

# Music for the Birds

*harp (or piano) and clarinet (Bb, A, and Eb)*

I The Providing Coast

II The Sandpiper's Delight

III The Great Egret

IV Water Ballet on Mustang Island:

*The Greater Yellowlegs*

*Pelicans on Patrol*

*The Blue Heron*

*The Seagulls*

*Pelicans on Patrol*

V Music for the Birds

Commissioned by  
The Austin Chamber Ensemble

Dedicated to  
Dr. and Mrs. George J. Merriman, Jr.

Composed by  
J. Todd Frazier

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## Program Notes

Music for the Birds, for harp and clarinet, was inspired by the Texas Gulf Coast and its indigenous water fowl. These musical character sketches offer interpretations from the peculiar and comical to the mystical and majestic qualities of Gulf Coast birds and their habitat. My interest in birds goes back to the childhood car trips I took with my grandparents from Houston to Corpus Christi to visit my great grandparents, George J. and Gem Merriman. One of the things we would do in the car was look for birds, especially Cranes and Herons, and we would often stop and get out at our favorite sighting spots for a better look. Through these memorable experiences I came to embrace and respect the fascinating and colorful world of the Texas Coast and felt that the many unique sights, sounds and colors I experienced would translate wonderfully into a musical response. Music for the Birds was commissioned by the Austin Chamber Ensemble and is dedicated to my grandparents, Dr. and Mrs. George J. Merriman, Jr. This work is intended to be used for both concert performances and environmental education and outreach programs.

## Descriptions of Individual Movements:

The Providing Coast is an impression of the soothing coastline in early morning.

The Sandpiper's Delight is about a handsome, nervous, and sometimes perplexed Sandpiper searching for a meal.

The Great Egret is a reverent tribute to this thoughtful and majestic bird. When I began writing this movement a storm had recently left Houston. Displaced by the storm, a Great Egret landed in my backyard! The bird was majestic and magical and time seemed to stand still as I watched it in the late hours of the night. The Egret studied its surroundings and gracefully toured the yard. I was struck by its large size, as I was very close to it. I knew that no one would believe this story, so after I admired the bird for a while I searched the house for a camera, but when I returned, the bird had vanished into the night. Needless to say, this event made a strong and stirring impression on me and inspired this movement. The Great Egret's dramatic departure is represented by the final measures of the harp.

Water Ballet on Mustang Island is a series of miniatures or "snapshots" inspired by the birds on Mustang Island. I only stood on the island for about fifteen minutes, but tried to be acutely aware of my surroundings. I soon realized I was the audience for a delightful island ballet. It was a lively performance in which the Gulls endlessly searched for food, squabbling amongst themselves, while the Pelicans passed overhead, patrolling the coast and ignoring their hungry friends. The Pelicans and Gulls provided a colorful chorus to the main dancers, the Blue Heron and gentle Greater Yellowlegs. The Heron, preferring to be admired at a distance, made the greatest impression on me and provided the inspiration for the reverent centerpiece of this movement.

Music for the Birds is a concluding response that fully explores the breadth of emotions associated with this meaningful and personal composition project.

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