

I AM PHOENIX

**AJ Harbison**

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A song cycle on poems for two voices by Paul Fleischman

I. The Wandering Albatross

II. The Actor

III. The Common Egret

IV. The Phoenix

For two female voices and guitar

**AJ Harbison**

Performance notes:

This work may be performed with a classical/nylon-string guitar (with optional amplification), or with an amplified electric guitar. If an electric guitar is used, the performer is encouraged to experiment with light effects such as chorus or flange to enhance the tone quality, but the effects should never interfere with the clarity of individual notes or the overall musical line.

Duration: ca. 9 minutes

*This work is dedicated to Paul Fleischman, with deep gratitude for trusting a young composer, and for allowing me to realize my childhood dream of setting these magnificent poems to music.*

Text from *I Am Phoenix: Poems for Two Voices* by Paul Fleischman (New York: HarperCollins, 1985). HarperTrophy edition with illustrations by Ken Nutt, 1989. Used by permission of the author.

# I AM PHOENIX

## I. The Wandering Albatross

Paul Fleischman

AJ Harbison

**Majestically** ♩ = 90

Voice I  
*mf* Be - hold the wan - - d'ring al - ba - tross!  
*mp* *p*

Voice II  
*mf* Be - hold the wan - - d'ring al - ba - tross!  
*mp* *p*

Guitar  
 VII CVII l.v. l.v.  
*f* *p* *mp* *mf*

7 *mp wistfully*  
 Roaming - Roam - ing the lone - ly o - ceans

*p*  
 al - ba tross wan - d'ring

l.v. l.v. sim.  
*mp* *mf*

11 *mf*  
 Be - lieved to bear the souls of lost mar - i - ners

*mp* *p* *mf* *mp*  
 wan - d'ring Sai - lors swept o - ver - board

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

15 *mp* *mf* *mf* *mp* *mf* *f* *mf* *mp*

wan - d'ring al - ba-tross Men lost to storms and sharks

wan - d'ring al - ba-tross

*f* *sub. mp* *f* *mp* *fp*

18 *mf* *p* *mf* *f* ritard.

al - ba-tross roam- ing a - ris- en a - soar- ing

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

al - ba-tross roam- ing The ship - wrecked The storm - drowned

21 *a tempo* *mp* *p* *mp* *quasi ritard.* *mp* *p*

Al - ba-tross! wan - d'ring al - ba tross Wan d'ring wan - d'ring al - ba tross!

*mp* *N.B.* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp* *p*

Al - ba-tross! wan - d'ring ceaseless - ly jour - ney - ing Wan - d'ring al - ba tross!

*ten. mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp* *p* *CVII* *VII* *mf*

## II. The Actor

Allegro ♩ = 150

*mf* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

I

5

seem I ape I

*mf* *f* *mf* *f*

seem a shrike ape the gull

sul B and G

9

sing just like

*mp* *dolce* *p*

sing just like the car - di - nal.

*mp* *mf*

14

*p* *mp*

mim- ic\_ coots mir-ror

*p* *mp*

I mim- ic\_ I mir-ror\_

*f* *mp*

18

*mf* *mp* *mf molto espress.*

crows im- i - tate the o - ri oles\_ I

*mf*

I im- i - tate

*mf* *mp* *mf dolce*

23

*f*

cop - y I ech - o I know by heart

*mf molto espress.* *f* *mf*

cop - y wrens\_ ech - o owls\_ I know by heart the

29 ritard.

a tempo ♩. = ♩

cat - bird's calls.

*f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

33

But all of that sham

is simply sham

*mf* *mf* *f*

37

is what\_ I am.

For a mock-ing-bird I am.

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

## III. The Common Egret

**Tempo Rubato** ♩ = ca. 90 - 96

*p* *n.* *mf* *spoken, indignantly (pitches approximate inflection)*

com- mon\_ Com- mon!

*mp* *mf* *mf* *spoken, indignantly (pitches approximate inflection)*

They call us com- mon\_ e- grets\_ The in - jus- tice!

*mf* *f*

*all chords (3 or more notes) rolled*

6 *mp* *f* *mf*

As if to be so white that snow clouds\_

*f* *mf* *f*

snow is filled with en - vy clouds con- sumed with

*mf* *f* *mf*

10 *mp* *f* *mf* *slight rit. a tempo*

that milk rates as or - di- nar- y\_

*mf* *mp*

spite that milk should seem mo- las - ses

*mp sub. f* *mp*

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of three systems of music. The first system (measures 1-5) features a vocal line with lyrics 'com- mon\_ Com- mon!' and 'They call us com- mon\_ e- grets\_ The in - jus- tice!'. The piano accompaniment includes chords and a melodic line. The second system (measures 6-9) continues the vocal line with lyrics 'As if to be so white that snow clouds\_ snow is filled with en - vy clouds con- sumed with'. The piano accompaniment features a prominent triplet in the bass line. The third system (measures 10-13) concludes the vocal line with lyrics 'that milk rates as or - di- nar- y\_ spite that milk should seem mo- las - ses'. The piano accompaniment includes a triplet in the bass line and a melodic line in the right hand.

15

*f* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

Gold should be so slan-dered dia - monds scorned as worth - less

Gold dia - monds

*mf*

19

*f* slight rit. *mf* *p* *n.* *scoffingly*

ru bies\_ spurned e - grets com - mon.

*f* *mp* *mf* *scoffingly*

ru bies\_ if com - mon e <sup>3</sup> grets are but com - mon.

*f* *mp* *mf*

CVII

## IV. The Phoenix

Maestoso, broadly ♩ = 100

First system of the musical score. It consists of three staves. The top two staves are vocal lines, and the bottom staff is a piano accompaniment. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is Maestoso, broadly, with a quarter note equal to 100 beats. The first vocal line starts with a forte (f) dynamic and the lyrics "I am Phoe-nix Phoe-nix ev-er". The second vocal line continues with "I am Phoe-nix the fire-bird! Phoe-nix". The piano accompaniment features triplet patterns in the left hand.

I am Phoe-nix Phoe-nix ev-er

I am Phoe-nix the fire-bird! Phoe-nix

Second system of the musical score, starting at measure 6. It consists of three staves. The top two staves are vocal lines, and the bottom staff is a piano accompaniment. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is Maestoso, broadly. The first vocal line starts with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic and the lyrics "last - ing! I am Phoe-nix! Im- mor - tal\_ e - ter -". The second vocal line continues with "I am Phoe-nix! Im- mor - tal\_ e - ter - nal\_ un-dy- ing". The piano accompaniment features chords and triplet patterns in the left hand.

last - ing! I am Phoe-nix! Im- mor - tal\_ e - ter -

I am Phoe-nix! Im- mor - tal\_ e - ter - nal\_ un-dy- ing

Third system of the musical score, starting at measure 12. It consists of three staves. The top two staves are vocal lines, and the bottom staff is a piano accompaniment. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is Maestoso, broadly. The first vocal line starts with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic and the lyrics "- nal\_ I live in A - ra - bia". The second vocal line continues with "A - ra - bia I'm as large\_ as an". The piano accompaniment features chords and triplet patterns in the left hand.

- nal\_ I live in A - ra - bia

A - ra - bia I'm as large\_ as an

17 *mp* *mp* *mf* *mp*

ea - gle My feath- ers\_ are\_ scar- let, pur - ple, gold - - en.

ea - gle scar - let, pur - - - ple.

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

23 *mf* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mp*

one There have ne-<sup>3</sup>ver been more. I am my own daugh-ter

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

There is but one Phoe- nix-- I am my own moth-er

*mf* *mp* *mp*

30 *f* *mf* *mp*

grand-daugh-ter great-grand-daugh ter\_ I was will

*f* *mf*

grand-moth-er great-grand - moth- er\_ I was my own\_ mid-wife, will

*mf* *f* *mp*

35 **ritard.**

be my grave-dig-ger. I gath-er up twigs

be For each time I dis-cov-er I'm be-com-ing old

VIII VII *mf*

of sweet-smell ing spic - es and build a nest on the top\_ of a palm. Then I wait for

sweet-smell-ing spic - es I climb in-side.

**Tempo I**  
*mp*

39 noon fire I flap my wings burst in-to

and when the sun's hot as fire till the twigs be-neath me burst

*f* *mf* *f*

47

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

flames which I fan with my wings and fan and I Eight days pass.

*mf* *mp* *p*

which I fan with my wings and fan and fan and fan till the fire are no more. Eight days pass.

CXII

*mp* *mf*

56

*mp* *mf*

The ash-es cool. in the morn-ing, just as the sun

*mp* *mf*

Then, on the ninth day at dawn, ris-es in the east

*p* *mp* *mf*

*ritenuto* *a tempo*

64 *f* *mf* *mp*

I rise from the ash-es and fly up-ward new my own moth-er grand-moth-er

*f* *mf* *mp*

I rise a new Phoe-nix daugh-ter grand-daugh-ter

VII

*ff* *fff* *mf*

71 *mf* *mp*

great-grand-moth-er and on and on and on and on and on un-til the end

great-grand-daugh-ter and on and on and on un-til the end

CXII

78 *p* *p* VII

of time

of time

*p* VII

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