



# Arthur **FARWELL**

## Piano Music Volume Two

Tone Pictures  
after Pastels in Prose, Op. 7

Polytonal Studies, Op. 109:  
series II

Pawnee Horses, Op. 20, No. 2

Dawn, Op. 12

**Lisa Cheryl Thomas, piano**

INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

# ARTHUR FARWELL: PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME TWO

by Lisa Cheryl Thomas

When Arthur Farwell, in his late teens and studying electrical engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, heard the 'Unfinished' Symphony for the first time, he decided that he was going to be not an engineer but a composer. Born in St Paul, Minnesota, on 23 April 1872,<sup>1</sup> he was already an accomplished musician: he had learned the violin as a child and often performed in a duo with his pianist elder brother Sidney, in public as well as at home; indeed, he supported himself at college by playing in a sextet. His encounter with Schubert proved detrimental to his engineering studies – he had to take remedial classes in the summer to be able to pass his exams and graduate in 1893 – but his musical awareness grew rapidly, not least though his friendship with an eccentric Boston violin prodigy, Rudolph Rheinwald Gott, and frequent attendances at Boston Symphony Orchestra concerts (as a 'standee': he couldn't afford a seat). Charles Whitefield Chadwick (1854–1931), one of the most prominent of the New England school of composers, offered compositional advice, suggesting, too, that Farwell learn to play the piano as soon as possible. Edward MacDowell (1860–1908), perhaps the leading American Romantic composer, looked over his work from time to time – Farwell's finances forbade regular study with such an eminent man. But he could afford counterpoint lessons with the organist Homer Albert Norris (1860–1920), who had studied in Paris with Dubois, Gigout and Guilmant, and piano lessons with Thomas P. Currier (1855–1929), a piano teacher and student and associate of MacDowell's. Making his base in a pleasant attic room in Boston, Farwell was now set up to begin his new calling.

Playing with other talented musicians was an obvious source of pleasure, and he spent the summer of 1896 at Lake Owasco, one of the eleven Finger Lakes in up-state New York, at the home of Thomas Osborn, his brother's employer and himself a gifted pianist. Osborn enjoyed Farwell's company enough to invite him on an all-expenses-paid tour of Europe, taking in Bayreuth and Nuremberg before continuing to Vienna, enjoying the concerts and operas on offer and visiting a number of landmarks in the lives of Beethoven and Schubert. In autumn 1897, while still in Germany, Farwell sought out Engelbert Humperdinck, then 43 and at the height of his fame; Humperdinck looked over some of Farwell's music and agreed to take him on as a student. Osborne then went back to America and Farwell stayed on in a pension in Boppard am Rhein, where Humperdinck then lived. Humperdinck, who refused to accept any money for lessons from Farwell all winter, took him

<sup>1</sup> A detailed account of Farwell's life and work can be found in Evelyn Davis Culbertson, *He Heard America Singing: Arthur Farwell – Composer and Crusading Music Educator*, The Scarecrow Press, Metuchen (New Jersey), 1992.

along on work-engagements to Heidelberg and Frankfurt. ‘The lessons were informal: I went up whenever I had sufficient work to show’, Farwell later wrote. ‘We would spend several hours over it, and my teacher-host would usually serve coffee and cigars, and sometimes a glass of yellow Marsala.’<sup>2</sup> In March 1898 Farwell went to Berlin with Humperdinck, who had to be there to prepare for the first performance of his opera *Königskinder*. It was here that Humperdinck introduced Farwell to some of his friends, two of whom would influence the young composer: Hans Pfitzner and James Grun, the poet who was then writing the libretto of Pfitzner’s second opera, *Die Rose vom Liebesgarten*. Farwell spent the next five months in Berlin, during which time Grun helped Farwell achieve a more spontaneous means of expression. Composition lessons with Pfitzner, though valuable in the longer term, were a trial at the time: Farwell’s inexperience exasperated the opinionated and intense Pfitzner, who made little attempt to disguise his impatience. The pressure was such that Farwell’s health failed and, after spending the first part of the summer back in Boppard, he retreated to England to recuperate and to work on his Italian: the Humperdincks were intending to go to Italy in the winter of 1898, and Farwell was going to continue his studies with his teacher there. Meeting Humperdinck in Paris, he discovered that the planned Italian trip was no longer on the cards, and so he decided to stay in Paris to study with Guilmant.

He returned to America in 1899 and to a lectureship at Cornell University, remaining on the staff there for two years.<sup>3</sup> It was then that, in a bookshop in Boston, he discovered in Alice Fletcher’s *Indian Story and Song*<sup>4</sup> the transcriptions of Indian melodies which so sparked his interest that they set him on the path by which he is chiefly remembered today. Farwell had been fascinated with Indian music and life since boyhood, when his father used to take him on family vacations to a Sioux village in Minnesota, on the shores of Lake Superior. But it wasn’t until a year later, when looking at the original Omaha melodies without the harmonisation John Comfort Fillmore had added to Fletcher’s transcriptions that Farwell realised his compositions made more sense when he used the melodies only and abandoned the European harmonies imposed on them. It was then that he felt the obligation to preserve the original cultural setting of the melodies he chose for his pieces.

But Farwell’s reputation as an Indianist<sup>5</sup> – which he soon grew to resent – has obscured what he achieved as a composer in his own right: his Indianist works account for only around ten per cent of his published output of well over one hundred opus numbers (for example, he also had a keen literary sense and wrote a series of *Symbolistic Studies* for orchestra).

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Farwell, *Wanderjahre of a Revolutionist’ and Other Essays on American Music*, ed. Thomas Stoner, University of Rochester Press, Rochester, 1995, p. 53.

<sup>3</sup> Just before taking up his position at Cornell, Farwell returned to Lake Owasco, enjoying a camping holiday on the eastern shore. The experience resulted in a piano suite, *Owasco Memories*, Op. 8, published by the Wa-Wan Press in 1907.

<sup>4</sup> Small, Maynard and Co., Boston, 1900.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed history of the Indianist movement, cf. my booklet essay with the first release in this series of recordings, Toccata Classics TOCC 0126.

## *Dawn*, Op. 12

Like other ancient cultures, many Native American tribes place importance on the rising of the sun, so much so that their doors of their tipis and council buildings open to the east, and their pow-wow grounds and ceremonial artwork – sand-paintings – face in the same direction. The few words – ‘umba e-dan hoo-we-nae’ – of the Omaha song on which Farwell’s *Dawn* [1], composed in 1902, is based translate as: ‘with the dawn, I seek thee’ (most Indian songs consist of only a few words repeated many times). The text also includes many vocables (syllables without meaning). Farwell’s piano piece quotes two melodies (both from another collection of transcriptions by Alice Fletcher) of the Omaha tribe, whose territory was in present-day Nebraska. The first is one of the love-songs Fletcher gathers under the generic title ‘Be-Thae Wa-an’, and is the same melody used in ‘The Old Man’s Love Song’, the second item in Farwell’s piano suite *American Indian Melodies*, Op. 11 (1901). It was the Omaha custom to sing love-songs at dawn when the women went to draw water. One old man, by the name of Non-ba-non-zhin, whom Alice Fletcher describes as a very handsome, prosperous, a skilful warrior, with threads of silver in his black hair, and a devoted husband and father, would go to the top of a hill by his lodge every morning and, ‘while the morning star hung like a jewel in the east, he sang the melody carrying the words, *With the dawn I seek thee!*’<sup>7</sup> His secret was never disclosed, it is presumable that he was seeking his final union with the “Great Mystery”<sup>8</sup> The second melody is a simple Otoe<sup>9</sup> song from a Wa-Wan ceremony – intended to unite someone of one tribe in brotherhood with a member of a different tribe<sup>10</sup> – sung as a chorale as pipes are carried around the lodge.<sup>11</sup>

The form of *Dawn* is roughly ABA’B’ plus a codetta, with the Otoe melody being the B section. The cleverly written A section uses the exact pitches of the original pentatonic melody, E, D, B, A and G, which Farwell sets in G major, but the open harmonic structure allows the pentatonic melody and flavour to prevail. Even when he cadences on a bar of G major, he follows it with a chromatic bridge straight back to the pentatonic melody, thus avoiding the feeling of a conventional G major harmonic progression. Within the first large A section, he presents the original Omaha song in its entirety, then repeats the last half of the melody an octave higher, followed by the

<sup>6</sup> *A Study of Omaha Indian Music*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.), 1893; republished Bison Books, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1994, p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> *Indian Story and Song*, op. cit., pp. 77 and 78.

<sup>8</sup> Farwell, quoted in Culbertson, op. cit., p. 360.

<sup>9</sup> The Otoe (pronounced ‘o-to-AY’) were initially a single tribe in the Great Lakes region, but before any European encounter it split and migrated numerous times towards the south-west, eventually adopting the culture of the Great Plains area. Part of the reason for the split was the quarrel between two chiefs over the daughter of one and the son of the other: since the boy was accused of seducing the girl, his and his father’s group became Otoe, meaning ‘lechers’. They had contacts with the early French explorers Marquette and Joliet in 1673, and the Lewis and Clark Expedition encountered them in 1804 near the Platte River (in what is now south-eastern Nebraska) In the 1820s the US government pressured them into giving up their lands and moving again, first to a tract in Kansas and in 1881, finally, to ‘Indian Territory’ (which became Oklahoma).

<sup>10</sup> The Wa-Wan ceremony is described in more detail in my essay with Toccata Classics TOCC 0126.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Fletcher *A Study of Omaha Indian Music*, op. cit., p. 40.

first half of the melody, this time with a different accompaniment figure in a *pianissimo* pentatonic cascade. The B section, in E major, presents the Otoo melody in a low, soft register, then again an octave higher and a little louder, then a third time *fortissimo* another octave higher, with left-hand descending octaves in E major, which modulate into C major for the last statement of the Otoo melody in this section. The rhythm is a very distinctive and definitive Native American rhythm (although it also sounds Scottish): accented semiquaver (sixteenth note), dotted quaver (eighth), crotchet (quarter), on the downbeat. The A' section returns with the first half of the original pentatonic melody with accompaniment in G major, then its second phrase is repeated with the left hand in the same ascending chromatic scale, but in octaves this time, followed by a final two statements of the Otoo melody – the last of these *ff* and marked 'Broadly', given an even more emphatically Native American character with a downbeat of a demisemiquaver, double-dotted quaver and crotchet – in the B' section presented in a moving and stately chorale with descending left-hand octaves, stepwise in G major scales, and steadily increasing in volume until the arpeggiations and descending octave scales (implying E minor and G major) of the codetta, fading away in the morning sunlight into a *pianississimo* G major.

In 1904 Farwell wrote a version of *Dawn* for piano and small orchestra, revising it in 1909 to bring it closer to the version for solo piano. The orchestral version was first performed by the Peoples Symphony, conducted by Farwell, at Carnegie Hall, on 18 April 1909. He wrote in his programme note that he 'treats the song as an invocation of the spirit of life at dawn', and claimed the second melody was a 'response of the dawn to the invocation'.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Tone Pictures after Pastels in Prose, Op. 7***

Farwell was enthusiastic about integrating the arts, and his *Tone Pictures after Pastels in Prose* (1895) present nine short piano pieces partnered with, and taking their titles from, a series of prose poems by Théodore de Banville (1823–91), Charles Baudelaire (1821–67), Louis Bertrand (1866–1941) and Judith Gautier (1845–1917),<sup>13</sup> from a little, privately published volume titled *Pastels in Prose*.<sup>14</sup> Edward MacDowell put his stamp of approval on this collection by helping Farwell to select the pieces it should contain. Two of them – 'The Sages' Dance' and 'The Round under the Bell' – seem to have been premiered in orchestral versions: Culbertson<sup>15</sup> quotes a journal entry of Farwell from 19 June 1896, which records performances by the Promenade Orchestra, but she notes that there is no record anywhere else of either of these pieces in versions for orchestra.<sup>16</sup> All of them are evocative musical paintings,

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 367.

<sup>13</sup> Daughter of the poet Théophile Gautier and the historical novelist, Ernesta Grisi (herself the sister of the singer and ballet-dancer Carlotta Grisi).

<sup>14</sup> The translations are anonymous in Farwell's score but its title identifies as the source *Pastels in Prose*, a collection of translations of French prose poems published in 1890 by the American symbolist poet Stuart Merrill (1863–1915) – his only American publication, in fact, since he spent most of his later life in France and wrote in French.

<sup>15</sup> *Op. cit.*, pp. 46–47.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 504.

inspired by the prose-poems which precede them in the score. In 1892, only three years before the *Tone Pictures after Pastels in Prose* appeared, the Hungarian-born, Paris-based Zionist and social critic Max Nordau (1849–1932) brought out a book called *Entartung* ('Degeneration'), which condemned, among much else, *fin-de-siècle* symbolism and mysticism and the interpenetration of the arts.<sup>17</sup> In 'The Raconteur', his column in *The Musical Courier*, James Huneker (1857–1921), a formative American commentator on the arts, gave Farwell his first review, commenting that the words 'Pictures in Tone, Pastels in Prose' would drive 'Old Daddy Nordau wild!'<sup>18</sup>

## 2 'Roses and Lilies', by Théodore de Banville

A great corbel of Roses and a great corbel of Lilies both burst into flower at the same time in the garden of the poet. The Lilies and the Roses are intoxicated with joy. The soft summer wind caresses them and the sun kisses them, and makes the clear colors of their corals sparkle like the fires of precious stones. With a voice that makes no sound, and yet that can be heard, with the mysterious voice that emanates from things believed to be inanimate, they say, swaying in the light:

'We, the Flowers, are happy, because we live in the garden of the good poet, where we perform our proper functions, and where we exist purely and simply as Flowers, without fear of furnishing a pretext for classical tropes and of being used as terms of comparison. And as no philistine and no sayer of commonplaces will enter the garden, nobody will pretend that we have any relations with the winged butterflies – which is as absurd as to suppose any love between doves and crocodiles. And we, the Lilies with the straight petals and green chalices – we will gloriously uplift our golden pistils; and we the blushing Roses with ecstatic hearts – we will bloom for no reason at all, for the simple pleasure of it, without being constrained to affirm the pretended whiteness of red or green women, and without the humiliation of being compared to any young lady.'

A simple, carefree, lilting waltz melody is stated three times in F major, the second time a little varied with a few cross-over notes in the left hand and the harmony slightly varied. Perhaps hinting at the flowers in the poem which are happy to exist without 'furnishing a pretext', Farwell cleverly vacillates between the notes D and D flat. This subtle little flexibility implies an harmonic basis of F major or F minor, thus avoiding a specific tonality, and the melody happily exists either way, or, as at the end of the second statement, the D flat can suddenly take its own identity as a D flat major chord and head off in a new direction.

## 3 'The Sages' Dance', by Judith Gautier (after Li-Tai-Pe)

On my flute tipped with jade, I sang a song to mortals; but the mortals did not understand.  
Then I lifted my flute to the heavens, and I sang my song to the Sages.

<sup>17</sup> Within a few decades, of course, the Nazis were to use the concept of 'degeneration' to condemn work by Jewish and other artists of whom they disapproved.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Culbertson, *op. cit.*, p. 502.

The Sages rejoiced together, they danced on the glistening clouds.  
And now mortals understand me, when I sing to the accompaniment of my flute tipped with jade.

Over a left-hand ostinato pattern of two-note slurs and *staccato* alternating open fifths and fourths, the right-hand melody enters in thirds with similar articulation and accents. The piece is in a simple AA' form (which Farwell instructs should be 'moderately fast – without hurrying'), the A' section stated two octaves higher with the top note doubled an octave below.

4 'The Stranger', by Charles Baudelaire

'Whom lovest thou the best, enigmatical man, say, thy father, thy mother, thy sister, or thy brother?'  
'I have neither father, nor mother, nor sister, nor brother.'  
'Thy friends?'  
'You use there a word whose sense has to this day remained unknown to me.'  
'Thy fatherland?'  
'I know not in what latitude it is situated.'  
'Beauty?'  
'I would fain love it, godlike and immortal.'  
'Gold?'  
'I hate it as you hate God.'  
'Eh? What lovest thou, then, extraordinary stranger?'  
'I love the clouds – the clouds that pass – over there – the marvellous clouds!'

In C minor, this piece has, like the Chopin Étude in C sharp minor, Op. 25, No. 7 (nicknamed the 'Cello Étude'), a beautiful cello-like bass melody in the left hand, with softer repeated chords in the right, and also has a cadenza-like climactic passage. Farwell's piece is not as technically difficult as Chopin's, half as long, and in common time rather than Chopin's 3/4. The theme, only two bars long, is stated six times with different harmonies each time and slight changes to the 'cello' melody while keeping the same melodic rhythm. This passage is followed by four bars in which the roles of the left and right hands are reversed and the melodic shape inverted, then the two-bar theme is repeated twice more, but with G instead of C in the bass, functioning as the dominant until the final *ppp* rolled chord in C major.

5 'Indifference to the Lures of Spring', by Judith Gautier

The peach-blossoms flutter like pink butterflies; the willow sees itself smiling in the water.  
Yet my weariness persists and I cannot write poetry.  
The breeze from the coast, bringing me the perfume of the plum-trees, finds me indifferent.  
Ah! when will night come and make me forget my sadness in sleep.

In A flat major and a 6/8 metre, after an introduction it presents a persistent rhythmic motive built from a double-dotted quaver, demisemiquaver (thirty-second note) and quaver. The form is AA', with A' requiring high cross-over notes in the left hand and lower bass notes in the accompaniment. There is also a short passage of two bars where the melody is in the centre and both hands must reach to high and low E flats on the off-beat and then quickly return to the *legato* melody.

**6 'The Red Flower', by Judith Gautier**

While working sadly by my window, I pricked my finger, and the white flower that I was embroidering became a red flower.

Then I thought suddenly of him who has gone from me to fight the rebels; I imagined that his blood was flowing also, and tears fell from my eyes.

But methought that I heard the sound of his horse's steps, and I arose joyously. It was my heart, which, beating too fast, imitated the sound of his horse's steps.

And I resumed my work by the window, and my tears embroidered with pearls the stuff stretched on the frame.

The next piece is also monothematic, in E major, with a melodic motive in 3/4 that emphasises the dominant, perhaps to suggest impatience in waiting for the soldier's return. The two-part thematic idea is played three times, followed by a dramatic triplet transition to another statement on the dominant, and closes finally with the long-awaited tonic statement of the melodic motive.

**7 'Anywhere out of the World', by Charles Baudelaire**

This life is a hospital where every patient is possessed with the desire to change his bed. This one would prefer to suffer before the stove, and that other thinks that he would recover by the window.

It always seems to me that I will be better where I am not, and that question of removal is one that I discuss incessantly with my soul.

'Tell me, my soul, poor chilled soul, what wouldst thou think of dwelling in Lisbon? It must be warm there, and thou wouldst grow as lusty as a lizard. The city is on the sea shore; they say that it is built of marble, and that the inhabitants have such a dislike for everything green that they uproot all the trees. There is a landscape after thy taste, a landscape composed of light and minerals and water to reflect them.'

My soul makes no answer.

'Since thou lovest repose so well, combined with the sight of movement, wilt thou come and dwell in Holland, that beatifying land? Mayhaps thou wouldst find distraction in that country, whose image thou hast so often admired in the museums. What wouldst think of Rotterdam, thou who lovest forests of masts, and ships anchored before the steps of the houses?'

My soul remains dumb.

‘Thou wouldst smile, perhaps, on Batavia? We would find there the mind of Europe joined to the beauty of the tropics.’

Not a word. – Is my soul dead?

‘Hast thou, then, attained such a state of numbness that thou findest pleasure only in thy sorrow? If so, let us fly to the lands that are the analogues of Death. I have it, poor soul! I will pack my trunk for Torneo. Let us go yet farther, to the extremity of the Baltic; yet farther from life, if possible; let us settle at the Pole. There the sun slants upon the earth, and the slow alternations of light and night suppress variety and increase monotony, that half of Nothingness. There we shall be able to take long baths of darkness, while, to divert us, the aurora borealis will send us from time to time its rosy rays, like the reflection of the fireworks of Hell!’

At last my soul bursts forth, and wisely cries to me: ‘Anywhere! anywhere! as long as it be out of the world!’

The *Tone Picture* with the longest theme, it is in E minor, in AAA’ form. The second A is only slightly different from the first, primarily with the right-hand melody now in octaves. After an intense transition several bars long emphasising the leading tone and dominant harmony, the final section is a left-hand cadenza intensifying the right-hand melody, growing to a *fortissimo*, before a sudden, soft codetta, marked ‘with calm despair’. It ends with an E major chord.

#### 8 ‘Evening on the Water’, by Louis Bertrand

The black gondola glided by the palaces of marble, like a bravo running to some nocturnal adventure, with stiletto and lantern under his cloak.

A cavalier and a lady were conversing of love. ‘The orange trees so perfumed, and you so indifferent! Ah, Signora, you are as a statue in a garden!’

‘Is this the kiss of a statue, my Georgio? Why do you sulk? You love me then?’ ‘There is not a star in the heavens that does not know it, and thou knowest it not?’

‘What is that noise?’ ‘Nothing; doubtless the splash of the water up and down a step in the stairway of the Giudecca.’

‘Help! help!’ ‘Ah, Mother of the Savior! somebody drowning!’ ‘Step aside; he has been confessed,’ said a monk, who appeared on the terrace.

And the black gondola strained its oars and glided by the palaces of marble, like a bravo returning from some nocturnal adventure, with stiletto and lantern under his cloak.

A slow and graceful theme – another beautiful bass melody, in a rhythm suggestive of oars steadily stroking the water – is presented twice in D major, connected by a passionate passage in contrary motion octaves building to *fortissimo* before returning to the soft, peaceful theme reflective of a gondola gliding on smooth water in the evening.

9 'A Poet Gazes on the Moon', by Judith Gautier

From my garden I hear a woman singing, but in spite of her I gaze on the moon.

I have never thought of meeting the woman who sings in the neighboring garden;  
my gaze ever follows the moon in the heavens.

The bats cross it ever and anon, and oblige me suddenly to lower my lids; but when I lift them again, I still see  
the silver gleam darted upon me.

The moon mirrors herself in the eyes of the poets as in the brilliant scales of the dragons,  
those poets of the sea.

The penultimate of the *Tone Pictures*, in ABA form, it opens with a lovely, sombre melody in 3/4 time, in the bass, between two outer voices. It is the only *Tone Picture* to have a B section, and here the metre changes to common time and the tempo is 'a little faster', with a chordal left-hand and treble right-hand melody. The *legato* baritone melody returns, again in 3/4, surrounded by bass octaves and the left-hand crossed over to deliver delicately descending treble semiquavers in thirds.

10 'The Round under the Bell', by Louis Bertrand

Twelve sorcerers were dancing a round under the big bell of Saint John's. They invoked the storm and after the other, and from the depths of my bed I counted with terror twelve voices that fell processionally through the darkness.

Immediately the moon hid herself behind the clouds, and rain, mingled with lightning and whirlwinds, lashed my window, while the vanes screeched, like watching cranes when a shower bursts upon them in the woods.

The string of my lute, hanging against a panel, broke; my goldfinch fluttered his wings in the cage; some curious sprite turned over a leaf of the 'Romance of the Rose' that was sleeping on my desk.

But suddenly the thunder crashed at the top of Saint John's; the sorcerers disappeared, struck to death; and I saw from afar their books of magic burning like a torch in the Black Belfry.

The frightful conflagration painted the walls of the Gothic church with the red flames of purgatory and hell, and prolonged upon the neighboring houses the shadow of the gigantic statue of Saint John.

The vanes became rusty; the moon melted the pearly clouds; the rain only fell drop by drop from the edge of the roof, and the breeze, opening the ill closed window, threw upon my pillow the flowers of my jasmine bush shaken by the storm.

'The Round under the Bell', in E minor, spins the same thematic idea furiously throughout the piece with sweeping chromatic ascending and descending scales in semiquavers to connect the episodes, which are defined by an infectious repeated motive of a slurred crotchet-quaver figure in 6/8. Although this rhythm is first presented in

the long introduction, along with chromatic, ascending semiquaver scales, the theme proper does not begin in its entirety until bar 19, where it takes eight bars to present an inverted form of the shorter idea in the introduction. The full theme is immediately repeated with the left-hand melody presented in octaves and the right-hand accompaniment an octave higher. The closing section is slightly longer than the introduction, with similar rhythms, and this time chromatic, descending semiquaver scales.

### ***Polytonal Studies, Op. 109: Series II***

The first recording in this series presented twelve of Farwell's cycle of *Polytonal Studies*, Op. 109 (1940–52):<sup>19</sup> Nos. 1–11 and No. 34, all but the last combining two major keys (No. 34 combines the parallel E flat keys). Of the remaining studies – he did not compose the others he obviously had in mind – Nos. 12–21 combine two minor keys and No. 26 a major and minor one.<sup>20</sup> None of these studies has a date inscribed on the score (as several in the first set do), with the exception of No. 26, which is marked 10 June 1940.

No. 12, in C minor and G minor [11],<sup>21</sup> in ABAB form, is a mirror study of quavers (eighth notes) in moderate, contrary motion in section A, and a slower, waltz-like, homophonic B section.

No. 13, in 3/2 metre, and C minor and F minor [12], consists of seven variations of the first four bars of steady crotchets (quarter notes), blocked triads in the treble clef, played by alternating hands, a transition that takes the form of a shorter eighth variation, and then a closing restatement of the theme.

No. 14, in B minor and G minor [13], takes the shape of ABCDA'B'C'–codetta; it is moderately fast and technically difficult. The first three sections are eight bars each, the D section is twelve bars long, followed by A' with both hands in parallel octaves plus a minor sixth, B' and C' each now four bars only, and a codetta of twelve bars that includes A material inverted and in parallel minor sixths.

No. 15, in C minor and E flat minor [14], in ABA form, contrasts an impassioned, sweeping melody in section A, to be played 'somewhat slowly', with a faster chordal B section, with long sustained chords in the right hand and a distinctive single *staccato* octave in the left, followed by a minim octave, and a return of A extended into a rhapsodic climax before settling down to a quiet ending.

No. 16, in D minor and E minor [15], is a fast canon, the second voice entering two bars after the first an octave and a major second higher. The entire piece is played *staccato* until the final chord, except for two welcome *legato* bars in the left hand two-thirds of the way through, again two bars later and eleven bars before the end, this time

<sup>19</sup> On *Toccata Classics TOCC 0126*, along with *Impressions of the Wa-Wan Ceremony of the Omahas*, Op. 21 (1925), and *The Vale of Enitharmon*, Op. 91 (1930).

<sup>20</sup> My booklet essay with Volume One of this series assumes seventh-chord harmony as a governing principle. Culbertson (*op. cit.*, p. 747) believes that the symbols I take to be a number 7 in Farwell's manuscript are in fact the letter T, indicating 'tonic', but I think that this may be a misreading: he does use the seventh of his key centres in the harmonic structures of many of the *Polytonal Studies*, and the seventh does make it easy to pivot and modulate to other keys or implied keys.

<sup>21</sup> In these notes the first key listed is that of the bass clef and the second that of the treble.

with both hands in short, two-beat phrases. At times, the two canonic and imitative voices form mirrors in contrary motion. It is, as might be imagined, technically difficult.

In No. 17, in F minor and E minor [16], the opening wide-ranging five-bar melody is developed throughout, with a middle section that grows out of motives derived from it. Farwell indicates many changes of tempo, from 'somewhat slow' to 'more animated', 'relax the tempo' and 'rather slowly'.

No. 18, in F minor and F sharp minor [17], suggests, perhaps, a whirlwind or a dance with one spinning pirouette after another, respite provided by a couple of descending chromatic scales (the second one in triplets) – into the start of the next whirlwind.

No. 19, in G minor and B minor [18], is reminiscent of two Chopin preludes together: Op. 28, No. 4 in E minor and No. 6 in B minor. Several of Leopold Godowsky's *53 Studies on Chopin's Études* (1894–1914) combine two studies; Farwell may have taken his cue from them.

No. 20, in E flat minor and A minor [19], recalls both Rachmaninov (specifically the *Moment Musical*, Op. 16, No. 4, in E minor) and Prokofiev. It is roughly in ABA form: the first theme, stated in the first four bars, is later extended, sequenced and broken into smaller motives; the second, in three *legato* quavers followed by repeated *staccato* ones, is stated with alternating hands. It would make a good encore piece.

No. 21, in B flat minor and G minor [20], starts off *fugato* and continues contrapuntally, with similar fugue-like entrances throughout. In the first two fugal statements, the second statement enters on the fourth beat of the second full bar, both entering on a crotchet anacrusis on the dominant of each key. This contrapuntal piece is in ABCA'B'C' form, with the A sections fugal in nature and the B and C sections more homophonic.

In No. 26, in D flat major and F minor [21], Farwell puts the key-signatures only on the first staves, using accidentals in the remainder of the piece. The augmented second gives this study a distinctive sound, created by the E natural of the dominant chord in the treble and the tonic D flat in the bass.

### 'Pawnee Horses', Op. 20, No. 2

'Pawnee Horses' [22] is the second of the five pieces which make up the suite *From Mesa and Plain*, Op. 20, published in 1905, and is one of the most widely performed of Farwell's piano compositions.<sup>22</sup> He claimed that 'the melody carries the rhythm of the gallop and spirit of the scene as only an Indian would have conceived it'.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, it is a good example of the intricacies of Native American rhythm, notated in 9/8 here, but the melody has very irregular and unpredictable accents and many ties across strong beats, so that the typical strong beats of 9/8 are avoided; instead, the weight often falls unexpectedly. 'Pawnee Horses' is based on an original Omaha song from the Alice Fletcher collection and the score presents a translation of its words: 'There go the Pawnee horses. I do not want

<sup>22</sup> 'Pawnee Horses' exists also in an arrangement for eight-part mixed *a cappella* chorus, Farwell's response to a 1937 commission from John Finley Williamson, the conductor of the Westminster Choir, to arrange some Indian songs for his singers.

<sup>23</sup> Culbertson, *op. cit.*, p. 383.

them, I have taken enough' – the Omaha Indian, having taken so many horses from his enemies, the Pawnee, couldn't care less about having any more of them and so, when he noticed a herd of horses running in the distance, he sang this song. The horse was an integral part of the Native American culture since its reintroduction<sup>24</sup> to the Americas in the 1500s by the Spanish *conquistadores*. Although the Spaniards did their best to prevent the Native Americans acquiring the horse, it was readily accepted as a mythological gift from the 'Great Spirit'. Farwell was determined to respect the true nature of the Indian melodies he employed, and here he ingeniously uses harmonies that leave the original melody as the centre of interest, avoiding the awkwardness that occurs when combining conventional western harmony with indigenous melody. 'Pawnee Horses' is in AA form with an introduction that is redeployed between the two A sections and again at the very end. The melody itself is accompanied by open fifths and a repeated rhythmic galloping motive. The introduction is two whole-tone descending scales, overlapping at a quaver's distance apart and only a semitone apart; when the pitches in both scales are combined, the result is a descending chromatic scale.

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<sup>24</sup> Molecular biology has recently proved that *Equus caballus* originated around 1.7 million years ago in North America, where it died out at the end of the last ice age, after spreading to Asia and Europe.

**Lisa Cheryl Thomas** graduated with a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in piano performance from the University of North Texas in 2010, her teachers up to that point including Adam Wodnicki, Joseph Banowetz, Jim Giles, Alfred Mouledous, Virginia Queen, Adele Marcus, Dorothy Gideon, Bobbye Ossman, Jan Wiest Ward and Helen Barlow.

She is herself of Native American stock, counting members of the Cherokee, Blackfoot and Sioux tribes among her ancestors, and her research and lecture recitals on Native American and 'Indianist' piano repertoire are awakening a new enthusiasm and interest in this music, which she has performed in Europe as well as in America. The organisations she has addressed include several music-teacher associations (among them the Texas Music Teachers' State Convention in Arlington in June 2010), and her recital programmes have been presented at The National Museum of the American Indian of the Smithsonian and the Millennium Stage of The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. She has concentrated on this branch of the piano repertoire since premiering Tom Hoffmann's *Voices of Our Ancestors* in 1994, for prepared piano and rhythm instruments (Native American drum, wind chime, turtle-shell rattles, rain-stick, natural-bone wind-chime) in the Weill Recital Hall in Carnegie Hall in 1995. Works by Lisa Thomas under her Indian name, Delisgidv (the short version), were premiered at the Smithsonian in Washington DC and The Kennedy Center Millennium State, both in the summer of 2010, but have also been performed in San Francisco at the Presidio, in 1999, and in several other concerts, including her doctoral dissertation recital. Her doctoral thesis, *Native American Elements in Piano Repertoire by the Indianist and Present Day Native American Composers*, presented at the University of North Texas, Denton, in 2010, can be read online at [www.digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc28485/](http://www.digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc28485/) and was published by ProQuest in 2011, and *Smithsonian*, the magazine of the National Museum of the American Indian, published her article 'Composers and Indians: The Search for a National Style Preserved Native Tradition', in summer 2010 (Vol. 11, No. 2). Her website can be found at [www.lisacherylthomas.com](http://www.lisacherylthomas.com).

A *Fanfare* review of the first CD in this series ended: 'there is much of great beauty here. Lisa Cheryl Thomas is herself of Native American ancestry, and the love she feels for this music is near palpable. Her musicological background work is impeccable, too, as she used facsimiles of Farwell's manuscripts in preparation for this recording. She pens her own wide-ranging booklet note, also, which itself makes for fascinating reading. Recommended, and the second volume is awaited with enthusiasm'.





Recorded at Potton Hall, Westleton, Suffolk, on 1–2 November 2012.

Piano: Steinway D

Producer-engineer: Michael Ponder

Booklet essay: Lisa Cheryl Thomas

Cover image ('Tone Pictures after Pastels in Prose', No. 9, 'The Round under the Bell': 'But suddenly the thunder crashed at the top of Saint John's') © Michael Mill, Dreamstime

Design and layout: Paul Brooks, paulmbrooks@virginmedia.com

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# ARTHUR FARWELL Piano Music, Volume Two

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**1 Dawn, Op. 12** (1902) **5:20**

**Tone Pictures after Pastels in Prose, Op. 7** (1895)\*\* **14:34**

**2** No. 1 Roses and Lilies: 'Gracefully, with swaying motion' 1:40

**3** No. 2 The Sages' Dance: 'In even rhythm – well accented' 1:32

**4** No. 3 The Stranger: 'Mysteriously – with agitation' 1:57

**5** No. 4 Indifference to the Lures of Spring: 'Sadly' 1:49

**6** No. 5 The Red Flower: 'Slowly – longingly' 2:00

**7** No. 6 Anywhere out of the World: 'With restless discontent – not too fast' 2:34

**8** No. 7 Evening on the Water: 'Slowly and gracefully' 1:30

**9** No. 8 A Poet Gazes on the Moon: 'Sombrely' 2:16

**10** No. 9 The Round under the Bell: 'With wild fury' 1:52

**Polytonal Studies, Op. 109\*** (1940–52) – series II **40:03**

The first key given is that of the bass clef, the second that of the treble.

**11** No. 12 C minor/G minor: 'Moderately' 3:27

**12** No. 13 C minor/F minor: 'Very moderately' 4:06

**13** No. 14 B minor/G minor: 'Moderately fast' 2:42

**14** No. 15 C minor/E flat minor: 'Somewhat slowly, but with motion' 5:37

**15** No. 16 D minor/E minor: 'Rather fast' 2:22

**16** No. 17 F minor/E minor: 'Somewhat slowly' 4:52

**17** No. 18 F minor/F sharp minor: 'Fast' 2:43

**18** No. 19 G minor/B minor: 'Slowly' 2:11

**19** No. 20 E flat minor/A minor: 'Deliberately fast, without hurrying' 5:39

**20** No. 21 B flat minor/G minor: 'Moderately fast' 4:16

**21** No. 26 D flat major/F minor: 'Very moderately' 3:18

**22 From Mesa and Plain, Op. 20: No. 2, 'Pawnee Horses'** (1905) **1:19**

\*FIRST RECORDINGS; \*\*FIRST COMPLETE RECORDING

TT **65:03**

**Lisa Cheryl Thomas, piano**

The American composer Arthur Farwell (1872–1952) is remembered as the leading member of a group of 'Indianists' who used Native American tribal melodies. But Farwell's stylistic range was much wider than is realised today. This second CD of his piano music presents not only two Indianist pieces but also the early character-pieces *Tone Pictures after Pastels in Prose* and the experimental *Polytonal Studies*, which pit two different keys against each other to generate unusual harmonies.



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