

The Blind Men and the Elephant

for reed quintet

2017

Robbie McCarthy

Instrumentation:

Oboe
Soprano Saxophone
Bb Clarinet
Bass Clarinet
Bassoon

Optional Narrator

Program Notes:

We all harbor a little blind philosopher inside us. "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 underlying reason is that our life experiences or perceptions 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. This reality 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 truth?

This musical parable features poetry by John Godfrey Saxe, a poet and satirist best known for introducing our story to Western audiences. The poem contains an attended "moral," not spoken during the music:

So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!

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: Snake* and its performance. Poetry should always be followed by music with as little pause as needed. This continues in quick sequence until *Sixth: Rope* is underway. The *Closing* stanza should be read in measure 298 or 299, and wrapped up by measure 307.

A narrator is preferred to read the text, but ensemble members are welcome to read as well. Members may alternate, trade off, or select the saxophone player to narrate all, since the saxophone rests from measure 298-307, and is the only ensemble member available to read the *Closing* stanza.

If stanzas are removed or selected for performance with time constraints, please append the poetry numbers and stanza title numbers as necessary. For example, if first third and fifth stanzas are selected for a short recital, the following changes should be made to the printed program and text:

First: Wall

Second: Snake

Third: Fan

Introduction

It was three men of Indostan...

Second: Snake

The Second approach'd the animal...

Third: Fan

The Third, who chanced to touch the ear...

Indicated tempo markings throughout should be exact, though *accelerando* and *ritardando* markings should be highly exaggerated, especially in stanzas one and three. The fermata and tempo markings of the fifth stanza should be as free-flowing as possible without falling apart.

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

for reed quintet

First: Wall ♩ = 116

rit.

a tempo

The musical score is for a reed quintet, consisting of Oboe, Soprano Sax, Clarinet in Bb, Bass Clarinet, and Bassoon. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 5, and the second system contains measures 6 through 10. The time signature is 4/4. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score includes various dynamics such as *f* (forte), *p* (piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte), and *mp* (mezzo-piano). It also features performance instructions like *rit.* (ritardando) and *a tempo*. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, slurs, and articulation marks. The first system shows a complex interplay of rhythms and dynamics across the five instruments. The second system continues this interplay, with some instruments playing triplets and others providing harmonic support.

Oboe

Soprano Sax

Clarinet in Bb

Bass Clarinet

Bassoon

Ob.

S. Sax.

Bb Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 2

12

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

p *mf p* *f*

p *f p* *f*

p *mf p* *f p*

fp *fp* *fp* *f p* *f*

mf p *f*

17

rit. *a tempo* *rit.* *a tempo* *rit.*

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mf *f*

mf *f* *p*

f *mf*

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 3

22

Ob.

f *mp*

S. Sax.

p

B♭ Cl.

flutter tongue

mp *f* *mp* *mp*

B. Cl.

f *mp*

Bsn.

p *f* *mp*³

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 4

30

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

33

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

Second: Spear $\text{♩} = 108$

p *ff*

p *ff*

p *ff*

p *ff*

p *ff*

7
4

slap tongue

f

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 5

38

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

4

3

4

mp

fp

f

44

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

4

3

4

3

4

fp

fp

fp

fp

fp

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 6

49

Ob.

S. Sax.

B. Cl.

Cl.

Bsn.

f *p*

f *p*

f *p*

p

f *p*

3 4 3 4

54

Ob.

f *p* *f* *p* *f* *mf*

S. Sax.

f *p* *f* *p* *f* *fp*

B♭ Cl.

4 3 4 3 4 3

B. Cl.

4 4 4 4 4 4

Bsn.

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

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 7

59

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

fp

fp

fp

Oboe

64

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

fp

mf

f

fp

fp

mp

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 8

69

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

fp

fp

74

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

f

mp

mp

f

mp

p

mp

p

mp

f

slap tongue

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 9

79

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

85

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mf *p*

mf *p*

f *mp*

mp

3 4 3 4

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 10

90

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mf *p* *mf* *p* *f* *f* *mp* *f*

4 3 4 4 3 4

95

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mp *f* *mp* *f* *mp* *f*

3 4 3 4 3 4

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 11

Ob. *mf* *mp*

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl. *mf* *mp*

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

Bsn. *mf* *mp*

100

4 3 7 4

Ob. *p*

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl. *p*

B. Cl.

Bsn. *f*

105

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 12

111

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

p

117

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 13

Third: Snake ♩ = 116

122

Ob.

S. Sx.

B♭ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

f

f

f

ff

f

127

Ob.

S. Sx.

B♭ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

p

p

p

p

p

rit.

3

3

3

3

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 14

131 *a tempo*

Ob. *mp*

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl. *mf*

B. Cl. *mf*

Bsn. *mf* *mp*

135

Ob. *fp*

S. Sx. *mf*

B $\flat$ Cl. *mf*

B. Cl. *fp*

Bsn. *mf* *fp*

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 15

138

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mp

p

mf

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

141

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

p

p

mf

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 16

Ob. ¹⁴⁵ *mf*

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn. *mf*

Ob. ¹⁴⁸

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl. *p*

Bsn. *p*

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 17

rit. $\text{♩} = 100$

151

Ob. *mf* *p* *ff*

S. Sx. *mf* *p* *ff*

B $\flat$ Cl. *mf* *p* *ff*

B. Cl. *ff*

Bsn. *ff*

154

Ob. *ff*

S. Sx. *ff*

B $\flat$ Cl. *ff*

B. Cl. *ff*

Bsn. *ff*

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 18

158

Ob.

S. Sax.

B. Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

ff

ff

ff

161 *accel.* ♩ = 116

Ob. *mf*

S. Sax. *f*

B♭ Cl. *f*

B. Cl. *mf*

Bsn. *mf*

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 19

165

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mf

mf

mf

f *dim.*

accel.

168

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

p *ff*

f *dim.*

p *ff*

f *dim.*

p *ff*

a tempo

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 20

Fourth: Tree ♩ = 68

172

Ob.

S. Sax.

B♭ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

p

p

p

p

[illegible]

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 21

184

Ob.

mp

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

espress.

mf

190

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 22

rit.

♩ = 68

196

Ob.

S. Sx.

B♭ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mp

mp

espress.

mp

mp

5

4

Fifth: Fan ♩ = 68

202

Ob.

S. Sx.

B♭ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mp

mp

p

mf

mp

p

5

4

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 23

209

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mp

mf

p

217

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mp

f

mp

f

piu mosso

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 24

224 *a tempo*

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mp *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf*

6 3 4 4 4

Sixth: Rope ♩. = 132

231

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mp *mf* *mp* *mp* *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf*

3 9 8

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 25

239

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

245

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mf

mf

mf

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 26

251

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

f

mf

257

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

p

f

p

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 27

263

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

269

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mf

mp

mf

mp

mp

mp

mp

p

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 28

274

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mf

mp

p

280

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

mf

mp

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 29

286

Ob. *mp* *mf* *f*

S. Sx. *f*

B $\flat$ Cl. *f*

B. Cl. *mf* *f*

Bsn. *mp* *mf* *f*

292

Ob.

S. Sx.

B $\flat$ Cl.

B. Cl.

Bsn.

The Blind Men and the Elephant - Score - 30

298

Ob. *mp* *p* *mf* *rit.*

S. Sx.

B♭ Cl. *mp* *p* *p*

B. Cl. *mp* *p* *mp*

Bsn. *mp*

304

Ob. *molto rit.*

S. Sx. *mf*

B♭ Cl.

B. Cl. *mf*

Bsn.