *mf*

22

awe - some sense of taste. Their hear - ing and their eye - sight are quite keen. They

sfz *mf*

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25

Cl. 

run a-way or fly a-way es-cap-ing you in haste. But watch out! You'll get spurred if you are

25 

28

Cl. 

mean!

mf legato

28 

34

Cl. 

mf

34 

40

C

Cl.

2-part *f*

1

2 The tur-key is a re-spect-a-ble bird. *f*

40

C

43

Cl.

1

2 She cack-les and purrs, he

43

1

2 Cou - ra-geous A - mer - i - can bird!

46

1

2 tack-les with spurs. Cou - ra-geous A - mer - i - can bird!

50 D

Cl. *p*

1 Flocks of them are gath-ered and are scratch - ing in the dirt. So

2 Flocks of them are gath-ered and are scratch - ing in the dirt. So

50 D *mf* *sfz*

53

Cl. *mf*

1 man - y of them peck - ing on the ground. Gob-bling up the bugs and seeds,

2 man - y of them peck - ing on the ground.

53 *mf*

56 *mf*

Cl. *mf*

1 run - ning wil - ly nil - ly at a sound!

2 al-ways on a - lert, run - ning wil - ly nil - ly at a sound!

56

5

59

ff *mf*

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Cl. *E*

3-part
f

1 *f*
Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck!

E

2 *f*

67

Cl. *mf*

1 *mf*
Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck!

2 *f*
Gob - bler, tom, jake, jen - ny, hen! Gob - bler, tom, jake, jen - ny, hen!

67

71

Cl. *building...*

1 *mf* Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck!

2 *f* Gob - bler, tom, jake, jen - ny, hen! Gob - bler, tom, jake,

3 Gob - ble, gob - ble, gob - ble, gob - ble, gob - ble, gob-ble! Gob - ble, gob - ble, gob - ble, gob - ble,

71

building...

joce lyn chagen

74

Cl. *f*

1 *f* Peck! Peck! Peck! Tur - key! A re - spect - a - ble bird!

2 jen - ny, hen! Gob - bler, tom, jake, jen - ny, hen!

3 *mf* gob - ble, gob - ble! Gob - ble, gob - ble, gob - ble, gob - ble, gob - ble, gob-ble!

74

f

77

Cl. *f* Tur-key! A re-spect-a-ble bird! A re-spect-a-ble bird!

1 Gob-ble, tom, jake, jen-ny, hen! A re-spect-a-ble bird!

2 Gob-ble, gob-ble, gob-ble, gob-ble, gob-ble! A re-spect-a-ble bird!

3 Gob-ble, gob-ble, gob-ble, gob-ble, gob-ble! A re-spect-a-ble bird!

77

mp

81

mf build excitement...

83

Cl. *f* *2-part* *f* *mp* The tur-key is a re-

1 *mf* What, a tur-key?

2 *mf* What, a tur-key?

3 *mf*

86

Cl.

1

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2

spect-a - ble bird. Be - lieve me, it's real - ly not ab - surd. With
Such a bird. Please be - lieve! It's real - ly not ab - surd!

86

joce lyn chagen

89

Cl.

3-part

1

wat - tles and snood they have at - ti - tude A quirk - y A - mer - i - can

2

ah ooh have at - ti - tude A quirk - y A - mer - i - can

3

ah ooh have at - ti - tude A quirk - y A - mer - i - can

89

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92

Cl. *mf legato*

1 *mp* bird. Ah

2 *mp* bird. Ah

3 *mp* bird. Ah

92 *mf*

jocelyn chagen

96

Cl.

1 *f* A

2 *f* A

3 *f* A

96

G

Cl. *f*

1
na - tive A - mer - i - can Cou - ra - geous A - mer - i - can

2
na - tive A - mer - i - can Cou - ra - geous A - mer - i - can

3
na - tive A - mer - i - can Cou - ra - geous A - mer - i - can

G

jocelyn chagen

101

Cl. *cresc.* *ff*

1
Quirk-y A - mer - i - can *ff* bird!

2
Quirk-y A - mer - i - can *ff* bird!

3
Quirk-y A - mer - i - can *ff* bird!

101

ff

JH - GRL07

A Quilt of Snow

Snoen er her

for 2-part choir, piano, and C instrument

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Lyrics in Norwegian by Odd Nordstoga,
adapted by Patti Arntz

Odd Nordstoga
arr. Patti Arntz

Dolce ♩ = 84

C Instrument

Piano

5

C Inst.

1 & 2

9

C Inst.

1 & 2

White is the air, white ev'-ry-where, all the world is si - lent a - mid glist-'ning snow.

9



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Another great piece from the Compose Like a Girl Choral Series

arr. Patti Arntz

A Quilt of Snow

JH - GRL07

13

C Inst.

1 & 2

mp

Au - tumn is past, trees white at last, all the earth is warm 'neath a quilt of snow.

17

C Inst.

1

mp

Out - side we go, hearts with a glow, tread up on the new snow. —

2

mp

Out - side we go, hearts with a glow, as we gent - ly tread o-ver new fal-len snow.

21

C Inst.

1

One by — one, friends join the fun, earth is warm 'neath a quilt of snow.

2

One by — one, friends join the fun, all the earth is warm 'neath a quilt of snow.

21

mf

dolce

COMPOSE LIKE A GIRL



Support Compose Like a Girl on Patreon!

Become a subscriber and all donations will go to mentorship, engraving, editing, content creation, and advertising to support these amazing women composers. For many of the women featured in this series, these pieces are their first published works. Podcast coming soon!



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JH-GRL02	Suzy Johnson	A Respectable Bird	3-part treble choir, B \flat clarinet, piano
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JH-GRL04	Sherry Blevins	Looking for Light	SSA choir, piano
JH-GRL05	Sherry Blevins	If I Call to You, My Love	SATB div., solo, a cappella choir
JH-GRL06	Jennifer Lucy Cook	Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind	SSA choir, tamb., hand drum
JH-GRL07	Patti Arntz	A Quilt of Snow (arr. of Norwegian folk tune)	2-part treble, flute, piano
JH-GRL08	Grace Becker	Known	SATB choir, soloist, piano
JH-GRL09	Amelia Ouverson	A Departing Blessing	SATB choir, C instrument
JH-GRL10	B.E. Boykin	The Star-Spangled Banner (arr.)	SSAA a cappella choir
JH-GRL11	Grace Brigham	Love Isn't Static	round for equal voices
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JH-GRL13	Mary Montgomery Koppel	The Last Invocation	SATB div. choir, piano
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JH-GRL15	Lucy Walker	Today	SATB div. a cappella choir
JH-GRL16	Anna Vtipil	Aurora	SSAA div. a cappella choir
JH-GRL17	Johanna Malmberg	Vanheim	SSSAATTBB a cappella choir
JH-GRL18	Ellen Voth	The Harbor and the Sea	SSAA, piano
JH-GRL18.1	Ellen Voth	The Harbor and the Sea	SSAA, piano, B \flat clarinet



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