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About the Book

In 1971, my grandfather purchased a small farm in Peck, KS. This farm was his hobby for the next 50 years. He grew vegetables, maintained a fruit orchard, and harvested wheat in the summertime. When I was young, trips to “the farm” were fairly common, but the most memorable of these were the annual trips on the Monday of spring break during elementary school. He would pick me up early in the morning, and we would spend half a day planting potatoes, corn, and various other vegetables. After lunch (which, to my delight, usually consisted of hot dogs cooked over an open fire), we walked the pasture, making our way west to the creek. In the afternoon, we sat in the shade of a large tree by the windmill and looked out over the fields.

For many years I had envisioned writing a series of marimba pieces inspired by these memories. In the fall of 2024, Chris Crockarell asked me if I would be willing to write a book of intermediate level marimba solos in the coming year for the Row-Loff catalogue, and I gladly accepted the invitation. Almost immediately, I realized that this was a chance to bring my old vision to life. During the spring of 2025, I explored ideas, thought about piece titles, and considered what technical and musical challenges to emphasize in the solos. In May and July of that year, I wrote and recorded all eight solos for the collection.

I decided early on that my overarching goal for the book was to compose pieces that were approachable by younger players, but would be musically satisfying for more experienced players as well. I wanted to write relatively simple music that I would personally enjoy performing. I believe I have attained this goal. The solos in this collection range from medium-easy difficulty through medium-advanced, with one advanced piece at the end of the book. All eight pieces fit on a 4.3-octave (low A) marimba. The pieces are written as stand-alone solos, but could easily be combined in many ways to create suites of various lengths. It is also conceivable to perform the entire book as one extended presentation.

I have provided some notes and suggestions for each piece, which should aid in understanding the technical and emotional content of the music. Stickings are included in many of the pieces, and I recommend applying the written stickings at first. However, feel free to alter the stickings as necessary to fit your playing style.

To access recordings of these pieces, please scan the following QR code:



I sincerely hope you have as much fun learning and performing these pieces as I had writing them! Good luck, and happy practicing!

– Brian Mueller

Acknowledgements

This book has been a project of passion and I am thrilled to be able to share this music with the world. I would like to thank a number of people for their support throughout the writing of this book and beyond. First, thank you to Chris Crockarell for the invitation to contribute to the Row-Loff Catalogue, and for all of his hard work and dedication in bringing this project to fruition. I am honored to be part of the Row-Loff family. Thank you to Christian Kilgore for the phenomenal engraving, and to Mathew Smith for the wonderful cover design. Thank you to Lalo and Julie Davila for their constant support, feedback, and suggestions. Thank you to my students at Middle Tennessee State University, for always inspiring me to be the best version of me that I can be, and also for helping me field test many of these solos! Thank you to all of my teachers—too many to list for fear of leaving someone out. You know who you are and your impact on my life is incalculable. Thank you to my parents, Barbara and Scott, for their continual love and support throughout my life. Thank you to my grandparents, George and Bonnie Mueller, for their love, and for always making everything—from a holiday dinner to a quiet evening on the back porch—feel *special*.

This book is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents, George and Bonnie Mueller.

About the Author

Dr. Brian Mueller (b.1983) is currently on faculty with the Middle Tennessee State University Percussion Department, a position he has held since 2015. He is also on faculty with the Tennessee Governor's School for the Arts. He holds a Doctor of Music degree from the Indiana University Jacob's School of Music (2016). His prior academic background includes a Master of Music degree from the University of North Texas (2009) and a Bachelor of Music degree from Wichita State University (2007). Brian has worked as a freelance drummer and percussionist for many years, and is a published composer and arranger. He also has developed a metronome app for iPhone, "The Gnome," which is published through the Apple App Store.

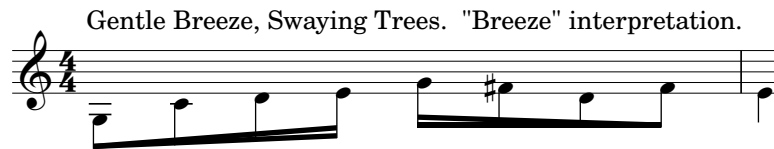
Brian has performed and presented clinics nationally and internationally, including at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention; the MTSU Jazz Festival; the Shanghai Jazz Festival; the Columbus (OH) International Festival; the North Georgia Percussion Festival; the McCormick Marimba Festival; Reinhardt University; Southeastern University; Florida State University; Tennessee Tech University; Indiana University; Wichita State University; Kansas State University; Middle Tennessee State University; the University of the South (Sewanee, TN); Jacksonville State University; The University of Texas at El Paso; East Mississippi Community College; the Conservatoire à Rayonnement Régional de Paris; the Central Conservatory of Beijing; the Midi School of Music (Beijing); Wuxi Grand Theater (Wuxi, China); Hangzhou Normal University (Hangzhou, China); the Zhejiang Conservatory of Music (Hangzhou, China); and the Wuhan Conservatory of Music.

Brian proudly endorses Innovative Percussion and Pearl/Adams Concert Percussion.

Gentle Breeze, Swaying Trees

This piece captures a feeling of solitude as one listens to trees swaying in the wind, with ample room for personal expression. *Gentle Breeze, Swaying Trees* requires musical sensitivity and a sense of pacing and breath, as well as subtle dynamic shading.

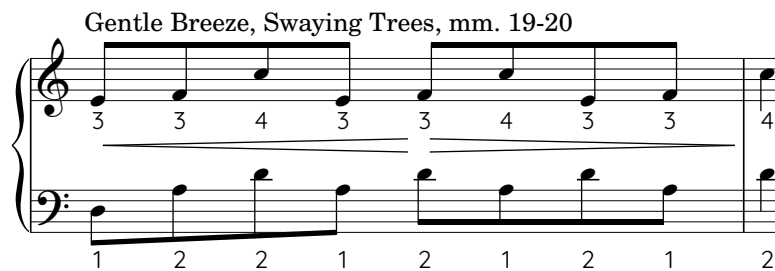
The recurring 8th note figures found throughout the first 36 measures should not be played in a rhythmically strict fashion, but should be played in a way that mimics a calm breeze. One possible interpretation, shown below, is to gently *accelerando* into beat 3, and *rallentando* from beat 3 to the downbeat of the next measure.



Each statement can be a little different, with varying degrees of push and pull.

The slurred melodic lines (as in measure 4) should be played louder than the the swaying figures, but should still have a sense of phrasing and contour – avoid the temptation of “pounding out” the melody.

The material at measure 19, which recurs several times throughout the piece, involves a grouping of 2 notes in the left hand played against a grouping three notes in the right beginning on the second beat of the measure:



Make sure you understand what each hand is doing by first practicing this measure one hand at a time, and then slowly putting the hands together.

Measures 45-52 should have a sense of forward motion as the music moves toward the climactic gesture at measure 53. This burst of energy dissipates quickly at measure 58, returning to a high-register restatement of the material from measure 19. At measure 63, the music is very free and should again mimic the rise and fall of wind in the trees.

Scan here to access a recording of *Gentle Breeze, Swaying Trees*:



Gentle Breeze, Swaying Trees

by Brian Mueller

$\bullet = 116$ *rubato e espressivo*

mp

**bring out slurred melodic lines*

To Coda

rit.

a tempo

1 2 3 2 3 3 2 3 2

5 6 7 8

9 10 11 12

13 14 15 16

17 18 19 20

3 3 4 3 3 4 3 3 4

1 2 2 1 2 1 2 1 2

What Once Was Home

by Brian Mueller

$\bullet = 140$

mf

1 2 2 1 2 2

2 3 4

poco rit.

5 6 7 8

9 *a tempo*

mf

3 3 4 3 3 4 3 3 4 4 4 3 3 3 3 2 3 2 3 3 3

10 11 12

13 14 15 16

3 2 3 2 3 2 3 3

17 $\%$

f

3 2 3 2 3 3 3 3 2 3 2 3 2

18 19 20

A Jaunt Through the Garden

by Brian Mueller

$\bullet = 150$
3

mf

2 3 2

3 2 3 2 3 2 3 2 2

3 2 3 2 3 2 3 4

4

3

5

6

7

3 4 3 2 3 2 3 2

8

9

10

11

f

12

13

14

15

take 2nd ending on D.S.

16

3

mf

17

2

18

lyrical

19

mp

In the Shadow of a Windmill

by Brian Mueller

♩ = 100 *molto rubato with mystery*

mf

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Golden Light in the Early Spring

by Brian Mueller

♩ = 70 *expressively*

Measures 1-3 of the piece. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 70 *expressively*. The first measure starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The melody in the right hand features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. A crescendo hairpin is shown over measures 2 and 3, leading to a piano (*p*) dynamic at the start of measure 3.

Measures 4-6. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes. The left hand accompaniment consists of chords and single notes. A mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic is indicated at the start of measure 5. A crescendo hairpin is shown over measures 5 and 6, leading to a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic at the start of measure 6.

Measures 7-9. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes. The left hand accompaniment consists of chords and single notes. A mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic is indicated at the start of measure 8. A crescendo hairpin is shown over measures 8 and 9, leading to a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic at the start of measure 9. A *rit.* (ritardando) marking is placed above measure 9.

Measures 10-12. The tempo changes to *andante* (♩ = 80). The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes. The left hand accompaniment consists of chords and single notes. A piano (*p*) dynamic is indicated at the start of measure 10. A mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic is indicated at the start of measure 12. A *gently* marking is placed above measure 11. A box containing the number 12 is placed above measure 12. A tempo change to ♩ = 80 *steadily building with rubato* is indicated at the start of measure 12. Fingerings are indicated for measures 10-12: 3 2 3 2 3 4 for the right hand and 1 2 1 2 1 2 for the left hand.

Measures 13-15. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes. The left hand accompaniment consists of chords and single notes. A mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic is indicated at the start of measure 13. A crescendo hairpin is shown over measures 13 and 14, leading to a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic at the start of measure 15. A crescendo hairpin is shown over measures 15 and 16, leading to a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic at the start of measure 16.