

Dave Soldier
Kurt Vonnegut

Ice-9 Ballads

Narrator, male singer (tenor/baritone range), three sopranos
clarinet, saxophone (double on alto & tenor), trombone, harmonica
three violins (one double on mandolin or extra mandolinist)
guitar, harp, synthesizer, bass
two percussionists including a balophone (or marimba substitute)

opus 14, 1995
version from December 21, 2011
about 30 minutes in length

Dave Soldier
ds43@columbia.edu
917-805-5735

Ice-9 Ballads Opus 14, composed 1995

Lyrics from Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* with edits as per his agreement, music by Dave Soldier

The original recording is with Vonnegut as the narrator, in live performance an actor of any empathetic type can do his part.

On amplification: in a quiet concert hall, the only amplification required would be quiet amps for the synthesizer, electric bass, and harmonica on one piece, and possibly the narrator. In other rooms, amplification will be useful, and it to the disgression of the performers and conductor.

- 1 narrator
- 1 male singer who can sing in West Indian dialect
- 3 sopranos who can sound West Indian
- 1 clarinet
- 1 saxophone, doubling on alto and tenor
- 1 trombone
- 1 diatonic "blues" harmonica (*if impossible to find the player, use a trumpet*) or chromatic diatonics required are D, Ab, B, Eb, C or F: *Mona's Funeral Music* uses an amp as in Chicago blues / Little Walter style if possible
- 3 violins, one doubles on mandolin: if a mandolin is impossible it could be played on the violin with a plectrum
- 1 guitarist on acoustic steel string, a jazz hollow body electric guitar, and 12 string with a capo
- 1 harp
- 1 electronic keyboard with amp and
- 1 phonograph or CD player or computer with amp for playback of Meade Lux Lewis recording – can be played by anyone except the clarinet
- 1 double bass with a double on *electric bass on Nice Very Nice and Big Tyrant*
- 2 percussionists: the instruments can be redistributed at will, but Perc 2 has the balophone part
 - Percussionist 1:
snare drum with brushes, crash cymbal, hi-hat woodblock, gourd or single conga (or djembe or bata), trap set *if trap set can't be used, adapt the other instruments for Big Tyrant*
 - Percussionist 2:
balophone (a West African xylophone) *if the balophone is impossible to locate, use a marimba,*
parade bass drum

I've written the balophone part in two ways: on a single stave where easy to read, but on two staves when the left hand is too low to read easily with the right.

1. *Annihilation Life*

Narrator reads in southwestern or midwestern intonation)

If I were a younger man, I would write a history of human stupidity (*pause*); and I would climb to the top of Mount McCabe and lie down on my back with my history for a pillow; and I would take from the ground some of the blue-white poison that makes statues of men; and I would make a statue of myself, lying on my back, grinning horribly, and thumbing my nose at You Know Who.

2. Dyot Meet Mat

As in book

God made mud
God got lonesome
So God said to some of the
mud, "sit up!"
See all I've made
the hills, the sea, the sky, the
stars.
And I was some of the mud
that got to sit up and look
around.
Lucky me, lucky mud.
I, mud, sat up and saw what a
nice job God had done.
Nice going, God!
Nobody but you could have
done it, God!
I certainly couldn't have.
I feel very unimportant
compared to You.
The only way I can feel the
least bit important is to think of
all the mud that didn't even get
to sit up and look around.
I got so much, and most mud
got so little.
Thank you for the honour!
Now mud lies down again and
goes to sleep.
What memories for mud to
have!
What interesting other kinds
of sitting-up mud I met!
I loved everything I saw!
Good night.
I will go to heaven now.
I can hardly wait...
to find out for certain what my
wampeter was
And who was in my karass

And all the good things our
karass did for you Amen.

sung version

Dyot meet mat
Dyot dyot lonzome
Zo Dyot zaid zome off da mat,
zit yup
Zee all Jy've meet
da hills, da zea, da skee, da
stores.
An jy buz zome a da mat got
do zit up and look rount.
Luk-i me, Luk-i mat.
Jy, mat, zat yup what a nize
job Dyot hat ton.

Nize dyo-shing, Dyot!
Noboty but voo cot half ton it,
Dyot!

Jy vil volly unim-ordand
compart da Voo.
Da only bay Jy veel da list bit
important is dink off all da mat
dat din't efen get zit yup an
look rount.

Jy dyot zo much, an most mat
got zo leetle
Tzenk voo vore da on-oh!
Now mat lies town and goes
to sleep.
Bat memries vore mat do haf!
Bat intrest-sting oder kinds zit-
ting-up mat jy meet!

Jy lovt evryting jy zaw!
Dyoot nath.
Jy go to hefen now. Jah...
Jy can hardly bait...
do find out bat my wampeter
bas
Who was on my karass

An all da dyood dings our
karass tit vore voo. Amen.

3. *Nice Very Nice*

Narrator and singer together: they should be highly dramatic/ expressive and overlap, not at all be simultaneous

Oh a sleeping drunkard
Up in Central Park
And a lion-hunter
In the jungle dark
And a Chinese dentist,
And a British queen -
All fit together in the same machine

sopranos:

Nice, nice very nice;
Nice, nice very nice;
Nice, nice very nice -
So many different people
In the same device.

4. *119th Calypso*

sopranos

"Where's my good old gang done gone?"
I heard a sad man say.
I whispered in that sad man's ear
"Your gang's done gone away."

male

Sweet wraith
sweet soul
be kissed
my soul

Sweet wraith
Invisible mist...
I am -
my soul -

Long have I
advised thee ill
as to where two souls might tryst
Sweet wraith
sweet soul
be kissed
my soul

wraith lovesick o'erlong
o'erlong alone
Wouldst another sweet soul meet?
I am-
my soul-
my soul
mmmmmm

5. *Duo for clarinet and Meade Lux Lewis*

The clarinetist turns on a phonograph record or CD of *Honky Tonk Train Blues* and plays a written part in duet. This is available on my website davesoldier.com, or find the original: make sure it is in tune with the clarinet.

narrator:

Born in Louisville, KY, in 1905, Meade Lux Lewis didn't turn to music until he had passed his 16th birthday and then the instrument provided by his father was the violin. A year later, young Lewis chanced to hear Jimmy Yancey play the piano. "This," as Lewis recalls, "was the real thing." Soon, Lewis was teaching himself to play the boogie-woogie piano, absorbing all that was possible from the older Yancey, who remained until his death a close friend and idol to Mr. Lewis. Since his father was a Pullman porter, the Lewis family lived near the railroad. The rhythm of the trains soon became a natural pattern to young Lewis and he composed the boogie-woogie solo, now a classic of its kind, which became known as "Honky Tonk Train Blues."

6. *14th Calypso*

Choir:

You are not dead,
but only a-sleepin'
we should all smile
and stop our weeping

verses sung by calypso singer with harmony from one soprano:

When I was young
I was so gay and mean
I drank and chased girls
Like young St. Augustine
St. Augustine
He got be a saint
So if I get to be one, too
Please Mama, don't faint.

verse 2:

Mother O mother, Oh how I pray
For you to guard us, every day.

chorus

7. *Mona's Funeral Music*

An instrumental featuring balophone. If the performer can play balophone, a traditional introduction can be used.

8. *Big Tyrant*

Oh a very sorry people

did I find here
Oh they had no music
And they had no beer
and everywhere
they tried to perch
belong to Castle Sugar
or the Catholic church.

sopranos in a nasty or variously in a deep reggae style:

We do, doodeley do, doodeley do, doodeley do,
What we must, muddily must, muddily must, muddily must,
Muddily do, Muddily do, Muddily do, Muddily do,
'Til we bust, bodily bust, bodily bust, bodily bust.

calypso singer:

I wanted all things
to make some sense
So we could be happy
instead of tense.

And I made up lies
so that they'd all fit nice
And make this sad world
a paradise.

sopranos:

We do, doodeley do, doodeley do, doodeley do,
What we must, muddily must, muddily must, muddily must,
Muddily do, Muddily do, Muddily do, Muddily do,
'Til we bust, bodily bust, bodily bust, bodily bust.

Tiger got to hunt
Bird got to fly;
Man got to sit and wonder, "why, why, why?"
Tiger got to sleep,
Bird got to land;
Man got to tell himself
He understand.

Narrator:

Someday, someday, this crazy world will have to end
And our God will take things back that He to us did lend.
And if, on that sad day, you want to scold our God,
Why go right ahead and scold Him. He'll just smile and nod.

9. *Folly*

Narrator:

I once knew an Episcopalian lad in Newport, Rhode Island, who asked me to design and build a doghouse for her Great Dane. The lady claimed to understand God and His Ways of Working perfectly. She could not understand why anyone should be puzzled about what had been or about what was going to be.

And yet, when I showed her a blueprint of the doghouse I proposed to build, she said to me, "I'm sorry, but I never could read one of those things."

"Give it to your husband or your minister to pass on to God", I said, " and, when God finds a minute, I'm sure he'll explain this doghouse of mine in a way that even *you* can understand."

She fired me. I shall never forget her. She believed that God liked people in sailboats much better than He liked people in motorboats. She could not bear to look at a worm. When she saw a worm, she screamed.

She was a fool, and so am I, and so is anyone who thinks he sees what God is Doing.

Curtain