

A Walk in the Mountains

Colorful Solos for Lever or Pedal Harp

by

Kathryn Cater

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Cover Photo: Scott Cater waits for Kathryn Cater to catch up and wonders if she will ever put her camera away. Horton Pass, Wallowa Mountains.

Cover Design: Karen McGarrett

Notes for "A Walk in the Mountains"

If you have the opportunity to engage your audience's imaginations with storytelling as you play, here are some thoughts for describing these pieces, and a few performance notes.

General performance notes: Harmonics are written where they are played.

Chords can be rolled or broken as it suits the piece, though I have made some suggestions.

I hope you will make the phrases sing, and that may sometimes mean putting away the metronome, creating your own dynamics, and occasionally disagreeing with my notations.

1) Up the Mountain Trail

This piece is about a trek up a steep trail to a high mountain pass. The pace is bright; you are so excited to be here, on this day, in this amazing place! You pause to look back as you gain elevation and the valley drops away, but then you see top ahead, and your steps quicken.

Reaching the pass, the view of the wilderness beyond takes your breath away:

mountains, streams, lakes, valleys: the earth sculpted in unimaginable shapes and colors.

Stop and be there.

But not too long; there are miles to go before you reach a place to set up camp.

Down the other side!

2) Light Through the Trees

I was walking on a wooded mountainside with a young poet, and he sighed that he was struggling to find the words to describe the light through the trees.

Words that came to my mind were obvious: filtered, dappled. So I wrote a song instead.

This piece has an intentional halting, filtered, dappled quality. Play it with intimacy.

3) Huckleberries

Cute, fast and loud. Memorize this one to slip in when you get bored on a gig. It's sure to please someone in your audience. Not too long, this could be a nice encore number or recital piece.

4) Tickle Creek

Tiny streams cross the trail, providing a welcome spot to sit in the shade, cool our feet, refill our water bottles and enjoy the wildflowers.

This piece feels intimate and playful to me. Imagine sitting on a mossy bank and dangling your toes in the icy water; hear it trickling, tickling down the mountainside.

5) Rain on the Lake

You have come to a high mountain lake, and a brief summer shower moves through.

You take shelter as the wind picks up and the first drops fall.

At first it's just a light steady beat of the rain, rings spread and overlap on the surface of the lake.

The wind picks up, the trees dance, and little waves move rhythmically across the water, slapping at the shore. The shower builds... maybe even you hear thunder far away, but just as suddenly it slows and the wind pushes it across the mountains.

Sunbeams push through the clouds and light up the mist rising from the lake.

Random heavy drops fall from the trees, while the rain slows, and stops.

6) High Meadows

You climb the mountain through tall trees until you come out into a wide meadow full of wildflowers. The sun is bright and warm; a light breeze moves the grasses.

You become aware of the insects living here: the butterflies, bees and crickets.

Birds hop around in the low bushes. This is a dreamy place, yet buzzing with a busy rhythm.

7) Fire Spell

Have you ever stared into a fire and been lost in the beauty? Day's end, you sink into a trance in front of your campfire: a fire induced hypnosis. The flames leap and dance, embers pulse and glow, sparks crackle and fly.

Keep the 16th notes light, paying attention to the melody. Accented 16th notes are part of the melody. The main theme is shared between the hands, starting in m. 9.

This piece will be fairly easy to memorize, and then play it dynamically with conviction!

I tend to play this about 140-145 per quarter note, and slow it down a bit measures 25-37, and take measures 38-41 like a cadenza – playing what comes naturally.

8) Afterglow

This piece is made of short phrases; breathe in, breathe out. Let the strings vibrate in-between.

The last light fades from the sky, the air cools. Fish risings make ringed patterns on the lake. Heard: crickets, frogs, the sounds of the lake, birds singing vespers.

Or... you could re-title this piece to make it fit a different story. I had many excellent suggestions for the title for this piece.

9) The Stars Come Out

Crystalline, sparkling, shimmering... as the sky darkens, stars begin to appear. You look out through the window of your tent, listening to night sounds and watch as the constellations take shape above you.

This moment you will keep forever.

I use breath marks to suggest a slight pause to let the phrase breathe. You may choose to allow pauses for other phrases as suits your mood and style. I use the term rubato to encourage intentional tempo shifts for an expressive performance.

10) Sunrise on the Mountain

First dawn is a whispered grey light. The mountains darken, backlit by the rising sun. The white brightness grows and spreads, finding passes to spill through, sending shafts of light. The mountain peak is crowned, just for an instant, with beams too brilliant for the eyes.

The sun rises over the mountain, and the sky melds into all of its blues.

The performer is urged to be very expressive, using rubato, tempo changes and dynamics as it feels right, letting the phrases command the performance.

Up the Mountain Trail

Kathryn Cater

♩ = 152-164

brightly

Chord symbols: F, B \flat , F, F, B \flat , F, d, B \flat , C7, F, d, B \flat , F, C7, F, d, B \flat , B \flat , F.