

# Lonesome Road (The Crawford Variations)

51 Variations for Piano

Larry Polansky

*Lonesome Road* is a set of variations on Ruth Crawford's harmonization of the folk song of the same name, published in Carl Sandburg's *American Songbag* (1927). The piece is in three sections, of 17 variations each. The variations in the middle section (XVIII–XXXIV) are, in general, longer and more developed than those in the outer sections. In many cases, there is a similarity of structure and idea between corresponding variations in each of the three sections (that is, Variation I is related to Variation XVIII, which is related to Variation XXXV).

Generally, variations follow without pause, or at the discretion of the pianist, unless otherwise indicated.

## 51 Variations

### Section 1

- |                                   |                                |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| I. Opening                        | X. Waltz (II)                  |
| II. Little Black Dots             | XI. Chorale (III)              |
| III. Chorale (I)                  | XII. Chorale (IV)              |
| IV. After Subono (I)              | XIII. Chorale (V)              |
| V. Waltz (I)                      | XIVa.; XIVb.                   |
| VI. Unison/Octaves                | XV. Very fast and loud         |
| VII. Chorale (II)                 | XVI. Chorale (VI)              |
| VIII. Genderan (for Marc Perlman) | XVII. "The Hensley Deviations" |
| IX. Unison                        |                                |

### Section 2

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|---------------------------------|--|
| XVIII. Quietly, peacefully      | XXVI. Middle   |
| XIX. Cengkok and Coda           | XXVII. Melody and accompaniment                            |
| XX. Song                        | XXVIII. Rather fast  |
| XXI. Fast                       | XXIX. Soft, not too slow, very rubato                      |
| XXII. Phantasy                  | XXX. Fast, swing   |
| XXIII. Slow                     | XXXI. Still fast, swing                                    |
| XXIVa. Fast; XXIVb.             | XXXII. Faster  |
| XXVa. Slowly; XXVb. Very legato | XXXIII. The Independence Movement<br>(for David Rosenboom) |
|                                 | XXXIVa. Very lyrical; XXXIVb.                              |

### Section 3

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|---|----------------------------------|
| XXXV. Fast                                | XLIII. Fast                      |
| XXXVI. Very slow, very quiet, very rubato | XLIV. Waltz (III)                |
| XXXVII. Ballad                            | XLV.                             |
| XXXVIII. Steady                           | XLVI. Legato, slow, soft, rubato |
| XXXIX.                                    | XLVII. Three keys waltz          |
| XL. Slow and pretty                       | XLVIII. After Subono (II)        |
| XLI.                                      | XLIX.                            |
| XLII.                                     | L. Chorale (VII)                 |
|   | LI. Gently, freely               |

### Performance and Edition History

*Lonesome Road (The Crawford Variations)* was composed over the course of one year in Indonesia (June 1988 – June 1989). It was revised and rewritten over the following several years in Oakland, Ca., and New Hampshire. The first draft was completed August 19, 1990, in Mendocino, California. A revised draft was completed March, 1991, in Hanover, New Hampshire.

This edition was made in 2004-2005: Bruno Ruviano copyist; Paul Schick, proofreader; myself and Michael Winter final proofing, editing, and revisions. This edition incorporates many suggestions from Martin Christ as well.

The premiere performance was given in Zürich, Switzerland, in March, 1994 by Thomas Bächli (Section 1), Urs Egli (Section 2), and Martin Christ (Section 3). The performance was presented by the Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik Zürich, directed by Marino Pliakas. Slight revisions were made to the score following that performance. These three pianists toured the United States (and Canada) with the piece in 1995, sponsored by Bay Area Pianists, Roulette, The Music Gallery, and the Pro Helvetia Foundation. A number of revisions were made after those performances as well.

Martin Christ gave the first solo performance of the work in 1996 in the U.S and Switzerland. Thanks to Ed and Jackie Carroll and Walter and Liz Sinnott-Armstrong for their essential part in the American premiere. To this date, Martin Christ is the only pianist who has performed the entire work. Two different suites have been made, one by Joseph Kubera, and another by Michael Arnowitt (the latter available from Frog Peak Music), and they have been performed a number of times.

The recording of *Lonesome Road* is available on New World Records 80566, performed by Martin Christ.

### **Thanks**

Thanks to Sarah Cahill for reading through and commenting on many of the variations over the course of its revision in 1990, for arranging the first American performances, and for her lifelong musical friendship; Marino Pliakas, for arranging the premiere in Zürich; Amy Beal for her editing and advocacy (and for one chord); Kyle Gann for his tireless consideration of not just this piece, but of all of our musics; David Mahler and Michael Arnowitt for copious editorial advice; Jody Diamond for her continued support; and most of all, Martin Christ for his ideas, musicianship and dedication.

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Hanover, NH  
12/22/05  
(rev. 12/22/05)