

A Respectable Bird
3-part mixed choir, B \flat clarinet, and piano
JH - GRL02.2

Suzy Johnson

pdf - \$1.95
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A Respectable Bird

Suzy Johnson

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



COMPOSE
LIKE A GIRL

Illustration: KT Thompson

jh music

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.

For my friend Ann Bolinger, who inspires love for all birds — even turkeys!

A Respectable Bird

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

Lyrics inspired by
Benjamin Franklin

Suzy Johnson

Do not photocopy.

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a tango ♩ = 116

Clarinet in B \flat

Piano

jocelyn hagen

6

Cl.

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10

A

Cl.

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

II *f* The tur-Key is a re-spect-a-ble bird. No

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

10

A

mf

jocelyn chagen

13

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

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

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

16

Cl. 

I  bob-ble and strut, A [>]na-tive A-mer-i-can bird.

II  bob-ble and strut, A [>]na-tive A-mer-i-can bird.

III  bob-ble and strut, A [>]na-tive A-mer-i-can bird.



*optional note

joceelyn chagen

20

Cl. 

I  *mf* They can - not smell things well but have an awe-some sense of taste. Their

II  *mf* They can - not smell things well but have an awe-some sense of taste. Their

III  *mf* They can - not smell things well but have an awe-some sense of taste. Their



23

I
 II
 III

hear - ing and their eye - sight are quite keen. They run a - way or fly a - way es -

hear - ing and their eye - sight are quite keen. They run a - way or fly a - way es -

hear - ing and their eye - sight are quite keen. They run a - way or fly a - way es -

23

mf

joce lyn chagen

26

Cl.
 I
 II
 III

cap - ing you in haste. But watch out! You'll get spurred if you are mean!

cap - ing you in haste. But watch out! You'll get spurred if you are mean!

cap - ing you in haste. But watch out! You'll get spurred if you are mean!

26

29

Cl. *mf* *legato*

29

mf

34

Cl. *mf*

joceelyn chagen

40

Cl. C

I *f*

The tur-key is a re - spect - a - ble bird.

II *f*

No

III

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40

C

43

Cl.

I

II

III

43

46

Cl.

I

II

III

46

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joceelyn chagen

She cack-les and purrs,
real - ly, you must please take my word. She cack-les and purrs,
he

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

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50 D

Cl. *p*

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

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

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

50 D

mf *sfz*

joce lyn chagen

53

Cl.

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

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

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

53 *mf*

56

Cl. *mf*

I

II

III

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

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

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

56

56

59

ff **Joelyn Chagen** *mf*

Cl. **E**

III *f*

Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck!

E

67

Cl.
 I
 II
 III
 Gob - bler, tom, jake, jen - ny, hen! Gob - bler, tom, jake, jen - ny, hen!
 Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck!

67

71

Cl.
 I
 II
 III
 building...
 Gob - ble, gob - ble, gob - ble, gob - ble, gob - ble, gob - ble! Gob - ble, gob - ble, gob - ble, gob - ble,
 Gob - bler, tom, jake, jen - ny, hen! Gob - bler, tom, jake,
 Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck! Peck!

71

74

Cl. *f*

I *mf*

II

III *f*

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

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

Peck! Peck! Peck! Tur - key! A re - spect - a - ble bird!

74

f

jocelyn chagen

77

Cl.

I

II

III

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

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

Tur-key! A re - spect-a-ble bird! A re-spect-a-ble bird!

77

mp

F

81

Cl. *f* *mp* *mf* *f*

I What, a tur - key?

II The tur-key is a re-

III The tur-key is a re-

81

F

build excitement... *mf*

Jocelyn Chagen

86

Cl. *f*

I Such a bird! Please be - lieve! It's real - ly not ab - surd! With

II spect - a - ble bird. Be - lieve me, it's real - ly not ab - surd.

III spect - a - ble bird. Be - lieve me, it's real - ly not ab - surd.

86

f

89

Cl. *mf* *f*

I
II
III

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

89

joceelyn chagen

92

Cl. *mf legato*

I
II
III

bird. Ah
 bird. Ah
 bird. Ah

92

ff *mf*

97 G

Cl. *f*

I *f*
A na-tive A-mer-i-can Cou-ra-geous A-mer-i-can

II *f*
A na-tive A-mer-i-can Cou-ra-geous A-mer-i-can

III *f*
A na-tive A-mer-i-can Cou-ra-geous A-mer-i-can

97 G

Joceelyn Chagen

101

Cl. *cresc.* *ff*

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

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

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

101 *ff*

COMPOSE LIKE A GIRL



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