

Backyard Songs

**3 Poems by Gwendolyn Brooks
for Soprano, Flute, and Harp**

Don Freund

Backyard Songs emulates the carefree virtuosity heard in the jazz singing of Ella Fitzgerald and the raw emotional power communicated by Memphis blues singer Ruby Wilson. The voice-dominated "songs" - settings of poems by Pulitzer Prize-winning Chicago poet Gwendolyn Brooks - are introduced and linked by "scat" sections in which the voice is instrumentally integrated to create a real mixed-trio texture. Dramatically, the set moves from the whimsical naughtiness of "a song in the front yard," through the threatening suppressed violence of the up-tempo "We Real Cool," and concludes with the wrenching, cathartic blues-cortège "of DeWitt Williams on his way to Lincoln Cemetery."

Backyard Songs was commissioned by the Jubal Trio

a song in the front yard

I've stayed in the front yard all of my life.
I want a peek at the back
Where it's rough and untended and hungry weed grows.
A girl gets sick of a rose.

I want to go in the back yard now
And maybe down the alley,
To where the charity children play.
I want a good time today.

They do some wonderful things.
They have some wonderful fun.
My mother sneers, but I say it's fine
How they don't have to go in at quarter to nine.
My mother, she tells me that Johnnie Mae
Will grow up to be a bad woman.
That George'll be taken to jail soon or late
(On account of last winter he sold our back gate).
But I say it's fine. Honest, I do.
And I'd like to be a bad woman, too,
And wear the brave stockings of night-black lace
And strut down the streets with paint on my face.

WE REAL COOL

The Pool Players.
Seven at the Golden Shovel.

We real cool. We
Left school. We

Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We
Die soon.

of De Witt Williams on his way to Lincoln Cemetery

He was born in Alabama.
He was bred in Illinois.
He was nothing but a
Plain black boy.

Swing low swing low sweet sweet chariot.
Nothing but a plain black boy.

Drive him past the Pool Hall.
Drive him past the Show.
Blind within his casket,
But maybe he will know.

Down through Forty-seventh Street:
Underneath the L,
And Northwest Corner, Prairie,
That he loved so well.

Don't forget the Dance Halls-
Warwick and Savoy,
Where he picked his women, where
He drank his liquid joy.

Born in Alabama.
Bred in Illinois.
He was nothing but a
Plain black boy.

Swing low swing low sweet sweet chariot.
Nothing but a plain black boy.

"a song in the front yard," "WE REAL COOL,"
"of DeWitt Williams on his way to Lincoln Cemetery,"
© 1987 by Gwendolyn Brooks,
The David Company, Chicago, Illinois.

Backyard Songs

Don Freund (1990)

for the Jubal Trio

(Scat Intro)

Flute in C (also Alto Flute) *p, dark* *mf* *playful*

Soprano *p, dark* *mf* *playful*
oo - wah - buh zeh - wuh - buh - duh zeh - wuh - buh - duh

Harp *ff* *p.d.t.* *mf* *p.d.t.*

DCB Harp Part edited '96, with the help of Ann Yeung
E♭ FG #A Corrected 2009 thanks to Kristie Withers Smith.

4 *mf* *p.d.t.* *f*

5 *5/4* *f*

zoo buh - doo - wah - bee doo - wuh - dah bi - di lee - dee lee - dee ra - da - ba -

D♭
E♭

6 *4/4* *f* *fp* *p* *3* *3*

7 *4/4* *f* *fp* *p* *3* *3*

8 *4/4* *mp* *5*

tow skuh juh-duh wah bee dah

m.o. *f* *D♭* *D♭* *G♭* *D♯* *B♭*

9 *gathering momentum* 10 *4/4* ♩ = 120

mp *gathering momentum* *mf*

mp *gathering momentum* *mf*

preh - tee - kuh - zah-vah spuh-doo - buh wut - chup - pah

staccato *4/4* ♩ = 120 *f*

3 *gathering momentum*

F# E♭ C# D♯

11 *poco accel.* 12 *mf*

poco accel. *mf*

doo - wi - rah - vah - tah doo - wi -

mf C♯ E# E♭ D♭

13 *6/8* ♩ = 132

6/8 ♩ = 132 *f*

skah - vah - buh - tuh skah - vah - buh - tuh doo - wee

6/8 ♩ = 132 *f*

D♯ G# E♭

14 *4/4* *f* 15 *3/4* ♩ = 80 16 *4/4* ♩ = 60

f *f* *fp*

lee - dee lee - dee kuh - tuh - wow! mah (ow)

4/4 *3/4* ♩ = 80 *4/4* ♩ = 60

mf *f*

B♯ F# G# C#

17 *f, brilliant* *mf* *f* *3/8*

oo tup - puh tuh - rah kuh - ruh boh - dee

4/8 ♩ = 184 (fast!) *3/8* *f*

19 20 21 22 23 *A b*

boh - dip - pow dip - pah zup - pee -

heavy (fingernails) *(simile)*

very dry *E b* *B b* *F #* *E b* *A*

24 *4/8* 25 26 *3/8*

dul zuk - kuh too - ruh kuh - too - ruh fuht - tup -

f *fingernail gliss. (back of 3 nails)* *ff p.d.t.* *ff percussive damps*

E b *F #* *A b*

27 28 29 30 31

pud - duk kut chah mvah - lih zuh - vah

ff *p* *(buzz!)* *p*

(fingernail damps) *G b* *A b* *E b* *B b*

32 33 34 35

p

zuh-vah skuh-vah buh tohp - pah - di-lee - bee pah - di-lee - bee

B \flat G \sharp A \flat G \flat E \flat

36 37 38

mf

mf

normal staccato

f

f p.d.t.

pah - di - lee - bee ruht doo - bee dah - wuh dah-buh doo - wuhp - put - chah

A \sharp E \flat E \flat

39 40 41 42

f

f

p.d.t.

p.d.t.

"isolated" (legato)

m.o.

f

pah-dee-bee ruht doo - bee dah - wuh

B \sharp C \sharp A \sharp D \flat G \sharp D \flat m.o. f D \flat G \flat

43 44 45

mp

mp

mp

dah - buh doo - wuht - dah - buh doo - wuht bsah - vah zhah - vah doo - bi

D \sharp D \sharp

46 *mp* 47 48 *mf* *mf*

doo-wee zah - bah zhah - vah doo - bi doo - wee tsah-wahzhah - vah boh - ri

(damp)

G^b G[#] C[#] D^b G^b A^b A[#]

49 *f* 50 *ff* 51 52 *ffp* 53 *ffp* $\text{♩} = 60$

doo-wee buh doo wee puht tub - but - tuf - fuht - too $\text{♩} = 60$

A^b G^b - G^b A^b 56

54 *mf* *mp* 55 *legato* 3 3 3 3 3

wuht brah - tuh-vuh grehdah-boo zoowah - doo-buh tee-rah doo-wah zhuh-dee

G^b B^b A^b - A^b - C^b - C^b

57 58 $\text{♩} = 80$ 59 $\text{♩} = 80$ *mf* $\text{♩} = 80$ *I've*

wah-dah-boh dee - ri zhah-vuh *I've*

B[#] C[#] D[#] EFG[#]A

88 89 90 91

won - der - ful fun. My mo - ther sneers, but I say it's fine

f Pedal buzz *mf* percussive damps

C^b E^b E^b E^b E^b A^b A[#] — E^b —

92 93 94 95

How they don't have to go in at quar - ter to nine. My

f *mf*

f p.d.l.t. *sfz*

D^b A^b B^b E^b E^b C^b - C^b A^b D[#] - D[#] - D[#] C^b - C^b F^b G^b C[#] G^b

96 97 98 bend G

mo - ther, she tells me that John - nie Mae Will grow up to be a bad

mf

mp (rhythmic damp on rest) *simile*

E^b G^b A^b - G^b G^b

99 100 bend F[#] 101 bend D^b

wo-man. That George'll be ta - ken to jail soon or late

F^b G^b G^b C^b E^b C[#]

12
102 103 104

mp *bend Db*

(On ac-count of last win-ter he sold our back gate).

a tempo

fingernail buzz-damps (r.h.)
Take Time

f

105 106 107

But I say it's fine. Hon - est, I do. And

108 109 110

bend Bb

I'd like to be a bad wo-man, too. I've

111 112 113

stayed in the front yard all of my life.

114 *2/8*

115 *4/8* 116 117 118

I want a peek at the back, the back— And wear the brave stockings of

p.d.l.t. *p.d.l.t. sempre* *f heavy*

B^b C^b A[#] A^b G[#] C[#] C^b B^b E^b C^b

119 120 121

night - black lace And

mf *f* *m.o.* *p.d.l.t. sempre*

E^b E C G^b C^b G C

122 123 124

strut down the streets with paint

mf *p.d.l.t.*

B^b

125 126 127 128

on my face. A girl gets sick

ff *p.d.l.t.* *m.o.* *very heavy*

D^b B^b -E^b ff B^b E^b

of a rose. 5/8

sfz *p* *f*

p.d.l.t. *p* *pp*

B \flat G \sharp A \sharp D \sharp D \flat D \sharp B \flat C \flat

4/8 $\text{♩} = 120$

mf bright *mf*

doo-wi duhbuhdah-buh doo-widuhbuh dah-buhdoo-wuh a-doo-bi duh-ba doo-wi doo-wahlah-buhdah zah -

4/8 $\text{♩} = 120$

mp relaxed, but clear

A \sharp C \sharp E \flat D \sharp

3/8 136 4/8 137 138 139 4/8

f

buh-doo-wi zah - buh-doo-wi lah-buhdah-bah zoo-wah zhuhbuhduh fah -

G \sharp G \sharp

140 141 142

tah lah - bi-dee - boh doh - wah doh - wah joh - wah joh - wah doh -

f subito

B \flat E \sharp E \flat E \sharp E \flat B \sharp B

16
159

160 161 162 163

mp *f* *p* *mf*

kuh dah vah dah voh doo bi jeh-tah mah - voo

nail scrape whistle *p.d.l.t.* *f*

(no pitch)[⊕] C#

164 165 166 167 168

f *f* *f* *f* *f subito*

zuh-bah - duh zuh-bah - duh deh vah zah - bah - dah

f *f* *f* *f* *f subito*

E^bF⁴ G⁴

169 170 171 172 173

Take Alto Flute

mp threatening

We real cool. We

mp driving *mp* sempre *mp* sempre

f *f* *f*

174 175 176 177 178

Alto Flute

mp (concert pitch)

Left school. We Lurk

mp sempre

f

179 180 181 182

late. We Strike straight.

f *p.d.l.t.* *mp* *mp sempre*

D^b *C^b* *f*

183 184 185 186 187

We Sing sin. We Thin

mp sempre *mp sempre*

f

188 189 190 191

gin. We

f *mp*

192 193 194 195 196

Jazz Jazz Jazz June. We real

mp *mp sempre* *mp sempre* *half-spoken (stage whisper)* *p*

D[#] *F[#]* *A[#]* *f* *C^b* *F^b* *C[#]* *D^b*

197 198 199 200 201

real cool. *p* We real cool. We
 cool. *half-spoken (stage whisper)* We Left
f *f* We real cool.
A^b

202 203 204 205 206

real cool. We Left school. *mp*
 school. We Lurk late.
 We real cool. *f*
knuckles on sound board

207 208 209 210 211

half-spoken Strike straight. We real
 We Strike straight. We Sing
half-spoken Strike straight. *mp* *mp sempre* We real *mp sempre* cool.
D^b *f* *C^b* *f*

212 213 214 215 216

We Sing sin. *(port.)* We real cool. *mp*
 sin. We Thin gin. real cool.
 We Sing sin. *(port.)*
f

217 218 219 220 221

We Jazz Jazz Jazz June.

f Pedal buzz *mp* sempre *f*

D^p *D[#]* *F[#]* *A*

222 223 224

duh - buh duh - buh doo - yah buh - tuh pah - yah duh - buh duh - buh tah - yah

mp *f* *mp*

225 226 227

buh duh-buh doo - bi dah-bah luh - buh luh - buh doo - wi dah - bah pah - duh a - doo - wuh duh - buh

We Jazz June.

f *mp*

mf bend pitch

228 229 230 231 232

doo - wi doo - wi yuh duh buh - doo wi - bi - tah - rah tah - ruh bud - duh We Die We Die

pp *pp*

sing (ghostly!) *pp* *pp*

20 233 234 235

soon.

soon.

pp

duh - buh duh - buh doo - wi dah - bah doo - wi doo - wi yuh duh buh - doo

soon.

mp

236 237 238 239 240 241

We Die

sing through flute

p melancholy

play

p melancholy

soon.

flat hands on soundboard

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 72, \text{ very free}$

sing (ghostly!)

soon.

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 72, \text{ very free}$

soon.

mp

242 243 244 245 246

p melancholy

ah - di - ah - doo - ah ah - di - ah - doo - ah

247 248 249 250

ah - di - ah - doo - wah zah - doo bi - dah wah - zah - oh - bi - ah - doo doo - wah - doo - wah - zhi

251 252 253 *ritardando*

doo - bi - ah - doo - ah doo - ah doo - ah oo wah - oo

Blues (of DeWitt Williams on his way to Lincoln Cemetery)

254 $\text{♩} = 66$ 255 256

mf 3 He was born in Al - a - bam - a. He was

mf $\text{♩} = 66$

DC#B
E#FGA'

257 258 259

3 *mp* bred in Il - li - nois. He was noth - ing but a plain black boy.

F# F# Eb C#

260 261 262 263

3 3 3 3 Swing low swing low sweet sweet char - i - ot.

A# Ab F# F# Eb Eb Bb Eb Eb B#

264 265 266

mf 3 3 3 3 Noth - ing but a plain black boy.

cresc. *F# F# Eb Eb C# Ab*

267 268 269

Drive him past the Pool Hall. Drive him past the Show. Blind with - in his

f *f* *p* *dark*

E^b *G*^b *G*^b *D*[#] *F*[#]/*D*^b

270 271 272

cas-ket, but may-be he will know. Down through For-ty-sev-enth Street:

mf *mf* *mf*

B^b *F*[#]/*B*^b *F*[#] *F*[#] *E*^b

273 274 275

Un-der-neath the L, And North-west Cor-ner, Prai-rie, That he loved so well.

mp *mp* *mf*

E^b *B*^b *E*^b *E*^b *C*^b *C*[#]

276 277

Don't for - get the Dance Halls— War - wick and Sa - voy,

f *f*

F[#]/*C*^b

278

279

Where he picked his wom-en, where He drank his li- quid joy.

Chord symbols: A^b , A^{\natural} , B^{\natural} , A^b , F^{\natural} , F^{\sharp} , B^b

280

281

282

Born in Al- a- bam - a. Bred in Il- li- nois. He was noth- ing but a plain black

Chord symbols: F^{\natural} , E^b/B^b , F^{\sharp} , F^{\natural} , $C^{\natural}/E^{\natural}$

283

284

285

boy. Drive him past the Pool Hall. Drive him past the Show.

Chord symbols: E^b , E^b/B^b , A^b , B^{\natural} , D^b , D^{\natural} , F^{\sharp}

286

287

Blind Blind with- in his cas - ket, but may- be may- be

Chord symbols: G^{\sharp}/D^{\sharp} , D^b , $G^{\natural}/D^{\natural}$, D^{\natural} , A^{\sharp} , A^b/D^{\sharp} , $F^{\natural}/D^{\natural}$, C^{\sharp}/G^{\sharp} , G^{\natural}

Performance markings: *p.d.l.t.*, *m.o.*

24
288

may - be he will know. Down through For - ty - sev - enth Street:

290

Un - der - neath the L, And North - west Cor - ner, Prai - rie,

292

That he loved That he loved so well.

294

Don't for - get the Dance Halls— for - get the Dance Halls— War - wick and Sa - voy,

p.d.l.t.

296 ³ ³ ³ ³ 297 ³ ³ ³ ³

Where he picked his wom - en, where He drank his li - quid drank

F[♯] *A[♯]* *G^b* *G[♯] B^b* *G[♯]*

298 ³ ³ ³ ³ 299 *ff* *ff* *jet whistle*

his li - quid joy. He was born in Al - a - bam - a.

G[♯] *D^b* *B^b* *G^b* *-D[♯]* *-D[♯]* *-D^b* *-D[♯]*

300 301 302

He was bred in Il - li - nois. He was noth - ing but a plain black boy.

f *ff (tutta forza)*

D[♯] *G[♯] - G[♯]* *A^b* *E^b C[♯]* *F[♯]* *F[♯]* *E^b C* *E^b*

303 *f* Swing low swing swing low sweet sweet char - i -

304 3 305 3

A[♯] *A*^b *B*[♯] *B*^b *E*[♯] *A*[♯]

306 *mf* 307 308 *ff* (let loose)

ot. Noth-ing but a plain black black boy. Swing low swing

begin holding back the tempo

sempr ff *ff huge!*

E^b *A*^b *B*[♯] *D*^b *F*[♯]/*D*[♯] *F*[♯] *E*[♯] *E*^b *-B*^b

309 *ff* 310 311 *ff*

Swing low swing swing low sweet sweet sweet

ff, immense! *sempr ff*

A[♯] *B*[♯] *A*^b/*B*^b *B*[♯] *B*^b *E*[♯]/*D*[♯]

312 313

sweet char - i - ot. *still slower* Noth - ing but a

ff *f*

A D# D Eb B C# F#

314 315 316 317

ff *wail!* *meno f* *p* *p*

plain plain plain black boy. ah - di - ah - doo - ah

4/8 ♩ = 138 *4/8* ♩ = 66

F C# Eb

318 319 320 321 322

4/8 ♩ = 138 *3/8* ♩ = 66 *4/8* ♩ = 66 *4/8* ♩ = 138 *3/8* ♩ = 66

(This last phrase may be sung an 8ve lower.)

a - doo - bi - dah - wah - m *(sounds 8ve)*

p

Eb F# A#

