

**Robert G. Patterson**  
*The Cat Menagerie (1988/1993)*

The movements of *The Cat Menagerie* began in 1988 as short piano pieces for children. The model for them was Debussy's *Children's Corner*, although they are closer to Stravinsky in style. All the movements are sketches of actual cat personalities I have known.

**1. Old Tom**

*"The Jellicle Ball is not what it was."*

Here is an old tomcat, the elder statesman, sneering lazily at the tail-chasing, ball-baiting, toe-mauling, side-winding kitten-things that assail his comfortable nap. Things were different when *he* was young, let me tell you! (We shed a tear for your memory, old Tom.)

**2. The Dreamer**

*"I'm off visiting cabbages and kings, but my tail will take a message."*

Sleep, blissful sleep. This is the life of the Dreamer. But if you speak to him, his tail will answer. What far country did you seek on that long-ago day when life at our house was not enough? What fortune found you, and what images decorate your dreams now?

**3. Three Legs, No Tail**

*"When you only have three legs it is a far, far better thing to stay in one place."*

No doubt it was humiliating, the odious day when a beastly fan-belt or tire permanently appropriated his nether parts. Still, humiliated is better than dead, and having made sure of so many meals since then, wherever he is put is the best place to be. That is, until the poking starts. Eventually he will tolerate no more poking, so he hauls himself up and kalumphs off—but not without a parting expletive!

**4. He Who Hesitates Is Caught**

*"To run, or not to run,—hmmm..."*

It's a predicament. You mind your own business, but the humans keep lumbering by. Basically this cat likes people, but he prefers not to be jerked in the air. Such a decision! Surely the human just wants a drink from the fridge. If the cat is very still, the human won't notice, even though the human is looking ... directly ... at ... Whoops! There goes a caught cat!

**5. Blue Blood**

*"Out of the depths of hair I cry to you—Brush Me!"*

Bred to be a living teddy bear, he has too much hair and too few brains. His hair ties itself in dissonant knots and slowly rearranges the skin on his body. Owwww!

**6. Chasing Phantoms**

*"It's a tough job, but somebody has to do it!"*

His cat-eyes see them everywhere. He has sworn a blood-oath to expel them from the premises. Up the stairs he chases them; down the stairs; across the bed; up-and-down the sleeping bodies; through the window. None can escape his gaze! Not at midnight, not at one o'clock, at two, or even four. Vigilance is his name, and he never shirks his duty.