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Kenneth Frazelle's "Blue Ridge Airs I" and Sonata for Cello and Piano: A synthesis of music, poetry, and nature

Inkman, Joanne Elizabeth, D.M.A.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1993

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KENNETH FRAZELLE'S BLUE RIDGE AIRS I
AND SONATA FOR CELLO AND PIANO:
A SYNTHESIS OF MUSIC,
POETRY, AND NATURE

by

Joanne Elizabeth Inkman

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Musical Arts

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1993

Approved by


Dr. Joseph DiPiazza

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APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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Note on Musical Examples

All musical excerpts with the exception of example 2.2 are reproduced from Kenneth Frazelle's manuscripts. Frazelle's music is copyrighted by the composer and is used by permission in this document.

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PREFACE

The composer Kenneth Frazelle (b. 1955) is rapidly moving to the forefront of the American musical scene. His music is receiving national and international attention from renowned audiences, and critics, and such international performers as Yo-Yo Ma, Jeffrey Kahane, Dawn Upshaw, and Paula Robison. His compositions have been performed throughout North America, Europe, and Israel. The rising acclaim for Frazelle's work warrants its exposure to the scholarly world.

Cellist Yo-Yo Ma described Frazelle's work as having "a unique voice and innovative quality."¹ Composer Roger Sessions, in a letter supporting Frazelle's work, stated, "His work shows him to be a young artist of great sensitivity and genuine originality."² Although his work is esteemed and performed by musicians of international stature, no scholarly research on the life and work of Kenneth Frazelle has been undertaken. The intent of this

¹Yo-Yo Ma, to whom it concerns, 23 January 1989. Transcript in personal library of Kenneth Frazelle, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

²Roger Sessions, New York, letter of recommendation, 10 March 1978. Transcript in the personal library of Kenneth Frazelle, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

study, therefore, is to present a portrait of Frazelle's life and to investigate his music and the development of his style with emphasis on two representative compositions.

The works from Frazelle's solo and chamber music for piano have been selected for detailed study. These represent contrasting genres drawn from a five-year period (1987-1992), and they exhibit many of the traits which are giving his work national and international acclaim. A piano solo, Blue Ridge Airs I (1988), and an instrumental chamber work, Sonata for Cello and Piano (1989), while diverse, both emphasize the role of the piano.

Chapter I of this document describes Frazelle's childhood, education, and professional years. Important teachers and individuals and other forces influencing his life and music are described, giving insight into Frazelle's creative development. Substantial compositions, commissions, premieres, as well as important performances throughout his professional life to the present (1993) are cited.

Chapter II traces Frazelle's growth as a composer, showing how his style evolved and was molded by specific visual, literary, and musical influences. Investigation of Frazelle's compositions from his earliest days indicates that a perceptible style change occurred in the late 1980s. Musical examples illustrating stylistic features reveal both

his musical growth and the evolution of a distinctive manuscript style.

Chapter III examines his most significant piano solo, Blue Ridge Airs I (1988) in detail. Performance and commissioning details, influences, musical shape, rhythmic complexities, and pianistic features are explored to illustrate characteristic elements of this music.

Similarly Chapter IV examines a representative instrumental chamber work, the Sonata for Cello and Piano (1989), showing the piano in a collaborative role. This sonata exemplifies Frazelle's use of traditional formal procedures in combination with nontraditional materials and techniques. The sonata's performance and commissioning details, influences, musical shape, rhythmic complexities, and instrumental features reveal a similarity to the stylistic features of Blue Ridge Airs I.

Chapter V recognizes Frazelle's visibility in the music world and summarizes the stylistic traits characterizing his most recent works. The study concludes with a look at the 1993 premiere of Sunday at McDonald's followed by discussion of works in progress and a projection of future creative possibilities.

A complete listing of Frazelle's compositions to date appears in Appendix A. Sketches from Frazelle's composition book comprise Appendix B.

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INKMAN, JOANNE ELIZABETH. D.M.A. Kenneth Frazelle's Blue Ridge Airs I and Sonata for Cello and Piano: A Synthesis of Music, Poetry, and Nature. (1993)
Directed by Dr. Joseph DiPiazza. 140 pp.

The purpose of this research is to document the life and work of American composer, Kenneth Frazelle (b. 1955). A native of North Carolina, Frazelle is a graduate of The Juilliard School in New York where he studied composition with Roger Sessions.

Commissioned by artists such as cellist Yo-Yo Ma, pianist Jeffrey Kahane, soprano Dawn Upshaw, and flutist Paula Robison as well as the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Spoleto Festival U.S.A., Frazelle composes in a wide range of media and genres. His compositions continually bring him critical acclaim as they are performed nationally and internationally.

Frazelle's works show that literary, visual, and musical influences play an important role in his creative processes. His settings of the poetry of A. R. Ammons (40 poems to date) reveal his intimate knowledge of this poet's works. Inspiration from visual art and landscape affect the shapes and sonorities of his music. In addition, Appalachian and Southern folk song have been incorporated into his music in a unique fashion. This study includes seventy musical examples which reveal Frazelle's musical growth and the evolution of a distinctive manuscript style.

Although Frazelle's output is extensive and richly varied, this project focuses on works that involve the piano. Two representative compositions from Frazelle's solo and chamber works for piano have been selected for detailed examination: a piano solo, Blue Ridge Airs I (1988), and an instrumental chamber work, Sonata for Cello and Piano, (1989).

An examination of the colorful, virtuosic Blue Ridge Airs I shows influence from landscape and indigenous and vernacular music. Based on a North Carolina Appalchian ballad, the work incorporates actual folk songs and folk elements. Musical shape, rhythmic complexities, and pianistic features are explored to illustrate the work's characteristic elements.

The Sonata for Cello and Piano (1989), a significant contribution to the cello and piano literature, shows the piano in a collaborative role. A close examination of the work reveals influences from poetry, artwork, landscape, and indigenous song. The three-movement work displays Frazelle's command of form, lyricism, rhythm, harmony, and collaborative writing.

The study concludes with mention of the 1993 premiere of Sunday at McDonald's and a look at future creative projects. A complete listing of Frazelle's compositions to date appears in Appendix A. Excerpts from Frazelle's compositional sketchbook are presented in Appendix B.

CHAPTER I
A PORTRAIT OF KENNETH FRAZELLE

Childhood

Kenneth Frazelle (b. 1955) was one of three children born to Olive Ann Shaw Downing and the late Kenneth Henry Frazelle in Jacksonville, North Carolina. Both his parents were from poor farm families of Irish, Scottish, and English origins, but deeply rooted in North Carolina since the early 1700s.

Although no family member was a professional musician, Frazelle was exposed to music during his formative years. His father was a folk singer and could play several instruments by ear, while an older cousin played the banjo and fiddle. He has fond memories of a rocking chair with a music box on it given to him on his first birthday. His father's relatives, with strong ties to the Southern Baptist Church, sang regularly in church choirs and the family often sang together. An early favorite was a musical game called "Miraculous," a version of "Name That Tune." According to Frazelle,

My father played the harmonica, and we had a toy piano that I think we got from Sears, where he worked. It works like a piano, but it's small; it sounds like a faint glockenspiel. He would play the first few notes, and we would guess what it was. There would be some kind of prize for the winner.¹

Frazelle was only five when his father died of alcoholism, but he retains strong impressions about the man who taught him to read and instilled in him a love for nature and for astronomy. The mother accepted the responsibility for the children's support and education and, recognizing their talents and abilities, ensured their access to opportunities for development. She worked as a court reporter and civil servant, while paying for dance, music, and art lessons for her three children.

Frazelle's formal musical training began in the third grade with piano lessons. His early interest in music and art was further nurtured by his attending a summer music program in Jacksonville where he took classes in music theory and painting. After learning music notation, Frazelle wrote his first composition at age eleven, a rhapsody scored for flute and piano.

Although as a child Frazelle lacked opportunities to attend concerts, he developed his appreciation of music by listening to his mother's record collection which spanned a wide range of styles. Recordings by popular artists such as

¹Genie Carr, "A Composer's 'Miraculous Game'." Winston-Salem Journal, 11 October 1987, H1-2.

Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, and Glenn Miller were balanced by recordings of classical repertoire including Rachmaninoff's second piano concerto and Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue. Motivated to further his understanding, Frazelle purchased piano music with allowance money he earned doing household chores or cutting the lawn.² At age twelve, he excitedly purchased the Haydn and Beethoven piano sonatas. He recalls:

It was so great--I remember looking at Op. 111 and all those 64th notes and being just dazzled by it all. I certainly couldn't play it, but I knew something wonderful was up.³

That year, 1967, Frazelle heard performances by two great concert pianists, Tamás Vásáry and Vladimir Horowitz. Vásáry performed Chopin's Berceuse and Mozart's Sonata K. 330 on a recital in Jacksonville. The same year, Horowitz gave a live television performance which Frazelle viewed from his home in Jacksonville.⁴ Every piece performed by both artists made indelible impressions on the

²Kenneth Frazelle, interview by author, 18 April 1992, Winston-Salem, tape recording. Interviews were also conducted on 4 April 1992, 3 May 1992, 18 May 1992, 14 December 1992, 22 February 1993, and 4 May 1993. Future references to interviews will list Frazelle's name and the date of the interview.

³Ibid.

⁴Horowitz on Television, Vladimir Horowitz, Columbia Records, R68-3062, 1968.

young Frazelle, motivating him to purchase the scores from both events:

I bought all the pieces--Chopin's Nocturne Op. 55 no. 1 and Ballade no. 1, Schumann's Arabesque and Träumerei, and Chopin's Berceuse. I remember being intoxicated with that D flat, all those black keys, and that kind of ornamentation, shimmering sounds. It was really great to take that music and recreate some of those sounds at the keyboard--just the kind of magic that you can get off the printed page--very exciting for me that I could make some of the sounds. Chopin was the first composer who went right through me--I just loved it.⁵

In 1969, Frazelle's mother arranged for him to study with her former piano teacher from Richlands, North Carolina, Gladys Sylvester. Frazelle was fascinated with the fact that Sylvester's brother, playwright Paul Green, was a Pulitzer Prize winner whose literature drew upon folk and local culture in North Carolina. The musical and literary accomplishments of these artistic individuals strengthened Frazelle's desire to broaden his horizons beyond his hometown of Jacksonville.

Frazelle remembers Sylvester's excellent instruction and encouragement with a sense of gratitude. The first lessons under her tutelage were difficult, however. According to Frazelle, she

zoomed into me about my left hand and overpedalling. I was used to being pumped up rather than criticized and helped. She gave me Bach inventions, Czerny, scales, and arpeggios--a

⁵Frazelle, interview, 18 April 1992.

pretty good technique. I adored it--it got better and better. The pieces got more interesting.⁶

Sylvester was a great disciplinarian who knew the repertoire, the instrument, and the technique required. Her clear musical ideas helped Frazelle sharpen his interpretive skills as he developed a repertoire of Chopin, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Prokofiev. Recognizing Frazelle's compositional interests as well as his performance abilities, she established study and performance objectives that would prepare him for the North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem. She encouraged him to compose by providing performance opportunities for his compositions on her recitals. His first solo piano pieces, dating from 1970 and written prior to any training in composition, were Bolero, Tarantelle, and Ballade. Further enrichment came from studying recordings and books Sylvester provided for him. He remembers hearing "some really wonderful, shocking things I had never heard before"⁷ in a Philadelphia Orchestra recording of Stravinsky's Rite of Spring.

Opportunity for musical development continued in 1970 when Frazelle attended East Carolina University Summer Band Camp, at which time he studied piano with Charles Bath and enrolled in a course in music appreciation. Inspired by the class, he purchased Schubert's Impromptus and a book on

⁶Frazelle, interview, 18 May 1992.

⁷Ibid.

twentieth-century composers, fervently reading about Stravinsky, Varèse, Debussy, and Schoenberg. Now more determined than ever to study music, he sought to continue his formal education in the discipline.

High School and College Years

Frazelle was accepted into the high school program of the North Carolina School of the Arts in 1971. There he studied both composition and piano, but his interest quickly gravitated toward composing. Both his composition teacher, Robert Ward, and his piano teacher, Clifton Matthews, encouraged him to compose. A prolific sight-reader and pianist, Frazelle increased his knowledge of the repertoire by playing any music he found in the music library. Because he was so talented, he was placed with college students during his second year at the school, although he was only sixteen. As Frazelle recounts:

Ward knew the repertoire; we would analyze Beethoven string quartets and sing the exposition to a Schubert symphony. We learned in a masterclass setting where you would play your compositions and hear what others were composing. It was a friendly atmosphere and there were insights into how others worked and how their work progressed from week to week. We brought in what we were inclined to write.⁸

As a composition student, Frazelle wrote his first vocal work. Six Songs of Emily Dickinson was completed in

⁸Frazelle, interview, 18 April 1992.

1972, while his orchestral works--music for Shakespeare's Henry IV Part I and Two Pieces for Orchestra--were completed in 1973 and 1974 respectively. The thrill of hearing the student orchestra perform his music greatly encouraged Frazelle, as did a performance of his Six Songs of Emily Dickinson.

Frazelle's creative work received recognition in 1971 when he was awarded first place in the North Carolina Federation of Music Teachers State Competition in piano performance as well as first place in composition for his Ballade. The next year, Frazelle's Piano Sonata 1972 placed first in the North Carolina Music Teachers National Association composition competition both for the state and Southern Division; thus he was qualified for national-level visibility at the age of eighteen.

In 1973, Frazelle won the Charles Ives Indian Hill Scholarship, which enabled him to spend a summer at Indian Hill, Massachusetts. Frazelle remembers the summer school, with its impressive faculty and opportunities for private study, as a place that fostered both his musical and personal growth. Several student film scores and the Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (1973) received performances at Indian Hill. Cultural events at the festival included weekly concerts by the Boston Symphony at Tanglewood and performances by the New York City Ballet at Saratoga Springs. Visits to Boston's Museum of Fine Arts and the

Lakeville, Connecticut home of harpsichordist Wanda Landowska further stimulated Frazelle's imagination and creativity. At Indian Hill, opportunities for composing were abundant. As Frazelle describes in a 1974 interview:

My skills as a composer were put enjoyably to the test when I was asked to do incidental music for one of the many productions by the Drama Department. My work also encompassed film music: I did scores to three of the students' motion pictures--a challenge, working within the realms of definitive time sequences. The people were wonderful--eager to applaud success and to console mistakes, willing to readily accept either as being natural. It was a wonderful summer!⁹

Returning to the North Carolina School of the Arts in the fall of 1973, Frazelle strengthened his knowledge of instrumental and vocal repertoire through extensive experience accompanying singers and violinists. He also gained a grasp of rhythmic flexibility performing in ensembles.¹⁰ The environment at the school encouraged students to explore related disciplines. Through writing music for plays for the School of Drama and in playing for dance classes, Frazelle experienced a "real loosening up of music and a whole range of possibilities."¹¹

During this period, Frazelle continued his piano lessons even though his heart was in composition rather than

⁹Anna Cate and Maxine Fountain, eds., Enthusiasts All (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Creative Printers, Inc., 1974), 293-94.

¹⁰Frazelle, interview, 18 May 1992.

¹¹Frazelle, interview, 3 May 1992.

in practicing the piano. His lessons proved invaluable, however, as he learned much that he could apply to his composing. Frazelle's piano teacher, Clifton Matthews, left a profound impression upon him about the instrument and the deepest values of music itself. Matthews taught him about "the gap between musical notation and real musical expression."¹² Matthews' command of the piano literature was extraordinary, and his thoroughness impressed and further inspired Frazelle in his own endeavors.

While attending a modern dance concert at the North Carolina School of the Arts during his junior year, Frazelle heard Suite from The Black Maskers (1923) by Roger Sessions. He responded to the rhythmic brilliance, dark color, and captivating quality of the music. Hearing this work aroused a compelling desire to study with that composer, and indeed, upon graduation from the high school program at the North Carolina School of the Arts in 1974, Frazelle won a scholarship to study with Roger Sessions at The Juilliard School in New York.

Frazelle experienced conflicting emotions during his first year at Juilliard. While stimulated by and exposed to many new musical ideas and concepts, he also experienced the isolation common among composers, a personal loneliness. Nevertheless, studies with Sessions and the diversity of

¹²Frazelle, interview, 4 May 1993.

cultural resources and opportunities in New York persuaded Frazelle to remain there.

Composers at Juilliard during this period included Milton Babbitt, Vincent Persichetti, David Diamond (Frazelle's theory teacher), and Elliott Carter. Frazelle felt the influence of these composers through their participation in the composers' forums. As he relates:

You knew how they thought, and you knew their students. A forum was not a concert. It was like sitting in on someone's lesson because you had their reactions to other students' music. Students played their tapes, and they discussed the music. One year the resident composers talked about their own string quartets during the forum. We had great visitor speakers--Aaron Copland, Peter Maxwell Davies, Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, and von Karajan--who gave classes at Juilliard. It was a very luxurious environment in terms of visiting artists. Some of the better known young composers in the country today were there at Juilliard.¹³

For Frazelle, live opera may have been the most important music he heard in New York, since he had not experienced it before. He often attended the Metropolitan Opera and the New York City Opera, where visual and dramatic aspects made a distinctive impression. He gleaned musical ideas from studying opera scores during live performances. Frazelle related:

You could go to the Met for four dollars and get score desks at the very top of the theater and sit up there with a little light and go through operas with the score, sometimes orchestra scores. I learned a lot about the flexibility of the voice,

¹³Frazelle, interview, 18 April 1992.

how it is supple, not like hitting a note on the piano, and the range of the humanness in the voice that varied between singers. Also, what happened off the page and in the orchestra was a real instruction to me.¹⁴

While at Juilliard, Frazelle seriously considered composing an opera. Through David Diamond, he began corresponding with playwright Edward Albee about the possibility of setting one of his works as an opera. In a letter supporting Frazelle's work, Albee described his music as "explorative, sensitive and dramatic."¹⁵ Frazelle became the first composer Albee encouraged to write an opera from his plays.¹⁶ The idea preoccupied Frazelle for a decade, after which his interest declined.

Opportunities to hear different styles of music performed by great artists enhanced Frazelle's musical knowledge. He heard first-class jazz in New York performed by Ella Fitzgerald, Joe Pass, and Oscar Peterson, among others. An abundance of classical music concerts including chamber and solo performances by artists and ensembles such as Vladimir Horowitz and the Cleveland Quartet contributed to his musical growth. Frazelle also heard performances of George Crumb's music. He relates that the coloristic

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Edward Albee, New York, to whom it may concern, 27 May 1983. Transcript in personal library of Kenneth Frazelle, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

¹⁶Ibid.

collage effects and seemingly ritualistic musical imagery of Crumb's music attracted him in the 1970s.¹⁷

The Composers' Concerts at Juilliard featured three of Frazelle's works. Frazelle himself performed the song cycle Slightly Thinner Than Sight (1976) with mezzo-soprano Donna Stephenson at the end of his sophomore year.¹⁸ Programmed during his junior year were performances of his Piano Sonata 1977 and Motets (1977), set to poems by e.e. cummings and scored for piano, voice, and speaker.

Frazelle's response to the visual arts has always exerted a great influence on his creative process and activates musical gestures within him. For him sound images can arise from visual impressions, or the two can occur simultaneously.¹⁹ New York provided an excellent opportunity for him to explore visual images. Frazelle often visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art. At the Metropolitan, Frazelle discovered the etchings of Rembrandt (1606-1669). The dramatic chiaroscuro effects created by minute crosshatchings intrigued him, and

¹⁷Frazelle, interview, 6 May 1992.

¹⁸Slightly Thinner Than Sight was Frazelle's first composition to be performed in a professional setting. In the spring of 1978, soprano Janice Harsányi programmed the work on a Kaleidoscope concert at the North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem.

¹⁹Bruce Weber, "Naturalissimo," The New York Times Magazine, 8 January 1989, 66.

he remains passionate about these works to this day.²⁰ When he attended an exhibit by painter Willem de Kooning (b. 1904) at New York's Guggenheim Museum, Frazelle related, "the paintings stimulated specific loud, brash sound-colors-clusters of undulating brass music."²¹ Frazelle also experienced a deep spiritual connection with the visionary color-field paintings of Mark Rothko (1903-1970) and the bold black and white canvasses of abstract expressionist Franz Kline (1910-1962).²²

It was at Juilliard that he first became acquainted with the work of Japanese artist Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858). Frazelle attributes significant inspiration to Hiroshige and feels that he knows this artist's work as well as the work of many composers. A great nineteenth-century master of the color wood-block print technique, Hiroshige is known for delicate color harmonies, portrayal of sea and sky, and treatment of bare paper as color.²³ According to art historian Sherman Lee, Hiroshige portrays the

Japanese landscape by using velvety color, technical virtuosity, and a more naturalistic, even Western-influenced, viewpoint. His

²⁰Frazelle, interview, 22 February 1993.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1990 ed., s.v. "Hiroshige."

landscapes are nearly always idyllic, but still particular.²⁴

Frazelle admired Hiroshige's work for its direct and honest quality, subtle colorations of ocean and sky, and atmospheric effects of moonlight, rain, mist, and snow. Even now he says that it is not an epic art but an intimate art that conveys a timeless quality.²⁵ The sense of momentum, layerings within different planes, spaciousness, symbolic nature, drastic form, and cropped effects all interest Frazelle.²⁶

Similarly, the poetry of Archie Randolph Ammons (b. 1926) exerts significant influence on Frazelle's creative output. Frazelle discovered a book of his poetry, Tape for the Turn of the Year (1965),²⁷ while Christmas shopping at a New York bookstore in 1974. The poetry caught Frazelle's attention for several reasons: the flow of words, the musicality of the language, the use of punctuation (the colon often replaces the period), and the sense of forward motion. Ammons' subject matter often deals

²⁴Sherman E. Lee, A History of Far Eastern Art (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), 490.

²⁵Frazelle, interview, 18 May 1992.

²⁶Frazelle, interview, 14 December 1992.

²⁷A. R. Ammons, Tape for the Turn of the Year (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965). Ammons originally wrote this long thin poem on a roll of adding-machine tape, then transferred it to typescript. It is a journal of the period 6 December 1963 to 10 January 1964.

with nature. Similarly, Frazelle is influenced by natural elements: water, landscape, plants, clouds, and light. Frazelle compares Ammons' poetry to Hiroshige's art, since from his perspective both artists deal with "observations of nature and the relationship of the observer to the landscape."²⁸ To date Frazelle has set approximately forty of Ammons' poems to music.

Frazelle graduated from Juilliard in 1978 with a Bachelor of Music degree, receiving the Gretchaninoff Award for High Achievement in Composition. The same year, his song cycle Diversifications (1978) won first prize in the Victor Herbert/ASCAP Competition sponsored by the National Federation of Music Clubs. His years at Juilliard proved vastly rewarding in terms of exposure to creative ideas and growth of his own creativity.

Professional Life

After graduation from Juilliard, Frazelle chose not to pursue graduate study as many composers did. Rather, he wanted to experience making a living in the world away from the New York school environment. He returned to Winston-Salem, where, like many composers in the early stages of their careers, he found it necessary to support himself by teaching piano and performing as a free-lance musician.

²⁸Frazelle, interview, 14 December 1992.

During this period, he continued to compose prolifically. He wrote dozens of didactic works for his piano students. Frazelle composed his first large-scale work in 1979, the thirty-minute piano solo titled Fantasies, which pianist Clifton Matthews premiered at the North Carolina School of the Arts in 1979. Later, Frazelle received the Joseph Bearns Prize from Columbia University for this work.

Frazelle's next two works dealt with subjects of water and light. A chamber piece, Seascapes (1981) was commissioned through the Rockefeller Foundation's Artist-in-Residence Program at the Southeastern Center of Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem. Seascapes is a theatrical composition of gigantic proportions (performance time is one hour and forty minutes) specifically designed for the Center's main gallery. A 1983 commission from the Center provided Frazelle with the opportunity to compose another large-scale chamber work, Prisma. Designed for the same space, Prisma explores images of light and refraction. The composition consumed a significant amount of Frazelle's time and creative energies, taking two years to compose. Meet the Composer, a national organization supporting lectures and performances of new American music, sponsored Frazelle's 1983 lecture about Prisma at the Center. In addition, Frazelle extracted thematic fragments from Prisma as a piano solo called Refractions (1984), which pianist Ronald Sadoff

performed at Carnegie Recital Hall (now Weill Hall) in a 1984 recital.

Frazelle composed Worldly Hopes, an uncommissioned work for voice and piano, between January and September of 1985. Inspired by performances of mezzo-soprano Jan DeGaetani and pianist Gilbert Kalish, Frazelle sent the music to both performers even though they were not acquainted with his music. Their positive reception of the score thrilled Frazelle. DeGaetani and Kalish first performed the songs with great success at the Southeastern Center of Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem in February 1987.²⁹ William Trotter reported on its performance in Musical America:

Its structural integrity, as well as its emotional depth, are truly compelling, and the cycle--as well as the performance--was received with great enthusiasm. Within a very tightly disciplined format, Frazelle's music--like the poems that inspired it--has a haiku-like power to suggest feelings, moods, whole landscapes, much vaster than itself.³⁰

An important contact was established in 1986 when Frazelle's longtime friend, Elizabeth Roberts (now Elizabeth Sobol) of IMG Artists, introduced his music to her client,

²⁹Teresa Sterne, ed., "A Tribute to Jan De Gaetani at the Kathryn Bache Miller Theatre." Program Booklet for the Fritz Reiner Center for Contemporary Music (New York: Columbia University, 1992).

³⁰Kenneth Frazelle, review of Worldly Hopes, by William Trotter, in Musical America 107 (July 1987): 50.

pianist Jeffrey Kahane. From that day forward, Kahane championed Frazelle's compositions. In 1986, Kahane selected Frazelle to compose a newly commissioned work for the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. Kahane and members of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra premiered that work, Piano Quintet, which was broadcast nationally in 1987 on Minnesota Public Radio.

In 1987, Frazelle joined the faculty of the North Carolina School of the Arts as part-time instructor of ear training and theory, a position which he presently holds. During that year, he received a commission from the North Carolina Arts Council for an orchestra piece for the Winston-Salem Symphony (now the Winston-Salem Piedmont Triad Symphony). In response, Frazelle composed his first work incorporating indigenous folk tunes. He took his title, Playing the Miraculous Game (1987), from the musical guessing game that he played with his family as a child. To date, the Winston-Salem Piedmont Triad Symphony has performed the piece twice. Also, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra performed the work in 1989, under the baton of John Adams. The piece has been published by Peer Southern Concert Music in New York.

Although Frazelle lives in Winston-Salem and works at the North Carolina School of the Arts, he spends much time in Virginia on a small farm in the Blue Ridge Mountains. One pastime that Frazelle has enjoyed since childhood is

gardening; he cultivates vegetables, flowers, and fruits. Two piano compositions, Blue Ridge Airs I (1988) and Lullabies and Birdsongs (1988), reveal Frazelle's interest in organic life, the landscape, and indigenous songs of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Blue Ridge Airs I was premiered by Jeffrey Kahane at the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. in 1988. Lullabies and Birdsongs was premiered by Clifton Matthews at the North Carolina School of the Arts in May 1990, and later performed by him again in Huittinen, Finland, in 1990.

Frazelle's inner ideas inspired by these visual and aural influences also found expression in several chamber works commissioned by international artists. Yo-Yo Ma and Jeffrey Kahane commissioned and performed Frazelle's Sonata for Cello and Piano (1989) in thirteen concerts throughout North America in 1989. Joseph Swensen and Jeffrey Kahane premiered Frazelle's Fiddler's Galaxy (1989) for violin and piano at Carnegie Recital Hall. Swensen later performed the work in the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Critic Marc Shulgold described his impressions of Fiddler's Galaxy in his review of a performance given by Swensen and Kahane in 1992 in Denver:

Galaxy is no Coplandesque slice of traditional Americana. It is decidedly contemporary, hopping in interesting fashion from old-fashioned tonality to brief splashes of dissonance. One hears, in this two-part, 15-minute piece, hints of Gershwin and Ives. Mostly, though, it's Frazelle we hear. His borrowing of standard hoedowns is skillfully and subtly handled: The quick glissandos and country-style double-stops are never milked for

their obvious crowd-pleasing charm. This is entertaining music that deserves repeated hearings.³¹

Frazelle's work has continued to gather increased visibility. A commission from the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. in 1989 produced the String Trio performed by Joseph Swensen, Scott Nickrenz, and Carter Brey in 1990. Its reception at the Spoleto Chamber Music program at the Dock Street Theatre, was described by critic Claire McPhail:

In three movements, the work was somewhat eclectic in its makeup. It changed moods, rhythms, dynamics and musical chairs sporadically, and ended in what one could call a jazzy, old-fashioned hoedown. Composer Frazelle . . . could hardly have wished for a warmer reception for his piece than was given by the Dock Street Theatre audience.³²

Other chamber works followed. The Ciompi Quartet performed String Quartet (1990), commissioned by the Raleigh Chamber Music Guild. Joseph Swensen conducted the Colorado Symphony in the premiere of Elegy for Strings (1991) which had subsequent performances by the Israel Chamber Orchestra (1992), the Eastman Philharmonia (1992), and the Santa Rosa (California) Symphony (1993).

³¹Marc Shulgold, "Duo's Chamber-music Gathering Full of Wit, Charm and Friendship," Rocky Mountain News, 24 January 1992, 93.

³²Claire McPhail, "Chamber Program Blend of Baroque and Contemporary," Charleston Evening Post, 23 May 1990, A6-7.

Blue Ridge Airs II (1991), a twenty-minute work for flute and orchestra, was commissioned by flutist Paula Robison, and has been performed with orchestras in Charleston (South Carolina), Chattanooga, Memphis, Birmingham (Alabama), and Winston-Salem. A colorful work, it shows Appalachian folk influences. Frazelle's Blue Ridge Airs II has been described by Whitney Smith as a picture postcard in sound. Citing a review of Paula Robison's performance with conductor Philippe Entremont, Smith described the work:

The tone poem fuses abstract music full of nature imagery with sections that quote Southern folk ballads and hymn tunes. The harmonies are of this century but not terribly dissonant. Some sections are rhythmic, others melodic, but mainly the piece seeks to describe the textures of a hilly, woody place bursting with the colors of changing leaves and sounds of songbirds such as the indigo bunting and wood thrush.³³

Aside from Frazelle's teaching and composing responsibilities in Winston-Salem, he occasionally performs his own works. In 1991, Frazelle performed Clear Again (1991) with cellist Elizabeth Anderson for an AIDS Benefit concert in Winston-Salem. As recipient of a North Carolina Arts Council Music Fellowship (1992), Frazelle performed his Lullabies and Birdsongs at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in October, 1992. Soprano Dawn Upshaw and

³³Whitney Smith, "Blue Ridge Airs Bursts with Color," The Commercial Appeal [Memphis], 2 November 1991, A14.

pianist Jeffrey Kahane premiered a recent song cycle, Sunday at McDonald's, on 7 March 1993, at Duke University. Kahane related in an interview that

as much as I love all of Ken's pieces I've done, this is the first time I feel he's managed to sustain the highest level from first note to last.³⁴

Besides these activities, Frazelle attends rehearsals of his works, gives preconcert radio and newspaper interviews, copies parts, attends recitals of commissioning performers, and actively corresponds with poets, performers, and artists.

In summary, it is evident that this young eastern North Carolina composer inherited musical talent from his father, was nurtured by his mother, and received first-class education at the North Carolina School of the Arts and The Juilliard School in New York. He is clearly emerging as an important composer whose work makes a significant contribution to twentieth-century American music. He continues to grow in visibility and is currently working on a work newly commissioned by the radio program, "St. Paul Sunday Morning," for harpsichordist John Gibbons. The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center has commissioned a chamber work (tentatively a clarinet trio). In addition, Kahane plans to commission a large-scale work for piano in

³⁴Jeffrey Kahane, quoted in Gordon Sparber, "Sounds of Success," Winston-Salem Journal, 7 March 1993, C5.

the near future. Clearly, audiences, critics, and performers all support his work, and, as Kahane has stated, "He may come to be known as one of the most important American composers of our time."³⁵

³⁵Jeffrey Kahane, quoted in Lynn Jessup, "Paintings and Poems are Muse for Music," Greensboro News and Record, 3 April 1988, H1-2.

CHAPTER II

THE EVOLUTION OF FRAZELLE'S MUSICAL STYLE

Frazelle's musical style is not easily defined or categorized. As composer and conductor John Adams stated in a letter supporting Frazelle's work:

He is obviously not a part of any particular stylistic juggernaut, be it downtown, uptown, East or West Coast. His work is seriously crafted and his incorporation of American vernacular music I find really very satisfying.¹

Frazelle possesses intuitive musicianship and intelligence balanced by structural integrity and compositional craftsmanship. Along with Frazelle's intrinsic musical abilities, visual, literary, and musical influences play a significant role in his creative process. His strongest influences have come not only from music but from poetry, prose, art, architecture, archeology, landscape, water, and light. Integrated into Frazelle's musical vocabulary are various types of musical styles including classical, jazz, rock, popular, ethnic, blues, and indigenous American music. According to Joseph Swensen,

¹John Adams, Berkeley, letter of recommendation, 15 February 1991, transcript in personal library of Kenneth Frazelle, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Frazelle has absorbed these influences in a most natural and magical way where you don't hear anything that comes close to an attempt at emulation or copying. It is spirits of Debussy and Bartók and especially the indigenous music of the Appalachian area that have somehow just been absorbed into him in a most organic fashion. They have come flowing out of him in a beautiful synthesis of the world's most deeply felt music.²

Throughout his life, Frazelle has been flexible in adopting new forms of expression and compositional techniques as he is exposed to other ideas, whether those ideas come from visual, literary, or musical sources. An investigation of Frazelle's stylistic development from his formative years up through 1992 shows recurring characteristic features and identifies various influences that contribute to his musical growth.

Formative Years (1970-1978)

As a youth, Frazelle wrote several piano solos prior to any formal training in composition. These early works show influences of a self-directed study of various composers. Frazelle gleaned ideas about form, harmony, and rhythm through study of piano scores by Beethoven, Debussy, Chopin, Prokofiev, and Bartók. For example, Tarantelle (1970) is modelled after Chopin's Tarantelle Op. 43 (1841). Similarities of key and meter choice, pianistic arpeggiated figures, introductory material, and balanced phrasing are

²Joseph Swensen, interview by author, 25 September 1992, Greensboro, North Carolina, tape recording.

shown in the excerpts of both Frazelle's Tarantelle (example 2.1) and Chopin's Tarantelle (example 2.2). Frazelle's inclusion of polyrhythms foreshadows the increasing importance of complex polyrhythms and rhythmic counterpoint, especially evident in later works such as Prisma.

Example 2.1: Tarantelle, mm. 1-12.



Example 2.2: Chopin: Tarantelle, mm. 1-9.

Tarantelle, Op. 43



Bolero (1970) and Pastorale (1971) are examples of expressive extremes in Frazelle's early piano works. Stemming from the influences of Bartók, Prokofiev, and Stravinsky, Bolero is highly energetic. It exhibits compelling rhythms and insistent use of the tritone and augmented triad. The percussive rhythmic energy in Bolero contrasts with the lyricism and sweetness in Pastorale. Influences of Debussy are heard in lush harmonies, shimmering sounds, undulating colors, and open textures. These colorful and transparent textures re-appear in works written in the late 1980s such as Playing the Miraculous Game and the Sonata for Cello and Piano.

Years at the North Carolina School of the Arts
(1971-1974)

As a student at the North Carolina School of the Arts, Frazelle explored various genres and media in a more formal setting. Compositions from this period, including works for solo piano, voice, chamber groups, orchestra, and theater, exhibit his incorporation of new musical ideas, especially expanded harmonic and rhythmic devices.

Frazelle experimented with a variety of harmonic techniques including modality, pandiatonicism, tonality, atonality, and twelve-tone technique. Key signatures are rare; Frazelle adds accidentals to create chromaticism, dissonance, tonality, and modality. Intrigued with the dramatic and harmonic possibilities of the augmented triad,

Frazelle employed this musical device in several early works including his Piano Sonata 1971. Frazelle uses twelve-tone technique in Piano Sonata 1972. Bitonality in Two Pieces for Orchestra (1974) is created by juxtaposing the tonic chords of C-major and B-flat major as shown in example 2.3. Frazelle cites the sonorities of Milhaud's Saudades do Brasil Op. 67 (1920-21) as the musical model for the work.³

Example 2.3: Two Pieces for Orchestra, mm. 1-4.

A closer examination of Piano Sonata 1972 gives insight into Frazelle's manipulation of harmonic and rhythmic devices. The sonata comprises three movements. The Largo introduction to the first movement is a tone row outlining

³Kenneth Frazelle, interview by author, 18 May 1992, Winston-Salem. Interviews were also conducted on 4 April 1992, 18 April 1992, 3 May 1992, 14 December 1992, 22 February 1993. Future references to interviews will list Frazelle's name and the date of the interview.

an augmented triad. Broken augmented triads form the musical material for the Vivace, creating dissonant and dramatic harmonies as shown in example 2.4.

Example 2.4: Piano Sonata 1972, mvt. 1, mm. 1-22.

I. Largo

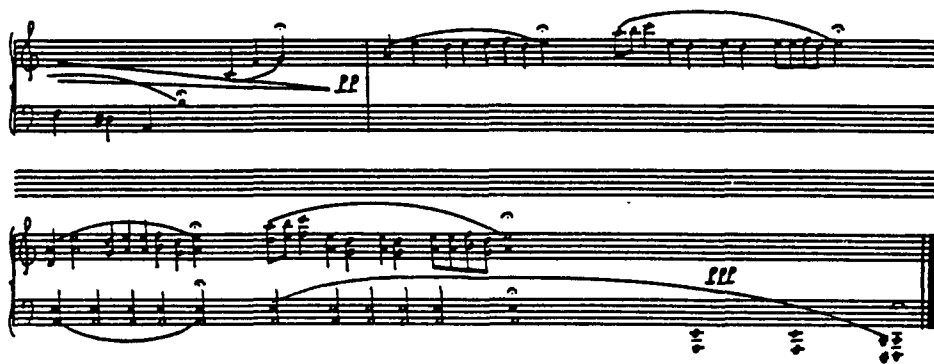
The musical score consists of three systems of grand staves. The first system begins with the tempo marking 'I. Largo' and the dynamic 'mf, dark and foreboding'. It features a melodic line in the right hand and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. A tempo change to 'Accelerando a Vivace' is indicated. The second system continues with 'pp Vivace' and 'mf crescendo a f'. The third system concludes with 'staccato accents'.

The influence of twentieth-century composers--especially Bartók, Ginastera, Stravinsky, and Prokofiev--is evident in Frazelle's choice of rhythmic groupings, syncopations, and use of accents. The asymmetrical rhythms, frequent meter changes, and tempo fluctuations in Piano Sonata 1972 generate excitement, while the driving rhythms and changing dynamics create an energetic character (see example 2.4).

Frazelle's early interest in ethnic music is evident in the second movement of Piano Sonata 1972. Originally a

movement from a set of his piano pieces called "Biafran Sketches" (1972), the second movement is based on musical elements and ideas from imaginary primeval African music.⁴ The movement opens with a simple unmeasured melodic statement, first unaccompanied and then repeated in octaves. The bare texture and modal inflection in the melody create a primitive atmosphere. The final measures present the melody in parallel fifths, thereby creating a sound resembling organum. Frazelle believes the spirit of this music relates to the spirit of the Appalachian music incorporated in his works of the late 1980s.⁵ Examples 2.5 and 2.6 compare excerpts from the second movement of the sonata with the indigenous music of the Appalachians set in Frazelle's Appalachian Songbook (1988). The movement foreshadows his attraction to and exploration of folk music in the 1980s.

Example 2.5: Piano Sonata 1972, mvt. 2.



⁴Frazelle expressed his concern about the famine in Africa through a painting and a piano solo, "Biafran Sketches."

⁵Frazelle, interview, 14 December 1992.

Example 2.6: Appalachian Songbook, "Naomi Wise," mm. 1-5.

NAOMI WISE

Traditional, arranged by *Rick Mashburn* for Joanna Andrew *Kenneth Frazelle (1985)*

Lento (♩ = 60) mf con rubato

1. I'll tell you a story a-bout poor O-mie Wise

mf colla voce

The image shows a musical score for the song "Naomi Wise". It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo and dynamics are marked as "Lento (♩ = 60) mf con rubato". The lyrics are "1. I'll tell you a story a-bout poor O-mie Wise". The piano accompaniment is written in two staves (treble and bass clefs) and includes the marking "mf colla voce". The score is handwritten and includes performance instructions like "mf con rubato" and "colla voce".

The theatrical works Frazelle composed at the North Carolina School of the Arts reflect the literary influences he gained from novels, poetry, and plays. Writing film and theater music helped Frazelle explore dramatic possibilities and formulate large theatrical concepts culminating years later in Seascapes (1981).

Frazelle's natural inclination toward poetic expression emerges in his first song cycle, Six Songs of Emily Dickinson (1972). The first song of the set, "Did We Abolish Frost," consists of modal and pandiatonic harmonies with a prominent use of fourths and fifths in both the vocal line and the piano part. Clear textures and sparse, widespread pianistic writing produce sonorities associated

with Copland and the "American" sound. The simplicity of expression is evident in example 2.7.

Example 2.7: "Did We Abolish Frost," mm. 1-10.

Lento

Handwritten musical score for "Did We Abolish Frost," mm. 1-10. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal line with lyrics "(some notes to be held)" and the piano accompaniment. The second system shows the vocal line with lyrics "Did We a-bol-ish Frost The Summer-wald not" and the piano accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings such as "mf" and "mp", and various musical notations like slurs and ties.

The Juilliard Years (1974-1978)

Frazelle's time at Juilliard presented opportunities to absorb new musical, visual, and literary influences, although the experiences were colored by inhibition and self-consciousness about his own natural musical instincts. The attitude prevailing at Juilliard, as perceived by Frazelle, was one of "unwritten rules about what you could and could not do."⁶ His adoption of self-imposed stylistic limits provoked changes in his music:

⁶Frazelle, interview, 18 May 1992.

There was an unspoken anti-tonal bias. If your piece was too melodic, too rhythmic, too accessible, you should blow your brains out. It was that sort of thing. We thought Elliott Carter, Roger Sessions, and Milton Babbitt were setting the style. They were real heroes to me.⁷

Frazelle feels that the music he composed during his first year at Juilliard lost its rhythmic solidity. Moving away from lyrical, clean, and pure sonorities, his style of expression became angular, dissonant, chromatic, and harmonically dense. He consciously avoided traditional rhythms, meters, tonal harmonies, and melodic figures. Frazelle's Three Studies for Piano (1974), completed during his first year at Juilliard, characterize this writing. The dissonance, chromaticism, and pianistic virtuosity show similarities to Bartók's Three Etudes Op. 18 (1918).

Frazelle's strongest musical influence during this time came through his mentor, Roger Sessions. According to Frazelle, Sessions encouraged students to develop a personal compositional aesthetic.

He cared about each student's particular voice. All the time I was studying with him he rarely referred to his own music in lessons. I think the fact that people as different as Milton Babbitt and David Diamond were both students of his says a lot about the kind of teacher he was.⁸

⁷Jim Kopp, "Beauty of Appalachia Shaped Frazelle's Cello, Piano Sonata," The Atlanta Journal, F3.

⁸Frazelle, interview, 14 December 1992.

In contributing to the development of Frazelle's compositional craftsmanship, Sessions directed Frazelle to a greater awareness of phrase structures, direction of phrases, balance of formal sections, development of small motives, and compression and intensity of musical lines. Sessions taught Frazelle that "every idea needs to be set off--in a sense like a diamond is set in a ring or a song is set."⁹ Under Sessions' direction, Frazelle learned the importance of integrating structure and intuition.

Frazelle also educated himself by studying Sessions' music. He absorbed ideas about rhythmic flexibility, rhythmic tension, and the seemingly improvisatory character of the music. The thick textures produced by the rich counterpoint, the vibrant orchestration, and the unmeasured sense of long line in Sessions' music also inspired Frazelle.

Not only did Frazelle study the work of Sessions, but he also studied the works of earlier composers during his time at Juilliard. As Frazelle explored Beethoven's late bagatelles, sonatas, and string quartets, he developed a love for high-registered piano sonorities. Inspired by Beethoven's Bagatelles Op. 126, Frazelle wrote Six Bagatelles (1976). As shown in example 2.8, Bagatelle no. 1 has fragments of high crystalline sounds. These types of

⁹Frazelle, interview, 3 May 1992.

sonorities are also heard in Fantasies (1979), Refractions (1984), and Blue Ridge Airs I (1988).

Example 2.8: Bagatelle no. 1, mm. 1-5.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for 'Bagatelles' by Kenneth Frazelle. The score is for piano and is divided into two systems. The first system is titled 'I. Adagio, cristalline (♩=40)' and includes the subtitle 'Bagatelles to Gladys Sylvester'. It features a treble and bass clef with a 3/4 time signature. Dynamics include pp, p dim., and mp. The second system continues the piece with dynamics (mp) and a crescendo marking. The score is annotated with 'con pedale sempre' and a circled '8'.

Frazelle was influenced somewhat by the music of contemporary composers, some of whom were Steve Reich, Terry Riley, and Luciano Berio. One composition in which these influences are evident is Music for a Summer Evening (1977). A minimalist work for piano, this piece exhibited a shift toward the use of slower harmonic rhythm. Because of the nature of the work, Frazelle explored rhythmic, dynamic, formal, and textural possibilities while remaining in one harmonic region. The static harmonies of Music for a Summer Evening contrasted with the changing atonality characteristic of many of his compositions at Juilliard.

Inspiration also came from visual sources, and once again can be seen in Music for a Summer Evening. Written for a friend's art show, the work reflects Frazelle's

impressions of the aquatic water colors and imagery. It reflects his growing command of rhythmic elasticity and his exploration of fluid and organic rhythms, as shown in example 2.9. Frazelle compares his interest in growing plant forms, astronomy, weather, and atmospheric effects to flexible improvisatory rhythmic gestures.

Example 2.9: Music for a Summer Evening, mm. 1-8.

MUSIC FOR A SUMMER EVENING (VII-20-77) Kenneth Frazelle
to Carol Hayes Bodenhamer

Quasi una fantasia
(con rubato e libitum)

con pedale

dim. molto e rall.

a tempo

Rhythmically, harmonically, and pianistically, Piano Sonata 1977 represents several aspects of Frazelle's evolving style resulting from musical influences. Complex rhythms reflect the influence of Elliott Carter. The

harmony is not tonal, atonal, or twelve-tone, but deals with specific kinds of chordal sounds suggesting tonic and subdominant relationships with tonal underpinnings. Frazelle attributes harmonic influences to his study of Dallapiccola's music, specifically the duality of highly organized twelve-tone writing with tonal references. Attracted to the transparency and lyrical qualities of his music, Frazelle cites Dallapiccola as one of his favorite composers during the 1970s. Pianistic registration across a wide range, another characteristic recurring throughout Frazelle's piano works, is shown in example 2.10.

Example 2.10: Piano Sonata 1977, mm. 40-49.



Literary influences emerge in Slightly Thinner Than Sight (1976), Frazelle's first song cycle set to Ammons' poetry. Frazelle cites this cycle as a stepping stone in

his development, stating that it brought him to a more honest place as a composer. The poetry inspired new sounds of expression.¹⁰ "Holly" (example 2.11) shows fluid improvisatory rhythm, use of small intervals, long sense of line, and intense chromaticism. The piano registration exemplifies Frazelle's love for high piano sounds. Textures are transparent, probably reflecting the influence of Frazelle's study of Dallapiccola's music.

Example 2.11: Slightly Thinner Than Sight, "Holly,"
mm. 10-16.

Diversifications (1978) is Frazelle's second song cycle set to Ammons' poetry. Composed during Frazelle's senior year, the songs illustrate the increasing complexity of

¹⁰Frazelle, interview, 18 April 1992.

Frazelle's writing. Frazelle continued avoiding certain tonal ideas, not trusting his own harmonic intuition. Prominent use of disjunct intervallic leaps in the vocal and piano parts form a defining characteristic, as shown in the following example.

Example 2.12: Diversifications, "Mind," mm. 1-6.

1. MIND
for Judith Clerman

Tempo moderato

Frazelle employed an innovative compositional technique in Motets by layering voice with spoken poetry. Motets, set to poetry by e.e. cummings, is scored for voice, speaker, and piano. He uses the idea of speech and singing intertwined to create layers of sound. He believes that the simultaneous juxtaposition of contrasting materials is a result of the influence of William Faulkner (1897-1962). Frazelle is a fervent reader of Faulkner and states:

Through his novels, I have gained insight into the process of interior consciousness, the coexistence of past and present, and into the writer's vision of the complex psyche of the South."¹¹

Frazelle's intensive training at Juilliard, his acute awareness and knowledge of other artistic disciplines, and his flexibility in adopting various stylistic elements formed an important part of his growth as a composer. The exploration of visual elements, literary ideas, and musical styles in his compositions at Juilliard provided a fertile foundation for his future works.

Professional Life (1978-1992)

The early part of Frazelle's professional life is marked by growth of stylistic ideas and principles acquired during his formative years in that he continues to draw upon visual, literary, and musical influences. Although the sources of materials and inspiration remain constant, Frazelle's style becomes increasingly complex as he stretches elements of tonality, rhythm, thematic variation, performance duration, and technical difficulty toward extremes. The evolution of his style and his adherence to musical, visual, and literary influence are demonstrated in Seascapes, Piano Quintet, Prisma, Refractions, Fantasies, and culminates in Worldly Hopes. At the height of this

¹¹Frazelle, interview, 22 February 1993.

complexity, a new expressive mode has emerged in Frazelle's works which is influenced by indigenous song and landscape.

Evolving Complexity of Style (1978-1986)

Water, spiral shapes, and architecture are explored in a tangible way in Seascapes, (1981). Fascinated with the physical layout and acoustical properties of the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Frazelle created a site-specific work in that the seating and architecture of the Center have influenced the design and form of the composition. The piano, celeste, vibraphone, harp, assorted percussion, and wind instruments are placed in a spiral shape. At the heart of the spiral is a string quartet and a mezzo-soprano soloist.

At the premiere in 1981, hanging mobiles and wind chimes made from seashells created visual and aural impressions linking the sea and music. The three-dimensional effect produced spatial unity between the audience and musicians.

Using six poems by Ammons to provide the text, Frazelle layers singing with spoken poetry in Seascapes. Three poems are recited on a tape recording made by Ammons especially for Seascapes, while the other three poems are sung. As in Motets, Frazelle attributes the simultaneous layering of material to the literary influence of Faulkner.

Another composition giving insight into the effect of visual influences on Frazelle's creative process is his

Piano Quintet (1986). Although the quintet is not programmatic, the inspiration for the music came from two visual images.¹² Frazelle attributes elements of the first movement to a print of "The Whirlpools of Awa" by Hiroshige. Halley's Comet provided the creative imagery for the second movement. When comparing the water images of Seascapes to his Piano Quintet, Frazelle states:

What's new in this is that the actual momentum of this spiraling water is more in the fabric of the music--not in people sitting around banging seashells.¹³

The influence of light is explored in Prisma (1983). Prisma (Italian for prism) is a musical and visual exploration of the relationship between music and light. A solo piano is the prominently featured instrument in this work. Frazelle incorporates the audience into Prisma by seating them in a large oval shape around the piano and instrumental ensemble. Special lighting designed for the performance depicts musical images and fragments.

The immense difficulty performers encounter in Prisma results from Frazelle's ephemeral use of varied musical elements. Melodically, for example, a continual thematic inventiveness without repetition obscures melodic gestures. Abundant polyphony occurs as the instruments play

¹²Genie Carr, "Commissioned Work Written by Winston-Salem Composer," Winston-Salem Journal, 20 April 1986, C2.

¹³Ibid.

independently of each other. Rhythmic complexities include frequent meter changes, irregular divisions of the beat, simultaneous multiple rhythmic patterns, and syncopations and ties obscuring downbeats and bar lines. Example 2.12 shows a typical passage encountered in Prisma.

Example 2.12: Prisma, mvt. 2, mm. 437-439.

The image displays a complex musical score for Example 2.12, titled "Prisma, mvt. 2, mm. 437-439". The score is written for a full orchestra and includes the following parts: Flute (Fl.), Percussion (perc.), Violin I (vln. I), Violin II (vln. II), Violoncello (vcl.), Double Bass (db.), Violin III (vln. III), Violin IV (vln. IV), Viola (vln. V), and Violoncello II (vcl. II). The score is characterized by dense, overlapping musical lines with frequent meter changes and irregular divisions of the beat. The notation is highly detailed, featuring many accidentals, ties, and dynamic markings such as *pp*, *mf*, and *sfz*. The score is divided into three measures, with the first measure starting at measure 437 and the third measure ending at measure 439. The overall style is highly complex and rhythmic, reflecting the characteristics described in the text.

Refractions (1984) for solo piano demonstrates luminosity and color in Frazelle's piano writing. Refractions consists of thematic fragments from Prisma presented in seven sections or pieces of varying lengths. The harmony underlying the complexity is essentially simple and congruent, not unlike the spectrum of a prismatic rainbow, according to critic George Sinclair.¹⁴ Elizabeth Roberts described the colors and luminosity of Refractions in her review:

Perhaps the most striking element of Frazelle's music for the first-time listener is the extraordinary coloristic range, or musical "palate"--shimmering waves of sound, jolts of "light," and a sublime crystalline transparency he achieves in the upper regions of the keyboard.¹⁵

Frequent meter changes (4/8, 5/8, 8/8, 7/8, 9/16) and high register sonorities are shown in example 2.13.

¹⁴George Sinclair, "Out of School 'Refractions' Follows No Dogmas," Spectator Magazine, 17 May 1984.

¹⁵Elizabeth Roberts, "The Music of Kenneth Frazelle," Arts Journal 9 (June 1984): 35.

Example 2.13: Refractions, section 6, mm. 1-5.

Fantasies (1979), cast in three movements, is a thirty-minute piano solo showing several characteristics of Frazelle's complex style of pianistic writing. Themes are difficult to discern because of the perpetual variation of musical material. In addition, no obviously repeated rhythmic patterns occur, even though the overall effect is one of a dramatic command of rhythm. The texture varies with widespread writing, improvisatory gestures, and rich polyphony. Harmony derives from the polyphony, with tonal areas emerging from low sustained bass tones. Finally, an abundance of intricate and precise musical directions is delineated in the score. Notation of rhythms, dynamics, pedals, and tempo indications make the composer's intentions clear. While example 2.14 shows one of the canons in

Fantasies, it is not representative of the difficulty encountered in the work as a whole.

Example 2.14: Fantasies, mvt. 1, Canon II, mm. 1-6.

Combined influences of astronomy and poetry are manifest in the seven sections making up the second movement of Fantasies. Each segment begins with a line of poetry about stars. For example, exploration of the high registers of the piano produces ethereal sonorities representing the poetic lines as shown in example 2.15.

Example 2.15: Fantasies, mvt. 2, section 6, mm. 1-2.

Frazelle's setting of Ammons' poems in Worldly Hopes (1985) shows the incorporation of literary influence into his creativity. Critic William Trotter addressed the relationship of words and music in Worldly Hopes:

Throughout the cycle, the words are not simply decorated by the music but fused with it--the vocal line, for all its intervallic pole-vaulting and dramatic hairpin curves, flows through the complex piano writing like a bright stream of silver. This intertwining seems to function on an almost molecular level, and always with a sense of a stretched vowel, great tension is built up against the cofferdam of an impending consonant.¹⁶

It was the complexity of Worldly Hopes, among other incidents, that prompted Frazelle to begin exploration of a new style of expression in the 1980s. Musicians whom Frazelle respected addressed the complexity characterizing his former works. In an appraisal of Prisma, Elliott Carter suggested to Frazelle that in not repeating musical gestures, his work was too ephemeral.¹⁷ In essence, lack of repetition and an overabundance of ideas caused difficulties for both the audience and the performer.

The issue of accessibility brought Frazelle to reconsider the value of the complexity of his style. Frazelle realized that the extremely complicated character of his music limited the number of performers possessing the

¹⁶Kenneth Frazelle, review of Worldly Hopes, by William Trotter, Musical America 107 (July 1987): 50.

¹⁷Frazelle, interview, 4 April 1992.

artistic and technical capabilities to perform his works. In turn, this limited the number of performances a piece would receive, thus blocking his communication with audiences. Frazelle's song cycle, Worldly Hopes, represents the culmination of this complex style of expression. Performers Jan De Gaetani and Gilbert Kalish, who championed many twentieth-century compositions and for whom Worldly Hopes was composed, communicated to Frazelle their firm support of his work, while questioning the extreme difficulties that they encountered in the work. Frazelle, attuned to performers of such caliber, admitted that he had purposefully suspended the realm of accessibility and focused on what he wanted to write. The difficulties in both the vocal and piano writing are illustrated in example 2:16. It is important to recognize that the wide leaps in the vocal line are notated on two staves.

Example 2.16: Worldly Hopes, "Rainy Morning," mm. 324-25.

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is a vocal line, and the bottom staff is a piano accompaniment. The vocal line features wide leaps, with notes on two staves. The piano accompaniment is dense and complex, with many notes and rests. The tempo marking "molto allargando" is written above the vocal staff. The score is written in a hand-drawn style.

Frazelle gradually became concerned with presenting his ideas more clearly to audiences through a focused musical means. The visual effects of landscape in the Blue Ridge Mountains, Frazelle's desire for exploring new resonances and colors, and an interest in elements of the southern traditional folk song influenced new ideas that became integrated into his musical style.

A New Expressive Mode (1987-1992)

Guided by inner convictions, Frazelle sought a more direct and simple style of musical communication. For several years, Frazelle diligently researched and collected the indigenous folk song of the Appalachians and the South. He listened to live performances and records, talked to folklore professors and performers, and investigated early published collections of folk music. Frazelle also collected approximately 160 tunes from his own family in eastern North Carolina, handed down through several generations by oral tradition. Some of the songs were old versions as they "had come to the New World with Scottish, Irish, and English settlers."¹⁸ Frazelle spoke of his reaction to the songs:

There was something very attractive about this realm to me, about oral tradition, that had nothing to do with notation, melodies that are almost archetypical--talk about reducing something

¹⁸Genie Carr, "A Composer's 'Miraculous Game'," Winston-Salem Journal, 11 October 1989, H1.

to symbols that are really like archetypes. All folk songs boil down to very simple truths, both the stories and the music.¹⁹

Frazelle's first composition incorporating folk songs is Playing the Miraculous Game (1987). It consists of a collage of settings and fragments of folk tunes that he collected by tape recorder from his grandmother and great uncle. Critic Gordon Sparber, related Frazelle's skillful ability to knit folk songs into the orchestral fabric and his personal style when he said, "The piece couches old mountain airs cleverly--not indistinguishably--in a constantly shifting array of textures and tonalities."²⁰

The orchestral writing is colorful, and textures are clear even though simultaneous musical fragments abound on many levels.

The structure of the piece was inspired by a quilt, a now-faded patchwork stitched by his grandmother. The pinwheels inside squares inside a rectangle made the wheels in Frazelle's head spin. It was like each square had a momentum.²¹

Incorporation of folk elements occurs through literal quotes as well as folk-inspired harmonies and rhythms.

¹⁹Dean Smith, "Composing and Connecting: Kenneth Frazelle Expounds on His Work," The Arts Journal, 3 April 1988, H1.

²⁰Gordon Sparber, "Terrific: Concert Straddles Two Centuries," Winston-Salem Journal, 19 November 1990, 2.

²¹Lynn Jessup, "Paintings and Poems are Muse for Music," Greensboro News and Record, 3 April 1988, H1.

Tunes are quoted, fragmented, varied, and combined sometimes in a quodlibet fashion.²² Paul Brown, a musician thoroughly acquainted with music of the Blue Ridge area, noted that when Frazelle incorporates folk song, he

is not parodying it, not merely interpreting it, not re-arranging (like Percy Grainger often does), but he is giving it new emphasis, new voice, giving it its own meaning much as, for example, Stravinsky did with the Pulcinella Suite based on the music of Pergolesi--it has its own voice.²³

Works composed between 1987 and 1992 show involvement with aspects of southern traditional folk songs as well as with visual influences of landscape. General features of this style include a sense of recurring dance-inspired rhythms, vocally oriented improvisatory rhythms, sustained harmonic regions, imaginative and colorful harmonies, clear textures, repeated melodic gestures, development of motives, and recapitulation of important areas. Accessibility to both performer and audience also characterizes the works.

Frazelle successfully incorporates folk ideas into his music in a most natural manner. In his comments on Frazelle's String Trio (1989), critic David Patrick Stearns wrote:

²²The last variation of Bach's Goldberg Variations is an example of a famous simultaneous quodlibet.

²³Paul Brown, production manager at the Winston-Salem public radio station WFDD and an authority on the indigenous music of the Blue Ridge area, interview by author, 6 January 1993, Winston-Salem, tape recording.

Kenneth Frazelle's String Trio shows how easily a modern, more dissonant style can be integrated into the most basic popular music--country fiddling--without seeming gimmicky.²⁴

The tunes used in String Trio are taken from instrumental and ballad traditions of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Some of the earliest recorded fiddle music from the Round Peak area on the North Carolina-Virginia border provides the source for the tunes. The instrumental tradition from this area dates back two centuries.

Fiddler's Galaxy (1989) is named for the Appalachian town of Galax, Virginia, home of the oldest fiddlers' convention in the United States. The two sections of Fiddler's Galaxy are called "Old Time Conventions" and "Breakdowns." Frazelle found inspiration in the folk tunes that he heard played by authentic fiddlers, as well as from rare amateur recordings of old-time fiddlers from the North Carolina and Virginia mountains. He incorporated the bowings, phrasings, and mountain fiddle tunes, known as breakdowns, into the work. Breakdowns were derived from reels and hornpipes that the settlers brought from the British Isles.²⁵ Frazelle quotes entire sections of breakdowns in the second section of Fiddler's Galaxy especially, where a series of dances becomes a contest

²⁴David Patrick Stearns, "Spoleto: The Cutting Edge of Creativity," USA Today, 29 May 1990, D4.

²⁵Frazelle, program notes for Fiddler's Galaxy, 1989.

between the violin and piano. The following example shows the recurring rhythm and sense of forward motion influenced by characteristic dance rhythms.

Example 2:17: Fiddler's Galaxy, "Breakdowns," mm. 29-31.

Influenced by the ballad folk tradition, the flexibility, intricacy, and improvisatory nature of rhythm is another rhythmic characteristic of the style. Example 2.18, from Fiddler's Galaxy, represents the simultaneous contrast and independence of musical line and expansive registration.

Example 2.18: Fiddler's Galaxy, "Old Time Conventions," mm. 8-10.

According to Frazelle, the influence of phrasing peculiar to North Carolina fiddling has accommodated greater rhythmic momentum and propulsion in his music.²⁶ Paul Brown gave some insight into phrasing:

Phrasing and rhythm are constructed with dancing in mind in North Carolina and Virginia fiddling. The beginnings of phrases are syncopated forward to move dancers from one step to the next without interruption. Phrases are continuous to keep dancers moving. Phrases are not cut off sharply but as one phrase ends, another phrase is syncopated forward.²⁷

In contrast to Frazelle's former style, his harmonic language is less complex after 1987. The presence of extended tonal regions characterizes his music. Dissonances are more natural and at times almost consonant in effect compared to the pungent dissonance in his earlier works. Harmonies and tunes of a pentatonic and modal nature, common in folk music, frequently appear as well. An example of Frazelle's use of pentatonicism appears in the opening melody and harmony of Fiddler's Galaxy, shown in example 2.19.

²⁶Frazelle, interview, 22 February 1993.

²⁷Brown, interview, 6 January 1993.

Example 2.19: Fiddler's Galaxy, "Old Time Conventions,"
mm. 1-2.

Melodic contour in this style reflects the influence of landscape. For example, in his program notes to Fiddler's Galaxy, Frazelle talks about this effect in the first movement, "Old Time Conventions":

"Old Time Conventions" is slow; melodic lines rise and fall like mountain ridges as they reach into the past for fragments of the old music.²⁸

Frazelle projects his impressions from landscape onto "impromptu, crayon-and-pencil representations of the musical ideas he derives from the outdoors,"²⁹ a process which he refers to as a "kind of calligraphy."³⁰ He adds enough notes to the colors to activate and transcribe these

²⁸Frazelle, program notes to Fiddler's Galaxy, 1989.

²⁹Bruce Weber, "Naturalissimo," The New York Times Magazine, 8 January 1989, 66.

³⁰Ibid.

gestures into traditional notation at the piano. Appendix B shows several sketches from his composition book. Frazelle states:

I use different colors to convey orchestral textures and instrumental lines. Where I have a lot of dense colors and lines, that will become a very active orchestral texture.³¹

Blue Ridge Airs II is an example of a work that includes sketches in the initial compositional process. It abounds with aspects of folk and natural elements expressed in the texture of the orchestra. The work incorporates tunes such as "Jacob's Ladder," "Joke on the Puppy," and "Wondrous Love." Conductor David Stahl addressed the "American sound," folk elements, and Frazelle's ability to portray "landscapes" in this music.

For Stahl, the concerto has a distinctively American sound. "It's not easy," he said. "It actually took more rehearsal than I thought it would at first. But with the birdsongs, the fiddling tunes, the dulcimer, the naturally dissonant textures--I told him after the first rehearsal that I felt as if I had been lifted out of the hall, that I was in the mountains."³²

Frazelle has made voluminous musical sketches of birdsong. Notation expressing the call of the indigo bunting is found in the solo flute passage from Blue Ridge Airs II, shown in example 2.20.

³¹Ibid.

³²Gordon Sparber, "Composer's Blue Ridge Flute Work Premieres," Winston-Salem Journal, 27 October 1991, C1-5.

Example 2.20: Blue Ridge Airs II, mm. 359-63.

Frazelle explained his choice of instrumentation for Blue Ridge Airs II during a radio interview:

There are a lot of multi-layered, overlapping colors, almost cubistic things that happen in how I was using the folk materials and creating landscapes out of all these different elements, creating landscapes that seemed natural to do with orchestra and flute. The flute is like a participant in the landscape, just like a bird is in a landscape.³³

In the attempt to describe the developmental and stylistic traits of Frazelle's music, a survey of selected compositions permits only limited examination of his works. The gradual shift in Frazelle's style from complexity to a more direct and communicative musical language resulted in a simplification of musical elements. Detailed examination of compositions in the following chapters further identifies defining characteristics of Frazelle's style between 1987

³³Howard Skillington, interview with Paula Robison and Kenneth Frazelle, WFDD, 17 March 1993.

and 1992. Applying a statement attributed to Chopin, one could say that Frazelle's clear musical expression is not unlike the ideals of composers of the past:

Simplicity is the final thing. After having conquered all difficulties, after having played a huge quantity of notes, it is simplicity that emerges with all its charm as the final seal of art. It is not an easy thing.³⁴

Thus, it is clear that Frazelle is creative and expressive in his incorporation of visual, literary, and musical influences. While his music demonstrates that Frazelle continues to grow and change in the way he expresses his ideas, certain characteristics remain constant: a strong sense of rhythm, a unique harmonic language, a lyrical nature, a wide range of expression, and an imaginative sense of color. This study itself is a work in progress, and in no way seeks to categorize his work but rather to illustrate his development, as well as traits and influences present in his music.

³⁴Frederic Chopin, quoted in Maurice Hinson, At the Piano with Chopin (Sherman Oaks, Calif.: Alfred Publishing, 1986), 12.

CHAPTER III

BLUE RIDGE AIRS I

Blue Ridge Airs I is Frazelle's most significant work for solo piano to date. Commissioned for Jeffrey Kahane by the Spoleto Festival U.S.A., the work was premiered in Charleston, South Carolina, on May 21, 1988. Kahane also performed Blue Ridge Airs I at the Montreal International Music Festival in Canada, the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and El Camino College in Los Angeles.¹ Critics have been highly complimentary of the work. William D. Gudger praised the work and its performer in a review of the Spoleto Festival performance:

Pianist Jeffrey Kahane's moving world premiere performance of Kenneth Frazelle's "Blue Ridge Airs" was sandwiched between the tried and true music of Telemann and Mendelssohn. . . . In Kahane's hands it became piano music of the stature of Debussy or Bartók. . . . Blue Ridge Airs I deserves many more hearings.²

In a review of Kahane's performance for the Los Angeles Times, Terry McQuilkin observed:

¹Clifton Matthews performed Blue Ridge Airs I in May, 1990 at the North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem and Carlos Rodrigues performed the work at Weill Hall at Carnegie Hall in New York in December, 1991.

²William D. Gudger, "Blue Ridge Airs Gets Concerts off to Excellent Start," The Evening Post/The News and Courier (Charleston, S.C.), 21 May 1988.

Like Bartók's "Improvisations," Kenneth Frazelle's "Blue Ridge Airs," written 68 years later, weaves simple folk melodies into an intricate yet understandable contrapuntal fabric. The composer, whose music Kahane has actively championed, paced his ideas skillfully, and managed to create a wealth of variety--rhythmic, textural and timbral--without rambling.³

Representative of the piano in a solo role, Blue Ridge Airs I shows stylistic elements present in Frazelle's works composed between 1987 and 1992. Literary, visual, and musical ideas continue to affect style and expressive content. Specifically, a drama, based on folklore, influences the musical shape and emotional content of Blue Ridge Airs I. A rich heritage of folk music, as the title Blue Ridge Airs I suggests, fused with classical and vernacular music creates a distinctive work. The Appalachian landscape provides visual inspiration that is manifested in the sonorities and contours of the music. Examination of the music for influences, shape, rhythmic qualities, and pianistic features shows that Blue Ridge Airs I is a significant and unique contribution to the piano repertory of the twentieth century.

³Terry McQuilkin, "Pianist Kahane Performs at El Camino College," Los Angeles Times, 9 October 1989, 7(VI).

Influences

Literary Aspects

Blue Ridge Airs I, based on a true North Carolina story, relates the 1808 murder of Naomi Wise near Randelman, in Randolph County, North Carolina. Naomi Wise, engaged to Jonathan Lewis, agrees to elope with him. They ride away on horseback, and when Naomi questions the direction of their travels, her lover makes known his intentions to murder her. Lewis ignores Naomi's pleas for mercy, and her life ends in tragedy as he drowns her in the Deep River.

As Chopin's ballades expose "impassioned emotions in lyric effusion ending on a tragic note,"⁴ Frazelle's work demonstrates similar lyricism, drama, and tragedy in its portrayal of the Randolph County event.⁵ Furthermore, Blue Ridge Airs I shows an affinity to Chopin's ballades in that the compositions have as their structural basis a "thematic metamorphosis governed not so much by formal musical procedures as by a programmatic or literary intention."⁶ Unlike Chopin's ballades, however, Blue Ridge Airs I is connected to Appalachian folklore while Chopin's ballades are associated with ballads dealing with legendary and

⁴John Gillespie, Five Centuries of Keyboard Music (New York: Dover Publications, 1965), 232.

⁵Although Randolph County is in the Piedmont of North Carolina, the ballad has been assimilated into the Appalachian culture.

⁶Maurice Brown, New Grove, 2:78.

fantastic subjects of the Polish nationalist writer Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855).⁷

Musical Aspects

A historical connection between folk music and the piano ballade can be documented in works by Brahms, Grieg, Liszt, and Bartók. In the foreword to Masters of the Piano Ballade, Maurice Hinson compared the piano ballade to the folk ballad:

The piano ballade and folk ballad probably share the same purpose: they are intended to be musical narratives, the folk ballad using words and music, the piano ballade using music only. The reflection of the folk ballad in the piano ballade may take many forms. It may be nothing more than a certain mood or a hint of the folk ballad's manner of telling a story. The melody may be folklike or the rhythms may be those commonly used in ballads.⁸

In a modern example of the ballad/ballade connection, Frazelle incorporates six Appalachian folk tunes in Blue Ridge Airs I, all of whose origins have an association with the Appalachian area. The main folk tune employed, and the theme of the work, "Naomi Wise," contrasts with "Groundhog," of secondary importance, which provides comic relief in the music. Four other folk tunes, "Charmin' Betsy," "East

⁷Leon Plattinga, Romantic Music (New York: W. W. Norton, 1984), 200.

⁸Maurice Hinson, ed., foreword to Masters of the Piano Ballade. (Van Nuys, Calif.: Alfred Publishing, 1988), 5.

Virginny," "Pretty Saro," and "Tom Dooley" are used for musical resources only, according to the composer.

Frazelle's sources for the tunes are diverse and include versions from individuals as well as folk collections.⁹ For example, Frazelle combined at least three versions of "Naomi Wise": the version in The Frank Brown Collection, the "Doc Watson" version, and his grandmother's version. Another tune, "Tom Dooley," made famous by the Kingston Trio, Frazelle found in The Frank Brown Collection and John and Alan Lomax's Folk Songs of North America. Frazelle fashioned the folk song "Pretty Saro," also known as "The Wagoner's Lad," by combining a version found in the Sharp collection with a friend's version. His grandmother was his only source for "Charmin' Betsy."

The characteristics of these tunes contributed to Frazelle's musical style. For example, a peculiarity, noted by Cecil Sharp, among the singers of the Appalachian area, is "the habit of dwelling arbitrarily upon certain notes of

⁹Countless individuals have researched folklore and folksong. The most comprehensive and scholarly work for North Carolina is The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folk-Lore. John and Alan Lomax's collection of American Ballads and Folk Songs is a comprehensive history of folk song in America. Francis Child collected only the text of the folklore, making one of the most authoritative collections of folklore associated with English and Scottish origins. The title of Child's book is The English and Scottish Popular Ballads. Cecil Sharp's collection of folklore and song is published in Folk-Songs of English Origin From the Southern Appalachians.

the melody, generally the weaker accents."¹⁰ This practice disguises the rhythm and breaks up the monotonous regularity of phrases, resulting in an improvisatory and spontaneous feeling.¹¹

The fact that numerous versions of the songs exist likewise has bearing on the work. The oral preservation and transmission of these songs from generation to generation make them an ageless art.¹² The songs, however, "evolved according to the taste of the singers themselves,"¹³ making it impossible to find the original version of any song. Many of the stories, tunes, characters, and titles overlap from folk song to folk song. The living tradition of these songs contributes to the spontaneous nature of phrasing, rhythm, melody, and harmony apparent in Frazelle's music.

In addition to incorporating actual folk songs in Blue Ridge Airs I, Frazelle imitates the dulcimer and banjo, instruments associated with Appalachian music. For example, a drone-like texture imitating the dulcimer appears in the key of B minor, accompanying the folk tune "East Virginny" as shown in example 3.1.

¹⁰Cecil J. Sharp, English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians, ed. Maud Karpeles (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), xxvii.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Maud Karpeles, ed., Eighty English Folk Songs From the Southern Appalachians (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press), 10.

¹³Ibid., 9.

Example 3.1: mm. 121-126.

A banjo-like texture appears in the tonal region of G as shown in example 3.2. It later becomes an accompaniment for the pentatonic folk song "Tom Dooley."

Example 3.2: mm. 316-321.

Visual Aspects

In terms of visual influences, spacious effects produced by rests in Frazelle's music reflect influences from the white spaces in Hiroshige's prints. For example, the transitional passage at mm. 115-120, as shown in example 3.3, uses silence to highlight the new tonal region of B minor at m. 120.

Example 3.3: mm. 115-120.

In a letter to Frazelle, Ammons wrote that when one listens to Blue Ridge Airs I, the music

paints distances, mists, hues, slopes--an exact portrait of the spirit of the mountains--relaxed enough to be melodic enough--at other times sounding like the sounds of such a place.¹⁴

¹⁴Archie Ammons, Ithaca, correspondence to Kenneth Frazelle, 16 December 1988. Transcript in personal library of Kenneth Frazelle, Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

This comment represents the reaction to Frazelle's music by many performers, critics, and audiences. A look at specific musical examples shows the influence of the Appalachian landscape on Blue Ridge Airs I.

Frazelle evokes a sense of primitiveness and timelessness parallel to the ancient and ageless quality he perceives in the landscape of the Blue Ridge Mountains through harmony and registration in Blue Ridge Airs I. For example, the opening bass chord produces a dark, ominous, and foreboding sonority sustained beneath the folk song "Naomi Wise." The tune, written in the Dorian mode, helps create a dark brooding mood as shown in example 3.4.

Example 3.4: mm. 1-16.

BLUE RIDGE AIRS

Kenneth Frazelle
1988

Sostenuto e cantabile (♩ = 48-52) *p*

pp *ped.*

cresc. *v.* *cresc.*

ped. *alc.* *x ped.* *alc.*

As the folk song "Naomi Wise" unfolds in its second presentation at m.11 (example 3.4), Frazelle expands the registration to span three staves, a technique which is often necessary to clarify simultaneous musical lines in his piano works. Frazelle compares his acute awareness of the

shapes and contours of the mountains with the rising and falling musical lines. These wavelike motions are depicted melodically and rhythmically in the unfolding horizontal musical lines.

Frazelle compares his perceptions of landscape contours with his exploration of the "landscape" or sonorous capabilities of the piano. Various registrations and textures sustained through imaginative and subtle pedalling create color and atmosphere. According to Frazelle's program notes for Blue Ridge Airs I, he states that

Blue Ridge Airs I is not simply a setting of songs or a mirroring of sounds. Above all, it is a landscape. I spend much of my time on a farm in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, and that atmosphere has had an immeasurable effect on my hearing.¹⁵

Frazelle's colorful palette of sound reflects observations of shifts in light and cloud formations in the mountains. According to the composer, awareness of different atmospheric forms receding and coming into focus parallels tunes that appear and reappear in his music.¹⁶ For example, as the tune "Tom Dooley" recedes, "Naomi" emerges and gradually dominates the music as seen in example 3.5.

¹⁵Frazelle, program notes to Blue Ridge Airs I, 1988.

¹⁶Kenneth Frazelle, interview by author, 22 February 1993, Winston-Salem.

Example 3.5: mm. 335-340.

The image displays a musical score for piano, specifically measures 335-340. The score is written on two systems of staves. The top system contains measures 335, 336, and 337. The bottom system contains measures 338, 339, 340, 341, and 342. The music is characterized by complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and melodic lines that often feature slurs and ties. Dynamics markings include 'p' (piano) and 'a.d.' (ad libitum). A tempo marking '(340) poco a poco più energico' is present in the bottom system. The score is presented in a clear, black-and-white format.

A recurring feature present in Frazelle's recent works is the incorporation of passages depicting birds. Frazelle made hundreds of musical notations of birdsongs from the Appalachian mountains. For example, over a period of four years, Frazelle made musical notations depicting the call of the indigo bunting. These notations provide musical material for several works.¹⁷ Frazelle sketches the rhythmic and melodic quality of birds in a pianistic way. Example 3.6 shows the intricate rhythms and pitches notating the inflections of the birdsong. Frazelle's scoring in the high register of the piano creates high mellifluous sounds.

¹⁷The solo flute expresses the birdsong of the indigo bunting in Frazelle's Blue Ridge Airs II (1991). The eighth piece of his piano solo, Lullabies and Birdsongs, is titled "Indigo Bunting." The rhythmic asymmetry of the music adds a humorous quality to this distinctive bird.

Example 3.6: mm. 98-102.

Shape of the Music

Blue Ridge Airs I is a multi-sectional work in one movement with a performance duration of approximately seventeen minutes. Hinson's description of the piano ballade certainly applies to the structure of Frazelle's work:

It is a solo piano composition of the character-piece genre, one movement in length, with variable characteristics including any or all of the following--ballad-tone beginning introduction, main theme of a serious nature, contrasting secondary thematic material, areas of arrested motion, dramatic changes of mood, emotional character, relationship to the dance, varied repetition, irregular form and narrative style. Of these, the slow and serious ballade-tone beginning and main theme, and the narrative style are most important in distinguishing the piano ballade from other music.¹⁸

¹⁸Hinson, 4.

"Naomi Wise" provides the main theme and slow opening material. Example 3.7 shows this same folk song with text arranged by Rick Mashburn set to music by Frazelle in his Appalachian Songbook (1988).

Example 3.7: "Naomi Wise," mm. 1-6.

NAOMI WISE

Traditional, arranged by Rick Mashburn for Jessie Hester Kenneth Frazelle
(1988)

leato (d=ss) mf con rubato

1. I'll tell you a stor-y a- bout poor O-mie Wise

mf colla voce

The image shows a musical score for the song "Naomi Wise". It consists of two staves. The top staff is for the vocal line, written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo and mood are indicated as "leato (d=ss) mf con rubato". The lyrics are "1. I'll tell you a stor-y a- bout poor O-mie Wise". The bottom staff is for the piano accompaniment, written in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. It begins with the instruction "mf colla voce". The score shows the first six measures of the piece.

The folk song, "Groundhog," provides contrasting secondary thematic material. Its character, comic and hilarious, shows bizarre mountain humor. Example 3.8 shows the opening measures of "Groundhog" with text arranged by Rick Mashburn, also taken from Frazelle's Appalachian Songbook. The energetic dance-like rhythms and G Lydian mode contrast sharply with the expansive vocal character and Dorian mode of "Naomi Wise."

Example 3.8: "Groundhog," mm. 1-3.

(end of verse 1)

1. Shoul'der up your gun and
mf

(end of verse 3)

2. Ground-hog in the berry patch, he
mf

-hog.
mf

4. Skiv that ground-hog,
mf

ped.

p.

Because of the return of the "Naomi Wise" theme in the Dorian mode at measure 337, the form of Blue Ridge Airs I could be identified as rounded binary.

Measure	1	220	337
Section	A	B	A'
Folk song	Naomi Wise	Groundhog	Naomi Wise
Tonal Center	D Dorian	G Lydian	D Dorian

The drama portrayed in "Naomi Wise" governs the overall shape of Blue Ridge Airs I. The climax of the composition occurs in mm. 205-207 where Naomi is murdered. The intensity of the repeated D's, reiteration of thematic fragments, extremely loud dynamics, sharp rhythms, piercing

unison registration, and pedalling reinforce the seriousness of the drama. The D's represent the Dorian mode of the opening and conclusion of the ballade. Example 3.9 shows the climax of the work.

Example 3.9: mm. 205-207.

The image shows a musical score for piano, measures 205-207. The score is written for piano and includes dynamic markings such as 'molto', 'molto rallentando poco a poco', 'molto dim.', and '(mf)'. It also features performance instructions like 'ped.' and 'ff'. The score is written in a single system with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a piano part below. The tempo is marked 'molto' and the dynamics range from 'molto' to 'molto dim.' and '(mf)'. There are also markings for 'ped.' (pedal) and 'ff' (fortissimo).

Motivic Development

The six folk tunes and the music depicting the birdsong of the indigo bunting provide melodic and motivic material for development. The first presentation of each tune coincides with a new section in Blue Ridge Airs I. The folk tunes, selected by Frazelle for their inherent emotional characteristics, contrast in mood, nature, and mode. The following chart lists title, mode, and measure of the tunes and birdsong where they initially appear in the ballade:

<u>Tune</u>	<u>Mode</u>	<u>Measure</u>
"Naomi Wise"	Dorian mode	1
"Charmin' Betsy"	F (B-flat pedal)	47
"Pretty Saro"	A major	71
Indigo Bunting	atonal	98
"East Virginny"	B minor	124
"Groundhog"	G Lydian	220
"Tom Dooley"	G pentatonic	325
"Naomi Wise"	D Dorian	337

In addition to providing dramatic changes of mood, the songs provide melodic material for Frazelle to treat motivically. The tunes reappear in fragments, as well as in different guises and as accompanying figures. Critic William Gudger, in reviewing Kahane's premiere of the work, describes the collage effect of the tunes:

Like a singer's ballad, the work is quasi-narrative, based on a sensational murder story from 1808. . . . Rather than the repeated melodies with different stanzas of words found in a folksong. . . . Frazelle gives us fragments of melodies, now varied, now overlapped, which create an evocative collage. The folksong material makes the basic language of the work easily accessible.¹⁹

The music develops through statement and expansion of tunes. In his program notes for Blue Ridge Airs I, Frazelle gives insight into the development of the tunes:

¹⁹Gudger, 21 May 1988.

Unlike the singer, who uses repeated verses to draw out a ballad, the piano conveys the action through constant variation, development, fragmentation and overlapping."²⁰

The following musical examples illustrate the different techniques that Frazelle employs. He subjects the folk tune "Naomi" to constant variation. After its first two presentations as shown in example 3.4, it reappears transposed at m. 33. The greatest transformation, however, is in the rhythm of the tune and the triplet figure accompaniment as shown in example 3.10.

Example 3.10: mm. 32-35.

The musical score for Example 3.10 consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system covers measures 32-34, and the second system covers measures 35-35. The tempo is marked 'poco rall.' and the metronome is set to 168-176. The score includes dynamic markings like 'pp' and 'p'. The music features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with triplets and a melodic line.

Another variation occurs as the "Naomi" tune is knit into the fabric of a reel-like rhythmic accompaniment at m. 165 as shown in example 3.11.

²⁰Frazelle, program notes to Blue Ridge Airs I, 1988.

Example 3.11: mm. 163-168.

Musical score for Example 3.11, measures 163-168. The score is written for piano and features a complex texture with multiple staves. The top staff is marked with a circled '165' and includes the instruction *ad libitum quasi allegro*. The middle staff has *leggero p* and *5* written above it. The bottom staff has *dim.* and *ped.* markings. The music consists of intricate melodic lines and dense chordal textures.

At m. 346, "Naomi" returns to D Dorian mode and is juxtaposed with the indigo bunting material as shown in example 3.12.

Example 3.12: mm. 345-346.

Musical score for Example 3.12, measures 345-346. The score is written for piano and features a complex texture with multiple staves. The top staff is marked with a circled '345' and includes the instruction *poco a poco rallentando al fine*. The middle staff has *f* and *crescendo* markings. The bottom staff has *mf* and *5* markings. The music consists of intricate melodic lines and dense chordal textures.

"Groundhog" is an example of a tune imaginatively developed by Frazelle. His scoring highlights the dance-like and humorous character of the tune. Example 3.13 shows the first instance where the melody appears.

Example 3.13: mm. 219-221.

Handwritten musical score for Example 3.13, measures 219-221. The score is written on three staves. The top staff is a grand staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked "Molto vivace" with a metronome marking of quarter note = 69-76. The first measure (m. 219) is marked "molto" and contains a whole note chord. The second measure (m. 220) is marked "Marcato e staccato" and contains a triplet of eighth notes. The third measure (m. 221) is marked "3 simile" and contains a triplet of eighth notes. The bottom staff is a grand staff with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. It contains a piano accompaniment with a "p" dynamic marking. A handwritten note at the bottom of the page reads: "a piece notes in rectangles" and "silently (slurs toward the right indicate continual depression of notes until a rest)". A handwritten "220" is circled above the top staff.

Frazelle develops "Groundhog" at m. 232 where he presents it as ragtime with staccatos and octave displacement as shown in example 3.14.

Example 3.14: mm. 228-236.

Musical score for Example 3.14, measures 228-236. The score is written for piano and consists of two systems of staves. The first system shows measures 228-232, and the second system shows measures 233-236. The music is in a high register and features complex, idiosyncratic rhythmic patterns and dynamics.

Each presentation further increases the character of the idiosyncratic humor inherent in "Groundhog." A disguised version in a high registration appears at m. 276 set in a waltz rhythm (example 3.15).

Example 3.15: mm. 275-278.

Musical score for Example 3.15, measures 275-278. The score is written for piano and consists of two systems of staves. The first system shows measures 275-276, and the second system shows measures 277-278. The music is in a high registration and features a waltz rhythm. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp* and *mf*, and a tempo marking *And. mos. moder. (♩ = 8)* above the first staff.

A toccata-like pointillistic treatment of "Groundhog," marked "Presto," represents characteristic leaps as shown below in example 3.16 at m. 288.

Example 3.16: mm. 287-292.

Example 3.17 demonstrates overlapping tunes with a variation of "Naomi" in the treble clef and a variation of "East Virginy" in the bass clef at mm. 165-173.

Example 3.17: mm. 166-171.

An examination of the musical shape shows that the drama of "Naomi Wise" governs the overall shape of Blue Ridge Airs I. The contrasting nature of "Naomi Wise" and "Groundhog," along with the incorporation of the other folk tunes, provides a variety of musical material which Frazelle effectively knits together. Smooth transitions between sections and the collage treatment of the tunes strengthen the structural cohesiveness of the work. Musical shapes and spacious sonorities, reflecting influences from the Appalachian landscape, provide clear textures despite a complexity of musical events.

Rhythmic Features

In order to approach this music effectively, the performer needs an inherent feel for improvisatory and complex rhythmic gestures. Frazelle's intricate rhythmic notation appears complex in the score. The rhythms are organic, however, and Kahane aptly describes the "initial rhythmic complexity that becomes natural and organic after practice."²¹ A literal reading of the rhythms spoils the intrinsic and spontaneous quality of the music. It is advantageous for the performer to have a feeling for improvisatory rhythms as well as a strong sense of pulse similar to that ingrained in jazz musicians.

²¹Gordon Sparber, "Sounds of Success," Winston-Salem Journal, 7 March 1993, C5.

At m. 151, a triplet, quintuplet, sextuplet, and septuplet with ties occur within a single measure. The number of rhythmic groupings illustrates the type of subtle rhythmic flexibility a pianist must negotiate, as shown below in example 3.18.

Example 3.18: mm. 150-151.

Frazelle supplies metronome markings to help the performer establish tempo relationships between sections, important in defining the structure of the music. Again, in the performance notes to Worldly Hopes, Frazelle writes that "metronome markings are always approximate, indicating rhythmic characters and tempo relationships of sections within a piece."²²

A rhythmic device reflects the influence of Elliott Carter in Blue Ridge Airs I. Frazelle uses metric modulation at m. 65, taking a sixteenth note in 3/4 meter and making it equal to a sixteenth triplet in compound time

²²Worldly Hopes, score.

15/16, as part of the transition between "Charmin' Betsy" and "Pretty Saro." Example 3.19 shows this device.

Example 3.19: mm. 62-69.

The image shows a musical score for Example 3.19, measures 62-69. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a downward-pointing arrow above the right-hand staff. The second system continues the piece with dynamic markings like 'p' and 'cres.'

Since Frazelle incorporates rhythms, melodies, and harmonies from the vernacular into his work, a background in popular music is also helpful to the performer. Frazelle states that the inspiration for the closing material of Blue Ridge Airs I is the Beatles' song, "Hey Jude." Example 3.20 illustrates the closing of Blue Ridge Airs I. The melodic and modal inflections of the bracketed phrase reflects the character of the fading out portion of "Hey Jude."

Example 3.20: mm. 362-363.

con fuoco! (ff) mp sempre rall. al fine
molto vivace e molto fervoroso

The incorporation of a vernacular-type passage with syncopated jazzy rhythms and a descending figure resembling blues is shown below in example 3.21.

Example 3.21: mm. 343-346.

(sempre più energico) mp f mp sforzando poco a poco rallentando al fine
molto vivace e molto fervoroso

Pianistic Features

In Blue Ridge Airs I, the writing is pianistically demanding. Large leaps, repeated notes, changing tempi, rubato, contrasting moods, and simultaneous opposing musical materials with various articulations require advanced technique. In addition, the performer must possess creative insight in order to reproduce the imaginative scoring effectively. While technically difficult passages exist in the work, the writing remains idiomatic for the instrument.

Frazelle employs several specific twentieth-century techniques in Blue Ridge Airs I. For example, the pianist silently depresses and holds pitches G, C, D, E, and G beneath the folk tune "Groundhog" as shown in example 3.22. This pianistic device produces high sympathetic vibrations which contrast to the dark sounded pitches, A, D, E, and A, a pitch amalgamation associated with the "Naomi Wise" tune.

Example 3.22: mm. 219-221.

220

Molto vivace (♩ = 69-76)

molto

Molto

Marcato e staccato

3 simile

press notes in rectangles

silently (slurs forward the right indicate continual depression of notes until a rest)

%

Frazelle notates use of the pianist's fists in the fragmented, almost pointillistic texture shown in example 3.23. It is a fitting gesture for the hilarious quality of the music.

Example 3.23: mm. 247-252.

Since the music requires subtle articulation of contrapuntal layers, nuances, and blending of sonorities, excellent pedalling technique is a requirement. Frazelle gives precise pedalling notation through use of symbols and words including ped., elev. * , con. ped., u.c., tre corde, ped. poco a poco elev., 1/2 ped. muta, and ped. muta. Pedalling instructions, as found in the notes to performers in the score of Worldly Hopes, give insight into his intentions for applying the pedals. Frazelle states that,

generally, the pedalling is left to the discretion of the pianist. When specific pedalling directions exist, however, they should be carefully observed.²³ Example 3.24 shows directions for a gradual release of the pedal.

Example 3.24: mm. 190-192.

The use of sonorous low bass notes which reinforce tonal regions is a characteristic feature found in Frazelle's piano writing. He frequently writes a low bass note attached to a slur. The notation indicates that the performer should retain the tone in the pedal to create the appropriate atmosphere for purposes of sonority, color, and texture. Example 3.25 illustrates this compositional technique.

²³Worldly Hopes, score.

Example: 3.25: mm. 195-196.

Layering of musical materials occurs throughout Blue Ridge Airs I. At times, linear movement between two voices resembles Baroque or Renaissance keyboard writing. In contrast to the two-part texture, multi-layered fragments and melodies can occur simultaneously and are often notated on three staves. Counterpoint and a collage-type layering of material provide interest and variety of texture. Contrapuntal writing is a recurring feature found in Frazelle's writing for piano.

As an examination of folk elements, shape of the music, rhythmic qualities, and pianistic features reveals, Blue Ridge Airs I is a significant work for the piano. It draws upon a rich heritage of American culture and exhibits a great variety of expression. Upon hearing Kahane perform Blue Ridge Airs I, Yo-Yo Ma reacted by commissioning the cello sonata. Paula Robison, inspired by the landscape

unfolding before her as she listened to Blue Ridge Airs I, responded similarly with the commission for the flute concerto. The quality of workmanship and the breadth of expression make the work a significant contribution to the piano literature.

CHAPTER IV

SONATA FOR CELLO AND PIANO

The Sonata for Cello and Piano represents the high quality of workmanship and musical excellence characterizing Frazelle's chamber works during the period from 1987 to 1992. Yo-Yo Ma and Jeffrey Kahane premiered the sonata on September 15, 1989, in New Bedford, Massachusetts. In the same month, Ma and Kahane gave the New York debut of the sonata, followed by subsequent performances in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Atlanta, Miami, Pittsburgh, and Winnipeg (Canada). Of its performance by Ma and Kahane in Pittsburgh, critic Donald Rosenberg stated:

The 22-minute sonata possesses impressionistic harmonies and unabashedly romantic utterances, and the directness of its language reaches the ear with bright honesty.¹

The sonata has received attention from other international artists as well. Cellist Carter Brey and pianist Christopher O'Riley have championed the sonata by performing it throughout the United States. Brey and Kahane have also collaborated on performances of the sonata.

¹Donald Rosenberg, "Y Music Series, Site Open on A High Note," The Pittsburgh Press, 19 September 1989, B12.

The circumstances surrounding the commission of the Sonata for Cello and Piano by Ma and Kahane were quite accidental or, as Frazelle states, "serendipitous."² Upon hearing Kahane play Frazelle's Blue Ridge Airs I at the home of composer Leon Kirchner, Ma, attracted to the innovative quality of the music, asked Frazelle to write a duet for himself and Kahane.³ Frazelle responded by composing the sonata.

Frazelle began work on the sonata in the spring of 1989 while continuing his teaching responsibilities at the North Carolina School of the Arts. During the summer, however, he devoted himself exclusively to its composition, turning away all other work. The sonata was completed July 13, 1989, and dedicated to Elizabeth Roberts (now Sobol).

The musical quality of the sonata warrants its inclusion as part of the standard cello repertory. In the hands of capable performers, it is a work that reaches its audience through its emotional depth and musical integrity. Critic John Henken recognized its artistic worth and stated:

Kenneth Frazelle's new Sonata in its local premiere, could quickly become a repertory staple. It is identifiably American--of the Ives-Copland-Schickele lineage.⁴

²Ibid.

³Yo-Yo Ma, letter of recommendation for Frazelle, 23 January 1989.

⁴John Henken, "Ma, Kahane in Recital at Ambassador," Los Angeles Times, 7 April 1990, F4.

As with Blue Ridge Airs I, inspiration came from literary, musical, and visual sources. Specifically, a poem by Ammons inspired the opening of the cello sonata. In addition, words and ideas notated by Frazelle in his composition book show the importance of literary ideas in his creative process. Frazelle's flexibility in working with different musical styles is apparent in his fusing of folk and vernacular idioms with classical formal procedures. The artwork in the Book of Kells and the Appalachian landscape contributed to visual influences.

Influences

Literary Aspects

Frazelle attributes inspiration for the opening of the cello sonata to a poem of Ammons entitled, "Keepsake," from A Coast of Trees.⁵ A flowing brook is part of the poet's imagery in the poem and part of Frazelle's imagery in the sonata. In addition to the poem, Frazelle notated several words and phrases in his compositional sketchbook in February and March of 1989: phrases such as "while reading The Boarding House--Joyce," "shocking, spring light," and "reversal of lyrical/vibrant."⁶ The phrases

⁵A. R. Ammons, A Coast of Trees (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1981), 28.

⁶Kenneth Frazelle, compositional sketchbook, personal library of Kenneth Frazelle, Winston-Salem.

had literary and musical meaning to Frazelle during the compositional process.

Musical Aspects

The cello sonata shares common stylistic elements with Blue Ridge Airs I, showing influences of regional folk music. Unlike Blue Ridge Airs I, however, the cello sonata does not incorporate actual folk songs. Instead, folk elements are an integral and natural part of the composer's expressive language. The music evokes associations with traditional song of the Blue Ridge Mountains as described by critic Donald Rosenberg of The Pittsburgh Press. Commenting on a performance given by Ma and Kahane, he wrote that the sonata

derives its expansive appeal from the Blue Ridge Mountains. The three-movement work nods affectionately to that region's folk traditions, and it claims an American spirit that embraces Ives and Gershwin.⁷

In an interview with John Guinn in 1989, Frazelle stated that "it has been liberating for me tonally and lyrically to be involved in folk music. It allowed me to do things I never would have done otherwise."⁸ The second movement of the sonata, for example, is "influenced by the

⁷Rosenberg, 19 September 1989.

⁸John Guinn, "Composer Finds His Music in the Blue Ridge Mountain Landscape," Detroit Free Press, 17 September 1989, C3.

Appalachian ballads."⁹ The movement is aria-like, with its vocally oriented writing embellished through ornamented intermezzi. Characteristics of lyricism, improvisation, and spontaneity pervade the movement. Critic Timothy Pfaff has captured its essence in his review of Ma and Kahane's performance:

The "ballad" of the middle movement *Molto Adagio* offered a generous, beautifully shaped melody for the cello (rendered in a breathtaking whisper by Ma) that came straight from--and went straight to--the heart, an organ too seldom addressed by contemporary composers. Alternately wistful and playful, its long, sustained lines repeatedly burst into spitfire flurries of notes, most impressively the last time, when, after a big, unapologetic climax, it skittered off into silence.¹⁰

The influence of folk music allows for a simpler harmonic language reflected in a slower harmonic rhythm (I, V, IV, I) as demonstrated in example 4.1.

⁹Jim Kopp, "Beauty of Appalachia Shaped Frazelle's Cello, Piano Sonata," The Atlanta Constitution, 17 September 1989, F3.

¹⁰Timothy Pfaff, "Davies' Dynamic Duo," San Francisco Examiner, 9 April 1990, 3C.

Example 4.1: mvt. 2, mm. 64-69.

Frazelle uses altered scale degrees and modal inflections in the sonata. For example, at the retransition from the development to the recapitulation, Frazelle scores the cello and piano in unison, intensely reiterating a G# to A# and finally to B. The presence of the raised 4th scale degree gives a Lydian modal inflection, associated with Appalachian folk music.

The fusing of folk elements with traditional forms appears in the third movement, an energetic Rondo which Frazelle describes in his program notes as a perpetual vivace, increasingly energetic, and pulsating. Strong recurring rhythms show influences from the folk dance (jig) tradition. A schematic of the movement is shown in example 4.2.

Example 4.2: Schematic of third movement.

Section	Intro	A	B	A	A	B/A
mm.	1	19	65	99	116	119
tonal center	cello cadenza	E	F	F	E	E

Visual Aspects

While composing the cello sonata, Frazelle often referred to a replica of the Book of Kells.¹¹ The book, a masterpiece of the ornate Hiberno-Saxon style, is the illuminated gospel book begun at the Irish monastery of Iona probably in the late seventh century. The artwork in the Kells manuscripts is mirrored in the density of musical material in the sonata. The intricate details within a greater design helped Frazelle balance ideas of detail and color in the greater scheme of the sonata.

Crayon and pencil sketches made by Frazelle initiated the compositional process for the sonata. As noted in Chapter II, these sketches provide a means of transferring or transporting musical ideas that Frazelle absorbs from landscape. He transforms the sketches by expressing them as musical gestures. Frazelle explains this process:

¹¹Encyclopedia Britannica, 1990 ed., s.v. "Kells, Book of."

When I look at the sketches afterward, the intricacy and density of the lines and how the colors relate to each other and to the whiteness of the page are more important than the colors themselves.¹²

Example 4.3 is a copy of a sketch for the cello sonata extracted from Frazelle's composition book. Musical fragments, descriptive phrases, ideas, and sweeps of lines are visible in the illustration.

Example 4.3: Sketch from Frazelle's composition book.



¹²Guinn, 17 September 1989.

The Appalachian landscape, especially aspects of water and light, inspired the shapes and sonorities of the first movement. In a radio interview with Lee Ann Hansen, Frazelle gave insight into this influence:

I had a certain aural image of the cello arising out of an aquatic motif, not in the aquatic sense of an ocean, but more of a brook or a stream. Music coming out of the texture or fabric of fairly shallow water and rocks. I certainly don't want people to imagine mountain streams. That is sort of what prompted the whole thing, and there are a lot of effects that do sound water-like--similar to light refracting on shallow water and rocks--that has to do with the first movement.¹³

Shape of the Music

The Sonata for Cello and Piano comprises three motivically related movements. The following simplified chart indicates movement and tonal region.

<u>Movement:</u>	<u>Tonal Region</u>
I. Allegro ma non troppo	E and various regions
II. Molto Adagio	ambiguous, E,D,A
III. Molto Vivace	E and various regions

Critic John Henkins described the contrasting character of the movements in his review of a performance given by Ma and Kahane. According to Henken, Ma and Kahane

¹³Frazelle, interview by Lee Ann Hansen, National Public Radio, Performance Today, 21 September 1989.

stressed its lyrical sweetness without sentimentality, let the hushed mysteries of the central Adagio hover gracefully and projected barn-dance vigor in the rhythmically complex finale.¹⁴

Whereas in Blue Ridge Airs I the shaping forces are derived from the ballad narrative (story of Naomi Wise) and landscape influences, Frazelle employs classical formal procedures to shape the sonata. Frazelle describes the relationship between structure and intuition in the sonata:

Structure is very important to me--if it sounds free, that's good, but I also want it to sound logical--not arbitrary but for a reason. Part of the job of being a composer to me is balancing logic with freedom, and form with spontaneity. They have to co-exist.¹⁵

The first movement is in traditional sonata form, with the exposition, development, and recapitulation clearly delineated by a double bar and metric modulation. Although several themes are present, two principal thematic ideas dominate the movement. An unfolding gesture in the piano is followed by a contrasting lyrical theme in the cello, derived from the opening piano material. In Frazelle's program notes he describes the "undulating motions in the piano" from which "a lyric cello entrance emerges."¹⁶ The

¹⁴Henken, 7 April 1990.

¹⁵Kenneth Frazelle, interview by author, 18 May 1992, Winston-Salem.

¹⁶Frazelle, program notes to Sonata for Cello and Piano, 1989.

two ideas develop, moving away from the tonal center E through various tonalities, and return to the original tonal center in the recapitulation. The recapitulation is relatively short, 24 measures as compared with 90 measures of exposition and 87 measures of development.

As discussed in Chapter II, Frazelle's initial process of composition is creative rather than constructive. Musical gestures such as short fragments, chords, rhythms, melodic shapes, and orchestral splashes set Frazelle's ear and mind in motion. The process of developing an entire work from an initial musical gesture is exemplified in the cello sonata.

The opening gesture, shown in example 4.4, is the primary material from which the rest of the sonata germinates. The tonal center of E, the descending interval of a major third, the quintuplet, and the amalgamation of pitches (E G# A B) play important roles in generating musical gestures. This major triad with the added fourth (E G# A B) appears at structurally significant points throughout the first movement contributing to a sense of structural cohesiveness.

Example 4.4: mvt. 1, mm. 1-2.

Allegro ma non troppo (♩=56-58)

mf

pp molto leggero

pronun. sempre

M.S. pronunziato

ped.

A clear reiteration of the opening pitches (E G# A B) appears at the transition from the exposition into the development as shown in example 4.5. The low C# sustained in the cello at measure 88 adds color and denotes the presence of the relative minor key.

Example 4.5: mvt. 1, mm. 88-91.

pp

mu. cresc.

pp

alov. ped.

con ped.

90

At the retransition into the recapitulation demonstrated in example 4.6, the same pitches contribute to the structural cohesiveness of the sonata.

Example 4.6: mvt. 1, mm. 176-178.

The musical score for Example 4.6 shows measures 176-178. It consists of a piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The tempo is marked "Tempo primo (1♩=58)". The piano part includes markings for "cresc.", "molto dim.", and "ped.". The vocal line includes markings for "molto dim.".

Pitches (F# A# B) occur at the conclusion of the first movement as shown in example 4.7 and are a transposition of the opening pitches (E G# A).

Example 4.7: mvt. 1, mm. 200-202.

The musical score for Example 4.7 shows measures 200-202. It consists of a piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The tempo is marked "sempre rullatando al fine (♩=48)". The piano part includes markings for "mf" and "f". The vocal line includes markings for "mf" and "f". Two specific chords in the piano part are circled.

Motivic Development

Tracing the cello's opening motive in the first movement of the sonata demonstrates Frazelle's skill in developing and recapitulating motives. The initial entry of the cello at measures 9-10 is an ascending lyrical phrase using the pitches B B G# A B. This cello phrase combines with the piano's sonority, pitches (E G# A B) as shown in example 4.8.

Example 4.8: mvt. 1, mm. 9-10.

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: cello and piano. The cello part is on the top staff, and the piano part is on the bottom staff. The cello part begins with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic and features an ascending lyrical phrase with notes B, B, G#, A, B. The piano part features a rhythmic accompaniment with notes E, G#, A, B. Both parts include triplets and slurs.

Frazelle uses this cello motive from the first movement in both the second and third movements. Example 4.9 shows the motive as part of a triplet figure in both piano and cello in the second movement. Example 4.10 shows the cello

motive in the third movement as triplets in the cello,
against a repetitive four pattern in the piano.

Example 4.9: mvt. 2, mm. 39-40.

Musical score for Example 4.9, mvt. 2, mm. 39-40. The score is written for violin and piano. The violin part (top staff) features a melodic line with a circled triplet of eighth notes in measure 39, marked *arco* and *mf*. The piano part (bottom two staves) features a repetitive rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with a circled triplet of eighth notes in measure 39. The score includes dynamic markings (*mf*, *f*), articulation (*arco*, *pizz.*), and performance instructions. A box containing the number 40 is visible above the violin staff in measure 40.

Example 4.10: mvt. 3, mm. 19-22.

Musical score for Example 4.10, mvt. 3, mm. 19-22. The score is written for violin and piano. The violin part (top staff) features a melodic line with a circled triplet of eighth notes in measure 20, marked *mf*. The piano part (bottom two staves) features a repetitive rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The score includes dynamic markings (*mf*) and performance instructions. A box containing the number 20 is visible above the violin staff in measure 20.

At measure 15 of the first movement, the cello inverts and develops the motivic phrase. The piano retains the opening pitches of (E G# A B) as shown in example 4.11.

Example 4.11: mvt. 1, mm. 14-15.

Frazelle transforms the phrase into a playful character through melodic and rhythmic manipulation as shown at mm. 33-35 in example 4.12.

Example 4.12: mvt. 1, mm. 33-35.

At measures 52-53, the phrase soars from forte to fortissimo in the cello, leading into a modal region of B-flat Lydian in example 4.13.

Example 4.13: mvt. 1, mm. 51-54.

The musical score for Example 4.13 consists of four systems of staves. The first system features a cello line with a dynamic marking of 'f' and a fermata over a note, with an arrow pointing to it. The second system shows piano accompaniment with dynamic markings 'mf' and 'p'. The third system shows a cello line with dynamic markings 'ff' and 'mf', and a fermata over a note with a '5:II' marking above it. The fourth system shows piano accompaniment with dynamic markings 'mf' and 'p'.

In the development, further motivic transformation occurs. The opening melodic material of the development is derived from the cello motive, retaining the same basic shape. When the piano enters, the texture is sparse as shown in example 4.14. Both instruments convey jazz-like syncopated rhythms.

Example 4.14: mvt. 1, mm. 92-103.

The musical score for Example 4.14 consists of four systems of staves. The first system shows the cello and piano parts. The second system shows the piano part. The third system shows the cello and piano parts. The fourth system shows the piano part. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf*, *pp*, *p*, and *sf*, and a tempo marking of 100.

Throughout the movement, the cello phrase reappears in several guises and tonal regions. For example, both instruments consecutively develop the phrase in the key of G major and e minor. Later, the piano presents the phrase in single bass notes in c# minor.

The phrase occurs in the recapitulation and is elongated as shown in example 4.15.

Example 4.15: mvt.1, mm. 186-187.

The musical score for Example 4.15 consists of two systems of staves. The first system shows the cello and piano parts. The second system shows the piano part. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp*, *p*, *dim.*, and *(mp)*. The tempo marking is *poco meno mosso (♩=52-54)*.

An examination of motivic material demonstrates Frazelle's skill in developing and recapitulating ideas. Though the motives go through varied transformations, they are identifiable. The common motive shared by the three movements further establishes motivic cohesion in the sonata.

Rhythmic Features

Rhythmic ingenuities such as rhythmic modulation are a strength of the sonata. Improvisatory and recurring rhythmic gestures from the folk ballad and dance are present as well as a prominent use of vernacular rhythms. Rhythmic complexities including frequent meter changes, syncopation, and irregular groupings are part of the rhythmic language of the sonata.

Double bars and metric modulation clearly delineate formal sections. A quintuplet of sixteenths equaling one beat becomes five eighth notes each receiving a beat. The transition between the exposition and development is shown in example 4.16.

Example 4.16: mvt. 1, mm. 88-91.

The musical score for Example 4.16 consists of two systems. The top system is a vocal line with dynamics *pp*, *mezzo-cresc.*, and a boxed measure number 90. The bottom system is a piano accompaniment with dynamics *elev. ped.* and *con ped.*. A five-fingered scale diagram is shown above the piano part. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and fingerings.

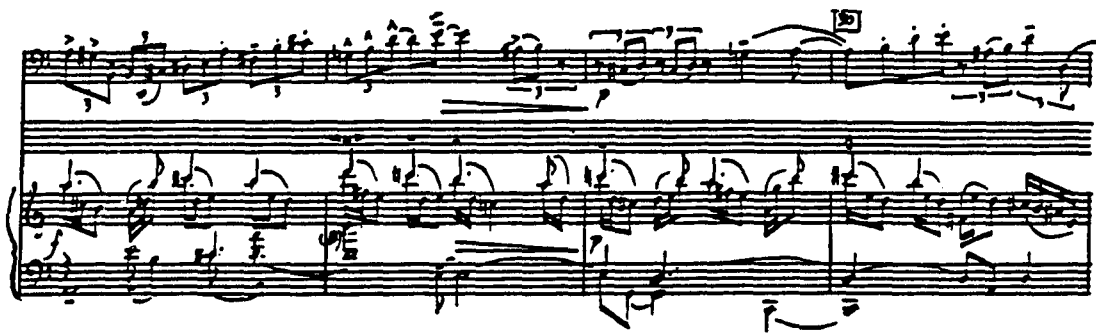
Improvisatory and irregular rhythms with vocally oriented writing occur especially in the second movement. Spontaneous and improvisatory passages reflect the influences of landscape and the folk ballad tradition as shown in example 4.17.

Example 4.17: mvt. 2, mm. 73-75.

The musical score for Example 4.17 consists of two systems. The top system is a vocal line with dynamics *cresc.* and a boxed measure number 74. The bottom system is a piano accompaniment with various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and fingerings. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and fingerings.

The triplet rhythm of the cello against the prominent duple rhythm of the piano produces rhythmic interest and tension in the third movement as shown in example 4.18. The simple direct rhythmic pattern shows influence of the dance-inspired recurring patterns of folk music.

Example 4.18: mvt. 3, mm. 27-30.

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: cello and piano. The top staff is for the cello, and the bottom staff is for the piano. The music is in 3/4 time. The cello part features a triplet rhythm, while the piano part features a duple rhythm. The score is for measures 27-30 of the third movement. A box containing the number '30' is located above the final measure of the cello staff.

A peculiar feature in Frazelle's writing in the cello sonata is that of "blind downbeats." Performers have encountered difficulties negotiating entrances when ties or rests occur on the downbeat. The difficulty increases when the collaborators have different rhythms simultaneously. A "blind downbeat" appears in example 4.19.

Example 4.19: mvt. 1, mm. 53-54.

Incorporation of jazz, blues, and boogie is present in the third movement especially. Jazz passages naturally emerge from the rhythmic propulsion generated in the movement as shown in example 4.20.

Example 4.20: mvt. 3, mm. 89-91.

A type of pop rhythm occurs when Frazelle annotates the cello as "funky," as shown in example 4.21.

Example 4.21: mvt. 3, mm. 65-68.

Frazelle generates rhythmic excitement particularly at the end of the third movement where syncopated repeated chords lead to triplets in both cello and piano. The resulting rhythmic propulsion and momentum shown in example 4.22 reflect influences of the dance-rhythms of the folk song.

Example 4.22: mvt. 3, mm. 141-148.

Instrumental Features

The role of the piano in the cello sonata is collaborative. Since Frazelle considers the cello and piano as equal partners in the sonata, he prefers to have the piano lid fully open for performance. Important motivic ideas are distributed equally between the instruments, ensuring a balance of solo passages for both. For example, the first movement opens with solo piano for nine measures, while in the third movement the piano is silent for nineteen measures while the cellist has an opening cadenza.

The ensemble relationship in the work is close-knit, with passages varying from supportive to conversational to unified. Supportive passages occur as either instrument embellishes the main line. Critic Donald Rosenberg described such a passage in his review:

Its central movement is one of stillness and rapture, with the cello occasionally whispering phrases and the piano spreading ripples of sound beneath the surface.¹⁷

Example 4.23 shows a conversational passage where both instruments quickly exchange pointillistic fragments. The passage also demonstrates the close-knit rhythmic ensemble required of the collaborators.

¹⁷Rosenberg, 19 September 1989.

Example 4.23: mvt. 1, mm. 77-80.

Musical score for Example 4.23, measures 77-80. The score is written for a cello and piano. The cello part is in the upper system, and the piano part is in the lower system. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp*, *mf*, *ff*, and *dim.*, as well as performance instructions like *arco* and *5 dim.*. The piano part features complex textures with many beamed notes and slurs.

In contrast, at the recapitulation, the opening melodic material occurs in both cello and piano. The instruments are in unison, demonstrating their equality as shown in example 4.24.

Example 4.24: mvt. 1, mm. 183-184.

Musical score for Example 4.24, measures 183-184. The score is written for a cello and piano. The cello part is in the upper system, and the piano part is in the lower system. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *p*. The piano part features complex textures with many beamed notes and slurs.

Frazelle's scoring exploits the strengths and colors of both instruments. Colorful passages reinforce the drama of the music. For example, the piano at measure 194 has sextuplets notated in the high register with pedal, followed by a trill, while the cello produces a repeated note effect shown below in example 4.25.

Example 4.25: mvt. 1, mm. 194-199.

The image displays a musical score for measures 194-199. It consists of three systems of staves. The top system is for the piano, featuring a sextuplet in the high register with a pedal, marked '(mp) sempre d.m.'. The middle system is for the cello, showing a repeated note effect, marked 'molto rallentando al fine' and 'arco'. The bottom system is for the piano, showing a trill, marked 'p'.

Critic Marc Shulgold described colorful passages in the sonata in a performance review, stating that "the scoring, particularly the delicate, French-Impressionist cascades from the piano, never failed to delight the ears."¹⁸

¹⁸Marc Shulgold, "Yo-Yo Ma, Kahane Form Delightful Chamber Team," Rocky Mountain News, 5 April 1990, 72.

Another effective passage for the cellist involves notation depicting a field sparrow. A similar feature, present in Blue Ridge Airs I, is notation depicting the birdcall of the indigo bunting. The imaginative scoring of the field sparrow is shown in example 4.26, where the cello has a glissando reinforced in the piano accompaniment by repeated syncopated chords.

Example 4.26: mvt. 3, mm. 135-140.

The image shows a musical score for Example 4.26, consisting of two systems of staves. The top system is for the cello, and the bottom system is for the piano. The cello part begins with a glissando marked "ord." and "accel. e. gliss." with a forte "f" dynamic. The piano accompaniment starts with a piano "pp loco" and includes a "repeat sign indicates d value" annotation. The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature.

A strong characteristic in Frazelle's piano writing is expansive registration which provides open sounding textures. Widespread unison passages spanning several octaves occur at structurally significant points in the cello sonata. At the conclusion of the first movement, for example, the cello has an undulating figuration while the piano has widespread unison writing as shown in example 4.27.

Example 4.27: mvt. 1, mm. 200-202.

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is in bass clef and the bottom staff is in treble clef. The music is written in a single system. Above the top staff, there are markings: "sempre rallentando al fine" and "(♩=48)". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamics like "mf".

A study of influences, shape, rhythmic qualities, and instrumental features of the cello sonata demonstrates the degree of excellence that characterizes Frazelle's instrumental chamber works. His incorporation of different styles into his own musical language, the commanding sense of rhythm and lyricism, the structural integrity, and the idiomatic writing for both instruments are some of the strengths of this work. The sonata is an attractive chamber work and deserves continued performance exposure.

CHAPTER V
MOVING TOWARD THE NEXT CENTURY

Frazelle's work received national exposure in 1986 when Jan DeGaetani and Gilbert Kalish performed Worldly Hopes. The following year, performance of his Piano Quintet by Jeffrey Kahane and musicians of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and its broadcast on American Public Radio brought further recognition to his work. These particular compositions are Frazelle's most complex works, and yet they are the vehicles which brought his work to the attention of prominent artists. A fruitful period of creativity since that time has resulted in substantial works for the concert repertory. Performances on renowned concert series, broadcasts on National Public Radio and American Public Radio, and television broadcasts on North Carolina Public TV have contributed to Frazelle's increasing visibility. As performers expose Frazelle's compositions to colleagues, audiences, and critics, the composer has met with continuous critical acclaim. Musicians of international stature have been inspired to commission a variety of works including compositions for piano, voice, cello, violin, flute, harpsichord, string trio, string quartet, string orchestra, and orchestra.

A perceptible style change occurred in Frazelle's works in the late 1980s. In a 1989 conversation about his work, Frazelle described ideas that influence his creativity:

In my music there are a lot of layerings of images which feel very visual and which are definitely tied into elements of the landscape here. I spend a lot of time in the mountains and that's definitely a source of stimulation to me. I also rely on aquatic images. Music conveys movement, after all, which is what the sea does. And I am very influenced by light. Someone told me that French painter Henri Matisse once said, "Everything is light." I know what he means.¹

A number of distinctive features characterize Frazelle's works composed since the late 1980s: a fusing of folk and vernacular elements with serious music, a firm grasp of structural procedures balanced with spontaneity and color, a personal harmonic language, intense and inventive rhythms, and a unique contrapuntal layering of sound.

Frazelle draws upon the rich musical heritage of the southern United States by fusing indigenous folk song of the South and Appalachian Mountains with Western art music. Frazelle's primary intent when integrating folk materials into his work is not to bring indigenous music into the concert arena but to fuse those folk elements with his own language, and thus to heighten his own expressive mode.²

¹John Guinn, "Composer Finds His Music in the Blue Ridge Mountain Landscape," Detroit Free Press, 17 September 1989, C3.

²Kenneth Frazelle, interview by author, 4 May 1993, Winston-Salem.

An additional result is that audiences gain exposure to an important feature of American heritage, the folk song.

Another appealing feature of Frazelle's work is the incorporation of the vernacular into which the music integrates gestures from blues, jazz, and popular music to create colorful passages. Frazelle's employment of the vernacular is demonstrated in harmonies, phrases, or rhythms in both Blue Ridge Airs I and Sonata for Cello and Piano.

Frazelle's music communicates structure as well as spontaneity and color. In a 1987 review of Playing the Miraculous Game, critic Gordon Sparber stated:

Another thing that commends Playing the Miraculous Game is its logical, well-formed shape. Unlike many works written today, it contains actual musical events. Things happen and relate to each other. Consequently, taken together they seem to mean something.³

Frazelle's harmonic language results from a unique manipulation and integration of harmonic systems including tonality, modality, and pandiatonicism. His firm grasp of tonality is evident even though use of dissonance, added tones, combining of sonorities, and modulatory excursions alter the concept of traditional tonality. In describing the harmonic language of the cello sonata, critic Timothy Pfaff stated:

³Gordon Sparber, "Terrific: Concert Straddles Two Centuries," Winston-Salem Journal, 19 November 1990, 2.

There was little in its vocabulary or syntax that one couldn't have heard 30 years ago. But far from pandering to his audiences with neo-romantic pabulum, the composer exploited the strengths of an established musical idiom.⁴

Frazelle's rhythmic resourcefulness and ingenuity are a consistent strength seen throughout his works. From his early compositions, his interest in polyrhythms, syncopation, meter changes, asymmetrical rhythms, and hemiolas has created variety and intrigue. The barbaric rhythms in Piano Sonata 1972, rhythmic elasticity in Music for a Summer Evening, and the dance-inspired and improvisatory rhythms in Fiddler's Galaxy exemplify different rhythmic aspects. Performers such as Jeffrey Kahane speak of rhythms that appear angular on the page but are natural after practice: "They are fluid, spontaneous, improvisatory, and organically rhythmic."⁵

A characteristic trait evident throughout Frazelle's music is his contrapuntal writing. In addition to counterpoint, a different type of layering of materials is unique to Frazelle's writing possibly reflecting the influences from the literature of Faulkner, multi-dimensional layers in the art of Hiroshige, and topography of landscape. The resulting collage-type texture intrigues and attracts artists such as Kahane, who indicates that he

⁴Timothy Pfaff, "Davies' Dynamic Duo," San Francisco Examiner, 9 April 1990, C3.

⁵Jeffrey Kahane, telephone interview, 22 April 1993.

enjoys the contrapuntal material and layering of musical lines.⁶

Frazelle exhibits tremendous variety in his compositions for the piano. In addition to solo compositions, the piano is found in his song literature and instrumental chamber works, is a featured instrument in Seascapes, and is an orchestral instrument in Playing the Miraculous Game. Frazelle's instrumentation for Prisma includes three pianos.

Features unique to Frazelle's keyboard writing include colorful resonances and expansive registration. In Refractions, Frazelle's keyboard writing evokes colorful and luminous sonorities. The high crystalline sonorities that characterize Six Bagatelles recur throughout his piano compositions. Music depicting birdsong in Blue Ridge Airs I is an example of high-registered sonorities. His sense of voicing has a unique layout with an expansive distribution of chord tones. Frazelle evokes a variety of sonorities through exploitation of the entire keyboard. Distinctive use of sustained low bass tones is a strong feature in his piano writing.

Frazelle's excellence as both pianist and composer results from the fact that the piano has always been his primary instrument. He writes idiomatically for the piano and, as Kahane stated, "Ken has an exceptional feel for

⁶Ibid.

writing for the piano. And a unique kind of sound."⁷ The piano, Kahane says, is like Frazelle's native tongue. He writes naturally for the piano, a characteristic he shares with Debussy, Chopin, and Rachmaninoff. Although extremely difficult, once mastered, it is almost always natural.⁸

Sunday at McDonald's (1993) is Frazelle's most recent work and the composer again turned to the poetry of Ammons for literary expression of his music. Sunday at McDonald's, set to five of Ammons' poems, achieves a high degree of musicianship in both the vocal and piano writing. As in Worldly Hopes, Frazelle's insight and sensitivity for expressing text are exemplary. The premiere performance of Worldly Hopes in 1986 inspired the reviewer to describe the relationship of words and music as being fused together. The same expertise in setting text to music is true for Sunday at McDonald's. Upshaw, who commissioned and performed the work, was attracted to Frazelle's songs by "their lyricism and their very sophisticated connection between the music and the texts."⁹ Upshaw indicated that Frazelle's music clearly evokes the meaning of the text. David Perkins, in a review of the performance of Sunday at

⁷Jeffrey Kahane, quoted in Gordon Sparber, " Sounds of Success," Winston-Salem Journal, 7 March 1993, C5.

⁸Jeffrey Kahane, telephone interview, 22 April 1993.

⁹Dawn Upshaw, quoted in Sparber, 7 March 1993, C5.

McDonald's, described the songs as "a lovely marriage of texts and notes."¹⁰

An attribute demonstrated in Sunday at McDonald's is Frazelle's ability to write music tailored for both performer and idiom. Upshaw continued, "Ken really understands my voice."¹¹ Comments from violinists, cellists, flutists, and pianists confirm that although Frazelle's works are at times extremely difficult, his ability to write idiomatically and for specific personalities, is a strong feature of his work.

Based on the evidence of his growth and success thus far, opportunities will continue to open up new realms of creativity for Frazelle. Possessing innate talent, he has developed his gift and expressed himself in a variety of genres. His boldness in finding new avenues of expression, his compulsion to create, and his interpretation of visual and literary ideas that he has absorbed show him to be a creative artist who is commanding attention from performers, critics, and audiences. He is certainly endeavoring to continue his high standards of composition with several new commissions including a work for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. He continues to broaden his creative output and is currently scoring the first half of a full

¹⁰David Perkins, "The Un-diva Conquers Duke," The News and Observer, 9 March 1993, E5.

¹¹Ibid.

length work, Still/Here, for Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. National and international performances of the commissioned work, for fall 1994, include the premiere at the Lyon Opera in Lyon, France, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music in New York. Almost all of Frazelle's premieres are documented on tape. Negotiations with major recording companies and some of the prominent performers who have championed his works are currently underway.

This document has exposed Frazelle's distinctive style of composition. His unique incorporation of his environment and many facets of nature, along with a wealth of practical experience can be seen in the two works expounded upon, Blue Ridge Airs I and the Sonata for Cello and Piano. Frazelle's musical achievements certainly indicate that he is in the forefront of the musical scene moving toward the next century. The negative criticism he has received is sparse and reviews have been consistently favorable. His individual approach to music embraces the past masters' works and present musical idioms and he continually grows toward an honest personal expressive means. Considering his young age, he is likely to become one of the preeminent American composers of the twenty-first century. Assuredly, he will leave his mark on the history of music.

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APPENDIX A

WORKS BY KENNETH FRAZELLESOLO PIANO

Ballade	1970
Tarantelle	1970
Bolero	1970
Pastorale	1971
Piano Sonata	1971
Piano Sonata	1972
Biafram Sketches	c. 1972
Homages to Kline, Pollack, DeKooning	c. 1972
Prelude and Fugue in C	1972-73
Mathematics in Music (2 pieces)	c. 1972-73
Piano Variations	c. 1973
Three Studies for Piano	1974-75
Fugue (After Bach's Art of the Fugue)	1976
Six Bagatelles	1976
Piano Sonata	1977
Music for a Summer Evening	1977
Fantasies for Piano	1979
Dream Pieces (19 pieces for children)	1979
Were You There? (hymn arrangement)	c. 1980
Andante Cantabile	1980
"What Child?" (Christmas Card)	1982
Various piano pieces (50) for modern dance classes	1984-85
Refractions from Prisma	1984
5 Lullabies for Colin (with drawings)	1984-85
4 Wishes	1986
Various piano teaching pieces (40 or so)	1979-87
Blue Ridge Airs I	1988
Lullabies and Birdsongs	1988
Towhee	1988
4 Lullabies	1989
A Birthday Book	1991

WORKS FOR TWO PIANOS

Music for Nash's <u>Echoes</u>	1971-74
Playing the Miraculous Game (two piano version)	1987

KEYBOARD

Canons (harpsichord or piano) 1993

PIANO AND VOICE (poet's name in parenthesis)

Six Songs from Emily Dickinson 1972
 Three Songs of Thoreau c. 1972-73
 Three Poems of Frank O'Hara 1973
 Word-Dreams (Frazelle) 1975
 Slightly Thinner Than Sight (Ammons) 1976
 Sonnet XXX (Shakespeare) 1976
 White Night (Tu Fu) 1977
 Another Song 1977
 Motets (e.e. cummings) (voice, speaker, and piano) 1977
 Fragment of e.e. cummings 1977
 Diversifications (Ammons) 1978
 Lyrics (5 piano fragments with words by Frazelle) 1979
 Two Songs from "Seascapes" (voice with
 piano reduction) (Ammons) 1980
 Worldly Hopes (Ammons) 1985
 Appalachian Songbook (text arr. by Rick Mashburn) 1989
 Sunday at McDonald's (Ammons) 1992

CHAMBER MUSIC

String Quartet 1973
 Sonata for Clarinet and Piano 1973
 Two Pieces for Winds (wind quintet) 1975
 Prelude for Oboe and Harp 1977
 Four Poems of Samuel Becket (voice and
 clarinet, harp, piano, cello) 1977
 Serenade for Flute and Harp 1983
 Piano Quintet (piano and string quartet) 1986
 Sonata for Cello and Piano 1989
 Fiddler's Galaxy (violin and piano) 1989
 String Trio 1989
 String Quartet 1990
 Clear Again (cello and piano) 1990
 Blue Ridge Airs II (solo flute with piano reduction) 1991
 Elegy for Strings (string quintet version) 1991
 Round Lines (two flutes) 1992

CHORAL

Music for "The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie" 1974
 Whispers of Heavenly Death (Whitman) (chorus
 and two pianos) 1977

ORCHESTRAL

Two Pieces for Orchestra	1974
Music for Orchestra	1978
Seascapes (voice and chamber orchestra)	1981
Prisma (chamber orchestra with designed lighting)	1983
Playing the Miraculous Game	1987
Elegy for Strings (string orchestra)	1991
Blue Ridge Airs II (flute and orchestra)	1991

THEATER WORKS

Music for Nash's <u>Echoes</u>	1971-74
Music for Shakespeare's <u>Henry IV, Part I</u> (chamber orchestra)	1973
Scores for two student films	1973
Music for Ibsen's <u>Hedda Gabler</u>	1974

All scores are in manuscript except for two orchestral works. Peer Southern Concert Music in New York published Playing the Miraculous Game in 1988 and will be publishing Elegy for Strings in 1994.

Inquiries for purchasing copies of Frazelle's published and unpublished compositions can be directed to:

Peer Southern Concert Music
810 Seventh Avenue, Ninth Floor
New York, New York, 10019
Phone: 212 265-3910

APPENDIX B

The following sketches are excerpts from Kenneth Frazelle's compositional sketchbook and are reproduced by permission.



Handwritten musical notation with annotations:

- piano* - yellow disruption (circled)
- deep lapping*
- Notes with a circled hf and a sharp sign $\#$.
- Annotations: *not the real a*, *cell.*, *linked*.
- Bottom annotation: *low expects F-gate*

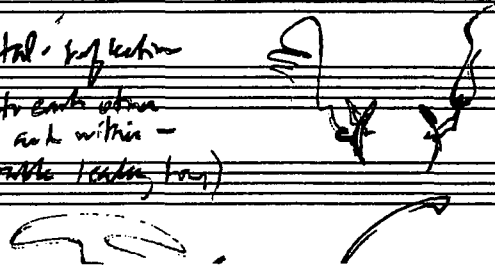
Handwritten musical notation with annotations:

- Notes with a circled a and p .
- Annotation: *att* (circled).
- Annotation: *low*.

discrete - primitive
 undulating - gestures have
 always been here but
 the format (crystalline) must
 carry these.

pivotal - reflection
 (streams above
 each within -
 double reading loop)

in
 thinking -
 " - from books
 down keyboard)



A page of handwritten musical notation on ten staves. The notation is highly abstract and includes various symbols and scribbles. On the second staff, there are some faint markings that appear to be '1. / m'. On the third staff, there are markings that look like 'b2' and '8'. On the fourth staff, there are markings that look like '2' and 'b2'. On the fifth staff, there are markings that look like '2' and 'b2'. On the sixth staff, there are markings that look like '2' and 'b2'. On the seventh staff, there are markings that look like '2' and 'b2'. On the eighth staff, there are markings that look like '2' and 'b2'. On the ninth staff, there are markings that look like '2' and 'b2'. On the tenth staff, there are markings that look like '2' and 'b2'. The notation is very dense and includes many vertical lines and scribbles that obscure some of the underlying structure.

11-9-55

Conrad Frazelle