

VARIATIONS ON AN ENGLISH PASTORAL THEME

By Rick England

INSTRUMENTATION

Conductor Score	1
Violin I	8
Violin II	8
Viola	5
Cello	5
String Bass	5

VARIATIONS ON AN ENGLISH PASTORAL THEME

Variations on an English Pastoral Theme is based on the tune “Brother James’s Air.” This version began life as a fall orchestral audition etude. When the composer noticed that he was still hearing students play it in March, he realized the variations had captured the imagination of the players and had potential as an educational tool to teach expressive playing.

At the heart of the piece is the opening violin solo melody, which is rather free-form in a wistful, quasi-improvisatory folk style—as if played while sitting outdoors on a rock. The melody wanders in and out of modal territory in the manner of early 20th century English string suites. Subsequent variations feature guitar-like accompaniment, duets, fragments of melodic material for each instrument, and a wide range of sweeping dynamic contrasts. The piece closes quietly, as it began, but in a new key with the solo in the cello.

The piece honors the composer’s mother who in her last years found great joy in the simple pleasures of watching the birds outside her window and listening to children make music.

Variations on an English Pastoral Theme

CONDUCTOR SCORE

Duration - 4:30

Rick England

Wistfully, in a folk style (♩ = 63)

Violins
I
II

Viola

Cello

String Bass

Solo
mf
p
p

stagger bowing
stagger bowing

Vlins.
I
II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

6
7
4
8
slowing slightly
9
10
in tempo

Note: The grace notes in measures 10, 26 and 72 should be played accented and on the beat, in the manner of an appoggiature.

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11 12 13 14 15

Slowing *in tempo* **tutti**

Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vla.
Cello
Str. Bass

mp

16 17 18 19 20

cantabile
mp cantabile
simile

Vlns. I
Vlns. II
Vla.
Cello
Str. Bass

21 22 23 24 25

I Vlns.

II Vlns.

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

26 27 28 29 30

I Vlns.

II Vlns.

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

31 32 33 34 35 **Tenderly, molto legato** 36

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

37 38 39 40 41

Vlns. I

Vlns. II

Vla.

Cello

Str. Bass

sfz > p mp

p sfz > p mp

sfz > p mp

sfz > p mp

sfz > p mp

66 67 68 69 70 71

I Vlns. II Vlns. Vla. Cello Str. Bass

slowing slightly

72 73 74 75 76 77 (□) 78

I Vlns. II Vlns. Vla. Cello Str. Bass

in tempo *slowing slightly* *deliberately* *pp* *p* *pp* *pp* *pizz.*

others (V),