

Composer's Note

It all began when John Michel asked me to set three poems from Louis Jenkins' *The Mad Moonlight*, published by Will o' the Wisp Books in 2019. The project, under the auspices of Schubert Club and funded by John Michel and Barbara Brown, has since mushroomed into the commissioning of a dozen composers for settings of almost all of the poems in the volume. John and Louis, both from Duluth, MN, were dear friends until Louis's death in December of 2019. The poems are light-hearted and wry; deeper meaning lurks beneath the surface. After the initial performance at the Landmark Center in St. Paul, John suggested an orchestrated version – a wonderful opportunity to enhance the peculiar spookiness of these poems.

WITCHES

Young Witches

The young witches love to dance
at night in the moonlight, wearing their very
skimpy black dresses.
And the big handsome boys
come down from town.
The girls lead them through the forest,
down the darkened paths. And the boys get turned
around and lost.
Those boys are dumber than sticks, thick as bricks,
and those girls are *wick-ed*.

Old Witches

The old witches live in huts deep in the forest.
They know the secret of wolfsbane, snakeroot
plants and herbs.
which are poison and which will make you well.
They make elixirs, potions and poultices,
balm for heartbreak, remorse, disillusionment,
for all the pains of old age and death...
Good luck to you, if you can find them.

BAT

There's a bat circling
in the early dark, between
the pine tree, the spruce and the maple.
He seems happy enough gobbling
up hundreds of mosquitoes on each turn around.
But maybe it's Dracula.
You have to think about that.
Maybe Dracula doesn't transform himself
into bat; instead maybe the bat becomes Dracula.
He has to go home soon,
put on his little suit and tie
and wander around the empty castle
muttering to himself in a strange accent.
And later, of course, there will be guests for dinner.