

FOUR SKETCHES FOR SAM

Written to echo the warm, childlike nature of my black lab/springer spaniel mix, *Four Sketches for Sam* is loosely based on four of our experiences together. This piece uses modified applications of counterpoint, thematic textural interplay between the marimba and double tenor/tenor steel pans, and accessibility through consistent grooves and diatonicism to achieve that end.

First, *Little Yellow Flowers* exploits the textural melding of the two instruments and bantering counterpoint between them to emote the excitement Sam (my dog) felt upon discovering a field of new flowers in a new city. It is written to function as a scherzo, even though it is the first of the four sketches.

A Good Day was inspired by a very pleasant day spent at an agility event in which Sam performed particularly well. It is my role at these events to let my wife run him and to watch them from a distance so as to not distract his run. I've often found myself thinking a whole series of thoughts over the course of their runs, which is the reason for the clusters of ideas against each other, all the while combining to create a uniformed, pleasant experience.

While *Silhouette* is certainly the most intricate and aggressive sketch of the four, it is with good reason that it is so. Sam is at his most natural and executes so many incredible movements with ease when he is chasing rabbits, squirrels and the like in the woods. It takes the title because after he is set loose, I am only able to see glimpses of his silhouette through the brush and trees until he has had enough "hunting" and returns. Musically, this sketch reflects my ideal picture of how counterpoint can be applied in contemporary settings.

Dreamfields vaguely explores the question of what animals dream about. After any of these days together, Sam will normally fall asleep in our living room in a warm ball of fur, twitching

FOUR SKETCHES FOR SAM (CONT'D)

periodically. He has the ability to relax more than any other creature I have ever seen on this planet because he spends his days living so emphatically. Even then, there is still a subtle current of energy in his rest, but it is a peaceful one. The delicate combination of the bowed marimba and brushes on the pan is meant to stand as the best realization of the textural interplay the previous three sketches introduced.

While most pan/marimba duets are essentially melody/harmony/bass-line exercises (and many are good ones, at that), *Four Sketches for Sam* is composed to move past the norm of a songo/montuno-based style of duet writing for pan and marimba. It is my sincere hope that you and the audience alike will find joy in the performance of this work.

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