

Ethan McGrath

AMERICAN WALTZES



FC

For Piano Solo

FOR PERUSAL USE ONLY

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Introductory Comments by the Composer:

The idea of writing a set of simple waltzes came to me one evening in early April 2020, as I was playing through a volume of Schubert's waltzes at the piano—something I had taken to doing rather frequently to pass the time and take my mind off the global pandemic. Much of my work had been put on hold due to the Coronavirus, so, for a change, I had plenty of time to pursue a composition project simply for the fun of it. I fancied the idea of creating some “light” music that I could easily share online in the hope of raising people’s spirits, since almost all in-person performances had been cancelled for the foreseeable future.

Many of these waltzes incorporate melodies I wrote between the ages of 15 and 19—which was really the beginning of my efforts as a composer. During those teenage years I was enamored with Aaron Copland and had become convicted, in my youthful passion, that I should be writing music that sounded “American.” I dare say I succeeded in some ways; though my early compositions were clunky in terms of form and development, the music was imbued with a certain “pioneer” spirit and raw energy that I now find nearly impossible to achieve from scratch, since I have, for better or worse, been shaped by more “cultivated” influences since then. While those early pieces are not good enough to be presented in their original form, I found that a number of the melodies made excellent material for waltzes (a term that I use rather loosely). I have always been fond of some of the tunes that I wrote back then, and I saw this project as a way of taking some of the best of my early work and putting it into a form in which I was comfortable sharing it with the world. That said, there are waltzes in this set that do not contain anything derived from my early works. The “Chattanooga Waltz” is entirely new, and there are others that are based on shape-note tunes, Shaker songs, and, in the case of “Annie’s Waltz,” a song by Stephen Foster.

As a disclaimer, I acknowledge that there are discrepancies between some of the waltzes, in terms of how much editing has been done; i.e. some of them contain rather detailed markings to show articulation, phrasing, and dynamics, while others are comparatively bare, containing mostly just the notes and a few dynamics. Basically, if I wanted something specific, I marked it, but where I felt that my intentions were fairly intuitive, or that some decisions could be left to the performer, I decided not to get too prescriptive.

Below are brief notes about each of the waltzes in turn:

- 1. Chattanooga Waltz (p. 1):** Named after my hometown of Chattanooga, Tennessee, this was the waltz that precipitated the whole series. I wrote it for an online concert benefiting members of our community who had been affected by a tornado in April 2020.
- 2. Bradbury’s Waltz (p. 4):** The hymn tunes of New England composer William B. Bradbury (1816-1868), a great many of which I sang in church growing up, helped inspire me to write the tune that this waltz is based on.
- 3. Pilgrim’s Waltz (p. 6):** Another hymn I sang in church back in the day was “I’m a pilgrim, and I am stranger,” with words by Mary S. Schindler. When I was 15 or so I wrote my own setting of those words. My text-setting was poor, but, minus the words, the melody turned out to be memorable, so I have given it new life in this waltz.
- 4. Lonesome Waltz (p. 11):** I have always found the raw, plaintive quality of the shape-note tune IDUMEA to be very striking (especially when sung to the Isaac Watts text “And am I born to die?”), so I was eager to compose my own version for this collection.
- 5. Soldier’s Waltz (p. 14):** This waltz is based on a tone poem called “Appomattox,” which I wrote in my teen years. As you might guess, it was supposed to be “about” the surrender of the confederacy at the Appomattox Courthouse in 1865—the official end of the Civil War.

6. Annie's Waltz (p. 17): Stephen Foster's music is such an integral part of America's musical heritage, so I wanted to include a nod to him in this set; this waltz is based on his song "Gentle Annie." The melody's many leaps of a 6th convey a strong sense of yearning, making this one of his most touching songs.

7. Shaker Waltz (p. 21): This waltz is founded on two Shaker songs: "Tis the gift to be simple" and "I will bow and be simple," both of which use similar language to express the Shakers' belief in the beauty of simplicity and living together in harmony.

8. Frontier Waltz (p. 24): I have been interested in shape-note music ever since high school, when I first stumbled upon some photocopied pages from *The Sacred Harp*. The two tunes featured in this waltz are, in fact, original melodies from my teen years, but they were inspired by shape-note music.

9. Garden Waltz (p. 27): This is based on one of my very favorite tunes, which I first ran across many years ago while flipping through a tattered copy of William Walker's *Southern Harmony* (1835). The song is called "Garden Hymn," and it can be understood as a kind wedding hymn, containing a number of allusions to the biblical *Song of Solomon*.

10. Singing Brook Waltz (p. 30): This waltz is named after Singing Brook Farm in Hawley, Massachusetts, the home of composer Alice Parker. My visits to the Farm to learn from Alice have been some of the most transformative experiences of my life, and I always look back on those times with great fondness.

11. Saints' Waltz (p. 33): This is based on two shape-note tunes: THE SAINTS' DELIGHT and PISGAH, both of which are usually sung to Isaac Watts' text, "When I can read my title clear." I was delighted to find that both tunes, though very different, work nicely together.

12. Harvest Waltz (p. 39): This music is derived from another one of my early tone poems—this time "about" what is traditionally thought of as the First Thanksgiving: the harvest celebration shared by the Pilgrims and Native Americans in 1621.

About the Composer:

A composer of diverse influences, Ethan McGrath seeks to write music that will break down barriers between people and have the potential to convey meaning to anyone who hears it. He has been commissioned by such organizations as the American Choral Directors Association, the Voce Chamber Choir (London), and the New Consort (NYC). His compositions have been featured in workshops by Rodney Eichenberger and performed by such ensembles as the Choir of Trinity College (Cambridge), the Capitol Hearings (Washington, D.C.), and the Taipei Chamber Singers. He has received awards from the Instytut Musica Sacra (Poland), Alfred Music, and the Southeastern Composers League, and his works have been published by Oxford University Press, Schott Music, Beckenhorst Press, and others. Ethan studied composition with J. Bruce Ashton and Jonathan McNair at Southern Adventist University and UT Chattanooga, respectively, and earned an MMus in conducting at the University of Cambridge, where he studied under Stephen Layton and Timothy Brown, among others. For more information, visit www.ethanmcgrath.com.

Chattanooga Waltz

From *American Waltzes*

Ethan McGrath

Gentle, lilting waltz tempo ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 120$)

Piano

The sheet music consists of four staves of piano music. Staff 1 (measures 1-6) starts with a dynamic **p**. Staff 2 (measures 7-12) continues the harmonic pattern. Staff 3 (measures 13-18) shows a melodic line with grace notes and a dynamic **mp**. Staff 4 (measures 19-24) concludes with a dynamic **p** followed by **cresc.**

28

poco rit.

a tempo

mf > *dim.*

mp

35

v

v

42

mf

49

v

v

56

mp

cresc.

f > *dim.*

v

62

rit.

a tempo

68

cresc.

74

f

dim.

80

mf dim.

p

molto cresc.

poco rit.

86

8va

f molto rit e dim.

p

dim.

pp

Much slower, freely

Bradbury's Waltz

From *American Waltzes*

Ethan McGrath

Unhurried, somewhat wistful ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 84$)

Piano

7

14

21

28

cresc.

mf

35

poco f

42

dim.

mp dim.

p

48

cresc.

mf dim.

p

55 rit.

Quite slow ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 63$)

rit.

p

pp

rit.

Pilgrim's Waltz

From *American Waltzes*

"I'm a pilgrim and I'm a stranger;
I can tarry, I can tarry but a night."

Ethan McGrath

Piano

Slowly ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 80$)

Moderate waltz tempo ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 108$)

tre corde

17

25

8^{va}

mp r.h. legato

32 (8^{va})

cresc.

mf

dim. poco a poco

39

p

pp

una corda

46

rit.

sub. mf

tre corde

53

pp

p

60

67

74

81

rit.

More expansive (♩ = c. 136)

88

(8va)

rit.

sf

94

Previous tempo ($\text{d} = \text{c. } 66$)

100

107

114

121

molto rit.

dim.

pp

una corda

Slowly, as before ($\text{d} = \text{c. } 80$)

128

cresc. e accel.

mp

tre corde

Moderate waltz tempo ($\text{d} = \text{c. } 108$)

135

mf *legato,
sostenuto*

142

cresc.

f

149

dim. poco a poco

p

156

pp

rit. e dim.

Lonesome Waltz

From *American Waltzes*

"And am I born to die,
To lay this body down?"

Ethan McGrath

Based on the shape-note tune IDUMEA

Melancholic, with a shuffle $\text{D} = \frac{3}{\text{D} \text{ D}} \text{ (D = c. 112)}$

mp melody well to the fore

Piano

The sheet music for piano is in 3/4 time and G major. It features five staves of music. The first staff shows a bass line with eighth-note chords. The subsequent staves show melodic lines with various note heads and stems. Measure numbers 6, 11, 16, and 21 are indicated above the staves. Dynamic markings include *p*, *cresc.*, and *mf*. The music is described as "Melancholic, with a shuffle" and "D = c. 112". The instruction "*mp* melody well to the fore" is placed at the end of the piece.

26

26

31

31

36

36

41

41

46

46

51

dim.

56

mf *cresc.*

61

dim.

66

mf *poco a poco dim.*

71

molto rit.

p dim.

pp

8va

Soldier's Waltz

From *American Waltzes*

Ethan McGrath

Piano

Solemnly ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 72$)

Moderate waltz tempo, somewhat sentimental ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 104$)

7 ten.
 mp

14

21 *mf*

28

35

42

49

56

63

dim.

p

70

cresc.

12

75

Tempo I ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 72$)

f *pesante*

p

mf *accel.*

81

rit.

Waltz tempo, as before
($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 104$)

p

86

rit.

Very slowly

mf

pp

Annie's Waltz

From *American Waltzes*

Ethan McGrath

Based on "Gentle Annie" by Stephen Foster

Graceful, sweet ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 108$)

Piano

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poco rit. *a tempo*

24

30

36

sim.

rit. *a tempo*

42

48

mf

54

rit.

a tempo

mp

60

mf

molto rit.

66

f

molto rit.

72

a tempo

mp cresc.

mf

dim e rit.

78

a tempo

pp sempre

una corda

84 *rit.* *a tempo*

90 *rit.* *a tempo* *molto cresc.*
tre corde

96 *molto rit.* *Slowly* ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 72$) *poco rit.*
f *mf dim.*

102 *a tempo* *p* *rit.* *pp*

Shaker Waltz

From *American Waltzes*

"I will bow and be simple,
I wil bow and be free."

Ethan McGrath

*Based on the traditional Shaker songs
 "I will bow and be simple" and
 "Tis the gift to be simple"*

Buoyantly ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 126$)

Piano

24

p

30

mf

36

dim.

p

42

p.

48

mp

54

60

66

72

78

Frontier Waltz
From *American Waltzes*

Ethan McGrath

Crisp, confident ($\text{d}.$ = c. 60)

Piano

l.h. always detached

8

15

sub.*f*

22

29

p

8va

Sheet music for piano, five staves. Measures 36, 43, 50, 57, and 64.

(8^{va}) -

36

43

50

mf

57

64

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71

cresc.

78

molto rit.

piu f dim.

lunga

p lunga

pp

Much slower, tenderly (♩ = c. 108)

8va

85

(8va)

molto rit.

poco sf

93

Tempo I (♩ = c. 60)

pp cresc.

f cresc. e accel.

100

ff

v

Garden Waltz

From *American Waltzes*

“The Lord into his garden comes;
The spices yield a rich perfume.”

Ethan McGrath

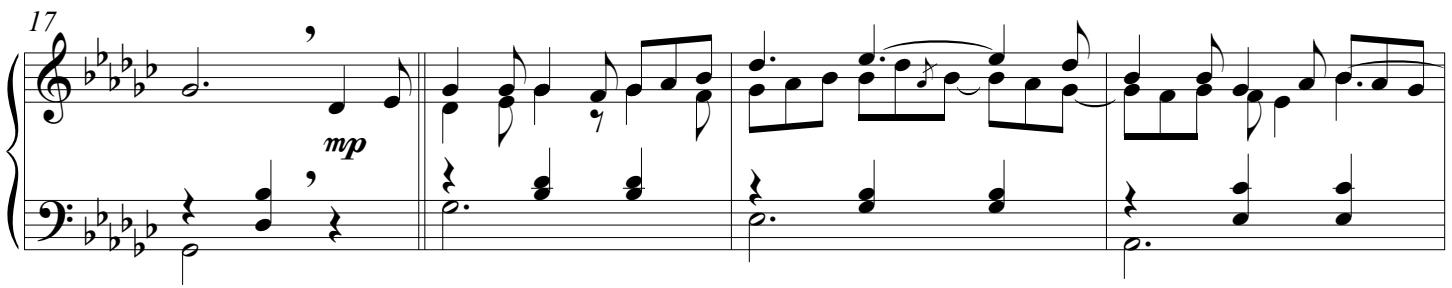
Based on the shape-note tune GARDEN HYMN

Unhurriedly, with great tenderness ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 69$)

Piano

The sheet music consists of four staves of musical notation for piano. The top staff is for the treble clef (G-clef) voice, and the bottom staff is for the bass clef (F-clef) voice. Measure 1 starts with a dynamic *p*. Measures 5 and 9 begin with *p.* Measure 13 begins with *p.* Measure numbers 1, 5, 9, and 13 are indicated above the staves. The music is in common time (indicated by a '4') and uses a key signature of five flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat, D-flat, G-flat). The notation includes various note values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Measure 13 concludes with a fermata over the treble clef staff.

17



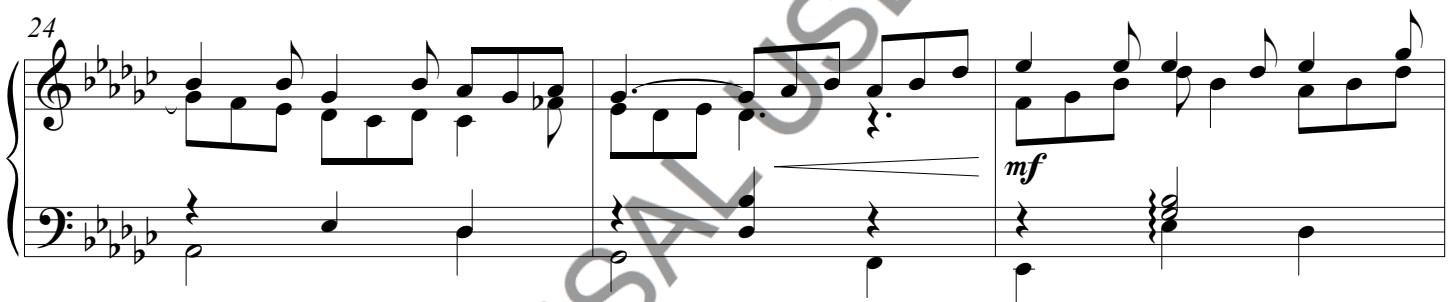
Musical score page 17. The score consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in a key signature of six flats. The music begins with eighth-note patterns. A dynamic marking "mp" is placed above the bass staff. The score continues with eighth-note patterns, some with grace notes and slurs.

21



Musical score page 21. The staves remain the same: treble and bass clefs, six flats. The music features eighth-note patterns with grace notes and slurs. The bass staff has a dynamic marking "p." at the beginning of the measure.

24



Musical score page 24. The staves are identical to the previous pages. The music consists of eighth-note patterns with grace notes and slurs. A dynamic marking "mf" is placed above the bass staff in the third measure.

27



Musical score page 27. The staves are the same. The music features eighth-note patterns with grace notes and slurs. A dynamic marking "mp" is placed above the bass staff in the third measure.

30



Musical score page 30. The staves are the same. The music consists of eighth-note patterns with grace notes and slurs. The bass staff has a dynamic marking "p." at the beginning of the measure.

molto rit.

f

mp

a tempo

p

molto rit.

Very slowly

mf

p

dim.

pp

Singing Brook Waltz

From *American Waltzes*

Ethan McGrath

Gently flowing ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 112$)

Piano

1

7

14

21

27

poco rit.

dim.

33

a tempo

p

40

46

53

59

mf

dim. poco a poco

rit.

65

a tempo

p *cresc. poco a poco*

71

mf

so

77

dim.

p *cresc.*

f 2 1

83

rit.

dim.

mp dim.

p

Saints' Waltz

From *American Waltzes*

"I feel like I'm on my journey home."

Ethan McGrath

*Based on the shape-note tunes
THE SAINTS' DELIGHT and PISGAH*

Piano Spirited ($\text{d}.$ = c. 69)

7

14

21

28

cresc.

mf

35

41

47

mp

53

p leggiero

8va-----

(8^{va})

59

rit. e dim.

Much slower and rather sweet (♩ = c. 108)

(8^{va})

65

(8^{va})

72

Jolly, playful (♩ = c. 52)

79

rit. e dim.

pp

poco rit.

cresc.

a tempo

mf

p

86

93

sf

100

mp

cresc.

107

f

mf

a tempo

115

f

cresc.

122

rit.

ff

a tempo

ff

molto rit.

Tempo I ($\text{d} = \text{c. } 69$)

128

8va-----

A bit faster and with great intensity ($\text{d} = \text{c. } 76$)

147 *8va-----*

pp leggiero

148

poco accel.

sub. f sempre

149

150

151

152

153 *(8va)-----*

159

Two staves in G major, common time. Treble staff: eighth-note patterns. Bass staff: eighth-note patterns.

165

Two staves in G major, common time. Treble staff: eighth-note patterns with 1 and 2 above some notes. Bass staff: eighth-note patterns.

171

Two staves in G major, common time. Treble staff: sixteenth-note patterns. Bass staff: sixteenth-note patterns. Dynamic: *accel. e cresc.*

177

Two staves in G major, common time. Treble staff: sixteenth-note patterns. Bass staff: sixteenth-note patterns. Dynamic: *ff*.

Harvest Waltz

From *American Waltzes*

Ethan McGrath

Straightforward, unhurried ($\text{♩} = \text{c. 84}$)

Piano

The sheet music consists of four staves of piano music. Staff 1 (measures 1-7) shows a simple harmonic progression with quarter notes and eighth-note pairs. Staff 2 (measures 8-14) includes dynamics like *poco cresc.* and *mp*. Staff 3 (measures 15-21) features sixteenth-note patterns and dynamics *cresc.*, *fp*, and *light and detached, but not too short*. Staff 4 (measures 21-27) concludes with a rich, sonorous texture indicated by *mf*.

8

poco cresc.

mp

15

cresc.

fp

light and detached, but not too short

21

mf rich, sonorous

26

mf

31

f

36

poco rit.

a tempo

mf

42

dim.

mp

dim.

p

dim.

48

rit.

trill

Quite slow ($\text{♩} = \text{c. } 63$)

pp

rit.