

The Blind Men and the Elephant

for woodwind trio

2014

Robbie McCarthy

*Commissioned by the Athenia Chamber Ensemble (Alison Brown Sincoff, flute,
Michele Fiala, oboe, and Matthew Morris, bassoon) with support from the Ohio
University COFA Creative Research Grant.*

Instrumentation:

Flute
Oboe
Bassoon

Program Notes:

We all harbor a little blind philosopher inside. "The Blind Men and the Elephant" is an ancient parable taught as a warning for people that promote absolute truth or exclusive subjective claims. The simple reason is that our life experiences or perception can lead to limited access and overreaching misinterpretations of a bigger picture. In turn, each creates his or her own version of reality from that limited experience and perspective. The picture itself could be love, religion, art, or work. How can a person with a limited touch of truth turn that into the one and only version of reality?

Performance Notes:

The poem's *introduction* should be read aloud, followed by the *first/wall* stanza. The *first/wall* music should then be performed, followed by a reading of *second/spear* and its performance. This continues in quick sequence until *sixth/rope* has been performed, then the *closing* stanza should be read. Poetry should always be followed by music with as little pause as needed. Performing ensemble members may choose to alternate narration, choose one performer to narrate exclusively, or utilize a non-instrumentalist narrator. I recommend that the flutist read the narrative, as they will not have to deal with reed maintenance during pauses.

Robbie McCarthy (1989) is quite possibly the world's only hybrid composer and professional LEGO builder. He is the winner of the 2011 Atlantic Coast Conference Band Director's Association grant for young and emerging wind band composers, and the 2010 Remix Composition Competition sanctioned by the Loose Filter Project, a movement dedicated to reframing what we know as concert music. He enjoys performing acoustic indie folk music, electronic process music, and everything in between. In his free time, Robbie can usually be found under the hood of his vintage Volkswagen bus, although he occasionally gets to spend time behind the wheel too.

The Blind Men and the Elephant

John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887)

[introduction]

It was six men of Indostan,
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

[First: Wall]

The First approach'd the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"

[Second: Spear]

The Second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, -"Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and
sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear,
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"

[Third: Snake]

The Third approach'd the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
"I see," -quoth he- "the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"

[Fourth: Tree]

The Fourth reached out an eager
hand,
And felt about the knee:
"What most this wondrous beast is
like
Is mighty plain," -quoth he,-
"'Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"

[Fifth: Fan]

The Fifth, who chanced to touch the
ear,
Said- "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!"

[Sixth: Rope]

The Sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Then, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see," -quoth he,- "the Elephant
Is very like a rope!"

[closing]

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

The Blind Men and the Elephant

Score

Robbie McCarthy

First: Wall ♩ = 116 *a tempo*

Flute *f p* *f* *rit.* *f*

Oboe *f p* *f p* *f* *p*

Bassoon *f p* *f* *p* *f*

5 *rit.*

Fl. *mf*³

Ob. *mf*³

Bsn. *p* *mp*

10 *a tempo*

Fl. *mf*³ *p*

Ob. *mf*³ *p*

Bsn. *mp*

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 2

This musical score is for the second part of 'The Blind Men and the Elephant'. It features three staves: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), and Bassoon (Bsn.). The score is divided into four systems, each containing three measures. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The tempo and dynamics are indicated throughout the score.

System 1 (Measures 15-17):

- Flute:** Measure 15 starts with a *mf* dynamic and a *p* dynamic marking. Measure 16 has a *f* dynamic. Measure 17 has a *mf* dynamic and a *rit.* marking.
- Oboe:** Measure 15 starts with a *mf* dynamic and a *p* dynamic marking. Measure 16 has a *f* dynamic and a *p* dynamic marking. Measure 17 has a *f* dynamic and a *p* dynamic marking.
- Bassoon:** Measure 15 starts with a *mf* dynamic and a *p* dynamic marking. Measure 16 has a *f* dynamic. Measure 17 has a *f* dynamic.

System 2 (Measures 19-21):

- Flute:** Measure 19 starts with a *f* dynamic and a *rit.* marking. Measure 20 has a *rit.* marking. Measure 21 has a *a tempo* marking.
- Oboe:** Measure 19 starts with a *f* dynamic and a *p* dynamic marking. Measure 20 has a *f* dynamic and a *p* dynamic marking. Measure 21 has a *f* dynamic and a *p* dynamic marking.
- Bassoon:** Measure 19 starts with a *f* dynamic. Measure 20 has a *mf* dynamic. Measure 21 has a *f* dynamic and a *p* dynamic marking.

System 3 (Measures 22-24):

- Flute:** Measure 22 starts with a *mp* dynamic and a *flutter tongue* marking. Measure 23 has a *f* dynamic. Measure 24 has a *mp* dynamic.
- Oboe:** Measure 22 starts with a *f* dynamic and a *p* dynamic marking. Measure 23 has a *f* dynamic and a *p* dynamic marking. Measure 24 has a *f* dynamic and a *p* dynamic marking.
- Bassoon:** Measure 22 starts with a *f* dynamic. Measure 23 has a *f* dynamic. Measure 24 has a *mp* dynamic and a *3* marking.

System 4 (Measures 26-28):

- Flute:** Measure 26 starts with a *mf* dynamic and a *3* marking. Measure 27 has a *f* dynamic. Measure 28 has a *mf* dynamic and a *3* marking.
- Oboe:** Measure 26 starts with a *mf* dynamic and a *3* marking. Measure 27 has a *f* dynamic. Measure 28 has a *mf* dynamic and a *3* marking.
- Bassoon:** Measure 26 starts with a *f* dynamic. Measure 27 has a *f* dynamic. Measure 28 has a *f* dynamic and a *3* marking.

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 3

30

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

33

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

Second: Spear $\text{♩} = 108$

p *f*

p *f*

p *f* *f*

38

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

mp *fp* *fp*

44

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

fp *fp* *fp*

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 4

49

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

f p

f p

f p

Detailed description: This system contains measures 49 through 54. The Flute part (top staff) has a melodic line with accents and dynamic markings of *f* and *p*. The Oboe part (middle staff) has a similar melodic line with accents and dynamic markings of *f* and *p*. The Bassoon part (bottom staff) has a lower melodic line with accents and dynamic markings of *f* and *p*. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 and back to 3/4.

55

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

f p

f p

f p

mf

Detailed description: This system contains measures 55 through 60. The Flute part continues its melodic line with dynamic markings of *f* and *p*. The Oboe part has a melodic line with dynamic markings of *f* and *mf*. The Bassoon part has a lower melodic line with dynamic markings of *f* and *fp*. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 and back to 3/4.

60

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

fp

fp

fp

Detailed description: This system contains measures 61 through 65. The Flute part has a melodic line with dynamic markings of *fp*. The Oboe part has a melodic line with dynamic markings of *fp*. The Bassoon part has a lower melodic line with dynamic markings of *fp*. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 and back to 3/4.

65

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

mf

f

mp

fp

fp

Detailed description: This system contains measures 66 through 70. The Flute part has a melodic line with dynamic markings of *mf* and *f*. The Oboe part has a melodic line with dynamic markings of *mp*. The Bassoon part has a lower melodic line with dynamic markings of *fp*. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 and back to 3/4.

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 5

70

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

fp *fp*

75

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

fp *fp* *f*

80

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

fp *fp* *fp*

86

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

mf p *mf p* *mf p*

mp

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 6

92

Fl. *mf p* *f*

Ob. *mf p* *f*

Bsn. *f*

97

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

102

Fl. *mf* *mp* *p*

Ob. *mf* *mp* *p*

Bsn. *mf* *mp*

107

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn. *f*

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 7

112

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

117

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

p

122

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

f

f

Third: Snake ♩ = 116

128

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

f

p

f

p

f

p

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 8

rit. *a tempo*

131 *p* *mf* *mp*

135 *mp*

138 *mf* *mp* *mf*

141 *p* *mf*

Fl. Ob. Bsn.

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 9

144

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

p

p

147

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

mf

149

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

151

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

mf dim.

mf dim.

p

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 10

♩ = 100

154 *rit.*

Fl. *p*

Ob. *p*

Bsn.

ff

3 3

157

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

3 3

160

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

ff

3 3 3 3

163 *f*

Fl.

Ob. *mf*

Bsn.

♩ = 116

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 11

167

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

accel.

mf

mf

mf

f *dim.*

170

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

mf *dim.*

mp

172

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

a tempo

Fourth: Tree ♩ = 68

p *ff* *p*

p *ff* *p*

p *ff* *p*

177

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

p *mp* *p*

p *p* *mp*

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 12

182 *tr* *tr* *rit.* ♩ = 116

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

mp

mp

pitch bend

mf

Detailed description: This system covers measures 182 to 187. The Flute and Oboe parts feature trills (tr) and a ritardando (rit.) marking. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 116. The Bassoon part includes a 'pitch bend' instruction. Dynamics range from mezzo-piano (mp) to mezzo-forte (mf).

188

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 188 to 192. The musical themes continue for the Flute, Oboe, and Bassoon. The notation shows various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines.

193

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

mp

Detailed description: This system covers measures 193 to 197. The musical themes continue for the Flute, Oboe, and Bassoon. A mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic is indicated for the Flute in measure 197.

198 *rit.* ♩ = 68

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

mp

mp

Detailed description: This system covers measures 198 to 202. The Flute and Oboe parts have a ritardando (rit.) marking. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 68. The Bassoon part features a crescendo (indicated by a wedge) and a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. The system concludes with a 5/4 time signature change.

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 13

Fifth: Fan ♩ = 68

204

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

p

mp

mf

p

mp

211

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

mp

mf

218

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

f

f

f

piu mosso

226

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

mp

mf

mf

mp

mp

a tempo

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 14

Sixth: Rope ♩ = 132

234

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

mf

mp

mp

mf

Musical score for measures 234-239. The Flute (Fl.) and Bassoon (Bsn.) parts feature melodic lines with crescendos. The Oboe (Ob.) part provides a rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp*.

241

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

Musical score for measures 241-245. The Flute (Fl.) part is silent. The Oboe (Ob.) and Bassoon (Bsn.) parts continue their rhythmic accompaniment.

246

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

mf

mp

Musical score for measures 246-250. The Flute (Fl.) part enters with a melodic line. The Oboe (Ob.) and Bassoon (Bsn.) parts continue their accompaniment. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp*.

251

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

Musical score for measures 251-255. The Flute (Fl.) part continues its melodic line. The Oboe (Ob.) and Bassoon (Bsn.) parts continue their accompaniment. A crescendo is marked in the Oboe part.

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 15

256

Fl. *f*

Ob.

Bsn. *mf*

261

Fl.

Ob. *f*

Bsn.

266

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

271

Fl. *mp* *p*

Ob. *mf* *mp*

Bsn. *mp* *p*

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 16

276

Fl. *mf* *mp*

Ob. *mp*

Bsn. *mp*

281

Fl. *mf*

Ob. *mf*

Bsn. *mf*

287

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

292

Fl. *f*

Ob. *f*

Bsn. *f*

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 17

297

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

mp

mp

mp

This system contains measures 297 through 301. The Flute part (treble clef) features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, including a trill in measure 300. The Oboe part (treble clef) mirrors the flute's melody. The Bassoon part (bass clef) provides a harmonic accompaniment with eighth and quarter notes. All three instruments play at a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. Measure 301 ends with a double bar line.

302

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

p

mf

p

p

mp

rit.

This system contains measures 302 through 307. In measure 302, the Flute and Bassoon play at a piano (*p*) dynamic, while the Oboe is silent. By measure 303, the Oboe joins at *p*. In measure 304, the Flute and Oboe play at mezzo-forte (*mf*), while the Bassoon returns at *p*. Measure 305 begins with a ritardando (*rit.*) marking. In measure 306, the Flute and Oboe play at *p*, and the Bassoon at *mp*. The system concludes in measure 307 with a 6/8 time signature change and a final double bar line.

308

Fl.

Ob.

Bsn.

molto rit.

This system contains measures 308 through 312. A *molto rit.* (molto ritardando) marking is placed above the first measure. The Flute part (treble clef) has a long, sustained note in measure 308, followed by a melodic line. The Oboe (treble clef) and Bassoon (bass clef) also have long, sustained notes in measure 308. The system ends with a final double bar line in measure 312.