

American Sketches
variations for piano

Commissioned by
Sharon Ley Lietzow

In Memory of
Emory Alexander "Ned" Gray, Jr.
April 4, 1917 - October 25, 1998

Composed by
J. Todd Frazier

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Program Notes:

American Sketches was commissioned in November 2000 by pianist Sharon Ley Lietzow and dedicated to the memory of her father, Emory Alexander "Ned" Gray, Jr. "During conversations with Sharon, I learned that her love for contemporary music inspired by folk melodies originated from musical experiences shared with her father. These experiences had a profound impact on her life. Therefore, when Sharon asked me for a new work in memory of her father, I looked to characteristic elements of American and Scottish folk melodies for inspiration. Just as an individual would reflect upon a series of pencil or pastel sketches on a common subject, American Sketches are similarly inspired and should be heard as musical reflections upon and impressionistic responses to the subject of folk music." J. Todd Frazier

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American Sketches

variations for piano

J. Todd Frazier

♩=54 expressive, freely

I

1 rit. , a tempo move forward rit. , a tempo

mf pp mf p f

soft ped. -- * (under measure 4)

Detailed description: This system contains measures 1 through 5. The music is in 3/4 time and features a variety of time signatures: 3/4, 4/4, 3/4, 4/4, and 3/4. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, while the left hand provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. Dynamics range from mezzo-forte (mf) to fortissimo (f). Performance instructions include 'rit.' (ritardando), 'a tempo', and 'move forward'. A 'soft ped.' (soft pedal) instruction is placed under measure 4.

6 rit. ♩=92

p pp p

soft ped. -- * (under measure 9)

Detailed description: This system contains measures 6 through 10. The time signatures are 3/4, 4/4, 4/4, 3/4, and 3/4. The tempo is marked as ♩=92. The right hand continues the melodic development with slurs and accents, while the left hand has a more active bass line. Dynamics include piano (p) and pianissimo (pp). A 'soft ped.' instruction is present under measure 9.

11 rit. poco a poco

3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 11 through 16. The time signature is 3/4. The right hand features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in measure 15. The left hand has a steady bass line. The tempo is marked as 'rit. poco a poco' (rhythmically decreasing little by little).

17 ♩=54 rit. a tempo move forward rit. majestic

f p f p f

soft ped. -- * (under measure 18)

Detailed description: This system contains measures 17 through 21. The time signatures are 3/4, 4/4, 3/4, 4/4, and 3/4. The tempo is marked as ♩=54. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, while the left hand has a bass line with chords. Dynamics range from fortissimo (f) to piano (p). Performance instructions include 'rit.', 'a tempo', 'move forward', 'rit.', and 'majestic'. A 'soft ped.' instruction is placed under measure 18.

22 rit. poco a poco

f p

soft ped. (under measure 25)

Detailed description: This system contains measures 22 through 26. The time signature is 3/4. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, while the left hand has a bass line with chords. Dynamics range from fortissimo (f) to piano (p). A 'soft ped.' instruction is placed under measure 25.

II

♩=108 *dynamic*

1

Musical score for measures 1-4. The piece is in 4/4 time. Measure 1 starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic in the right hand and a forte (*f*) dynamic in the left hand. Measure 2 features a piano (*p*) dynamic in the right hand and a piano (*p*) dynamic in the left hand. Measure 3 has a forte (*f*) dynamic in the right hand and a forte (*f*) dynamic in the left hand. Measure 4 continues with a forte (*f*) dynamic in the right hand and a forte (*f*) dynamic in the left hand.

5

Musical score for measures 5-7. Measure 5 features a forte (*f*) dynamic in the right hand and a forte (*f*) dynamic in the left hand. Measure 6 has a forte (*f*) dynamic in the right hand and a forte (*f*) dynamic in the left hand. Measure 7 continues with a forte (*f*) dynamic in the right hand and a forte (*f*) dynamic in the left hand.

8

Musical score for measures 8-11. Measure 8 features a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic in the right hand and a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic in the left hand. Measure 9 has a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic in the right hand and a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic in the left hand. Measure 10 features a forte (*f*) dynamic in the right hand and a forte (*f*) dynamic in the left hand. Measure 11 continues with a forte (*f*) dynamic in the right hand and a forte (*f*) dynamic in the left hand.

12

Musical score for measures 12-15. The piece is in 4/4 time and D major. Measure 12 features a sixteenth-note arpeggiated pattern in the right hand and a similar pattern in the left hand. Measures 13-15 show a more melodic line in the right hand with some grace notes, while the left hand continues with a steady eighth-note accompaniment. A fermata is placed over the final note of measure 15. A dashed line with the word "8vb" below it indicates an octave shift for the left hand.

16

Musical score for measures 16-18. Measure 16 continues the eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand. Measure 17 features a triplet of sixteenth notes in the right hand. Measure 18 features a triplet of sixteenth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand. A fermata is placed over the final note of measure 18.

19

rit. *playfully*

Musical score for measures 19-21. Measure 19 features a sixteenth-note arpeggiated pattern in the right hand and a similar pattern in the left hand. Measure 20 features a melodic line in the right hand with a wavy line indicating a tremolo effect, and a single note in the left hand. Measure 21 features a melodic line in the right hand and a single note in the left hand. Dynamics include *p* (piano), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *p* (piano).

III

♩=60 or slower, lyrical and expressive throughout

1 *mp* *mf* *rit.* *molto*

5 *mp* *f* *rit.*

9 *p* *a tempo freely* *mp* *soft ped.* ***

13 *move forward* *rit.* *a tempo* *rit.* *f* *a tempo*

17 *rit.* *3* *a tempo* *p* *mf* *p* *mp* *soft ped.* ***

2

21 *mf* *mp* *f* rit.

25 *p* *molto* *a tempo* (slower; than before, deeper reflection)

29 *mp* *move forward* *rit.* *a tempo* *rit.*

33 *f* *p* *mf* *p* *molto* *soft ped.*

(slower arpeggio)

IV

♩. = 72 playful and dynamic throughout, rhapsodic and free, as a recit.

Musical score for measures 1-5. The piece is in 6/8 time. Measure 1 starts with a *mf* dynamic. Measures 2-5 feature a melodic line in the right hand with grace notes and a 'move forward' instruction. Dynamics include *mp*, *mf*, and *mp*.

Musical score for measures 6-12. Measure 6 is marked 'a tempo' with a *mp* dynamic. Measures 7-11 are marked 'rit. poco' with a *p* dynamic. Measure 12 is marked 'a tempo' with a *f* dynamic. The right hand has long melodic lines, and the left hand has a rhythmic accompaniment.

Musical score for measures 10-13. Measure 10 is marked *mp*. Measure 11 has a *f* dynamic. Measure 12 has a *p* dynamic. Measure 13 has a *p.* dynamic. A note in measure 11 is marked with a 'V' (accents) and a dashed line points to it with the instruction: "grace notes to be heard as part of the melodic line, not too fast, sim. throughout".

Musical score for measures 14-17. Measure 14 is marked 'take time' with a *molto* dynamic. Measure 15 is marked 'a tempo' with a *f* dynamic. Measure 16 has a *mp* dynamic. Measure 17 has a *f* dynamic. The right hand has a melodic line with grace notes, and the left hand has a rhythmic accompaniment.

17 *rit. poco* *a tempo* *rit.* *a tempo*

f *mp* *p*

21 *move forward* *a tempo*

mp *mf* *mp*

25 *15^{ma}* *rit. poco* *a tempo*

p *mf* *p* *f*

28

mp *f* *p*

take time a tempo

32

p *molto* *f* *mp* *f* *p*

36

becoming.....majestic rit. *ff* *8va* *molto*

Red. *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.* *Red.*

(*8va*) a tempo (including pick up grace notes)

39

pp *mp* *mf*

Red. *Red.* *Red.*

43

rit. *pp* *8va* *a tempo* *p*

Red.

(8va) *pp* move forward

47

soft ped. * *

51 a tempo rit. poco

mf mp mf mp p

V

1 ♩=92 *refined, refreshing* (take time with grace notes to continue the line)

Measures 1-6: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Dynamics: *p*, *mp*, *p*, *mf*. Includes a fermata over measure 5 and a grace note in measure 6.

soft ped. *ped.* (ad lib)

7 *mp* *p* *mf* *rit. poco* *mp*

Measures 7-11: Treble clef, 2/4 time signature. Dynamics: *mp*, *p*, *mf*, *rit. poco*, *mp*. Includes a fermata over measure 10 and a grace note in measure 11.

12 *rit.* *p* *fff* *ppp* *f*

Measures 12-16: Treble clef, 5/4 time signature. Dynamics: *rit.*, *p*, *fff*, *ppp*, *f*. Includes a fermata over measure 15 and a grace note in measure 16.

soft ped. *ped.* soft ped. *ped.*

17 *p* *take time* *a tempo* *ff* *marching*

Measures 17-19: Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. Dynamics: *p*, *take time*, *a tempo*, *ff*, *marching*. Includes a fermata over measure 18 and a grace note in measure 19.

20 *mp* *f* *p* *rit.*

Measures 20-24: Treble clef, 5/4 time signature. Dynamics: *mp*, *f*, *p*, *rit.*. Includes a fermata over measure 23 and a grace note in measure 24.

2

a tempo

rit. poco

a tempo

♩=92

22

mf

p

ad lib.

soft ped. ---

27

mp

p

mf

ad lib. (ad lib)

soft ped. ---

32

p

mp

p

move forward *mf*

rit. poco *mp*

37

rit.

p

fff

take time

ppp

p

soft ped. ---

ad lib.

soft ped. ---