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
II. Little Black Dots
III. Chorale (I)
IV. After Subono (I)
V. Waltz (I)
VI. Unison/Octaves
VII. Chorale (II)
VIII. Genderan (for Marc Perlman)
IX. Unison

X. Waltz (II)
XI. Chorale (III)
XII. Chorale (IV)
XIII. Chorale (V)
XIVa.; XIVb.
XV. Very fast and loud
XVI. Chorale (VI)

**Section 2**

XVIII. Quietly, peacefully
XIX. Cengkok and Coda
XX. Song
XXI. Fast
XXII. Phantasy
XXIII. Slow
XXIVa. Fast; XXIVb.
XXVa. Slowly; XXVb. Very legato

XXVI. Middle
XXVII. Melody and accompaniment
XXVIII. Rather fast
XXIX. Soft, not too slow, very rubato
XXX. Fast, swing
XXXI. Still fast, swing
XXXII. Faster
XXXIII. The Independence Movement
(for David Rosenboom)

XXXIVa. Very lyrical; XXXIVb.

**Section 3**

XXXV. Fast
XXXVI. Very slow, very quiet, very rubato
XXXVII. Ballad
XXXVIII. Steady
XXXIX.
XL. Slow and pretty
XLI.
XLII.

XLIII. Fast
XLIV. Waltz (III)
XLV.

XLVI. Legato, slow, soft, rubato
XLVII. Three keys waltz

XLVIII. After Subono (II)
XLIX.

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 Ruviaro 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**

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