



AMERICAN
SKETCHES

KRISTIN LEE

John NOVACEK (b. 1964)

Four Rags (1999) * [9:58]

- 1 I. Intoxication [1:53]
- 2 II. 4th Street Drag [4:01]
- 3 III. Cockles [2:33]
- 4 IV. Full Stride Ahead [1:29]

George GERSHWIN (1898–1937)

- 5 But Not for Me (1930) (arr. Jeremy Ajani JORDAN, b. 1989) * [2:23]

James Louis 'J.J.' JOHNSON (1924–2001)

- 6 Lament (1954) (arr. J.A. JORDAN) * [5:07]

Scott JOPLIN (1868–1917)

- 7 The Entertainer (1902) (arr. J.A. JORDAN) * [2:19]

Amy BEACH (1867–1944)

- 8 Romance for Violin and Piano, Op. 23 (1893) † [5:52]

Henry 'Harry' Thacker BURLEIGH (1866–1949)

Southland Sketches (1916) * [11:05]

- 9 I. Andante [2:34]
- 10 II. Adagio ma non troppo [2:28]
- 11 III. Allegretto grazioso [3:18]
- 12 IV. Allegro [2:45]

	Jonathan RAGONESE (b. 1989)	
[13]	non-poem 4 (2017) (arr. for violin and piano, 2018) *	[6:29]
	Kevin PUTS (b. 1972)	
[14]	Four Airs: IV. Air (previously called <i>Aria</i>) (2000) *	[4:29]
	Thelonious MONK (1917–1982)	
[15]	Monk’s Mood (1943–44) *	[5:06]
	Total Timing:	[53:05]

Kristin Lee *violin*

* **Jeremy Ajani Jordan** *piano* † **Jun Cho** *piano*

Violin made by Gennaro Gagliano in Naples, Italy, 1759

Publishers:

Novacek *Four Rags*: © 1999 J. Novacek Music Co. Los Angeles

‘J.J.’ Johnson *Lament*: © 1954 (Renewed 1982) SCREEN GEMS-EMI MUSIC INC.

Burleigh *Southland Sketches*: © 1916 G. Records & Co., Inc.

Ragonese *non-poem 4*: © 2022 Jonathan Ragonese

Puts *Four Airs*: © 2004 Apreto Press (BMI)

Monk *Monk’s Mood*: © 1946 (Renewed) by Embassy Music Corporation (EMI) and
Music Sales Corporation (ASCAP)

American Sketches

My inspiration for *American Sketches* lies in the celebration of differences. It is the differences of people, environment, and encounters that ignite our curiosity, fuel our motivation, and inspire our creativity. By accepting and appreciating these differences, we pave the way for changes to our society. Whilst adopting change is difficult for many people, it is a critical component in our ever-evolving world, particularly within the musical communities.

The history of American music is a great example of this notion. From the Indigenous sounds of the Native Americans to the influences of Western Europe and Africa, the American sound merged and evolved into what we know as Ragtime, Appalachian Folk, Jazz, and so much more. The variety of musical styles represents the diverse culture of America, showcasing the beauty of individual expression and the celebration of American history.

Henry ‘Harry’ Thacker Burleigh (1866–1949) introduced the complex but soulful tunes of American Spirituals to the classical realm, and inspired composers like Antonín Dvořák as he was exploring the Americas. In his *Southland Sketches*, Burleigh embodies a similar approach by applying his own beautiful tunes in the violin with simple

but gorgeous harmonies in the piano accompaniment.

American music would not be represented without the innovation of the giants like **Scott Joplin** (1868–1917), **George Gershwin** (1898–1937), **J.J. Johnson** (1924–2001), and **Thelonious Monk** (1917–1982). Each of these luminaries left a mark on the musical landscape, revolutionising their respective sounds: Joplin pioneering ragtime, Gershwin applying jazz idioms to classical compositions, Johnson embracing bebop with the trombone, and Monk fearlessly challenging and redefining the jazz traditions.

In recognition of the importance of musical evolution, I have included *Four Rags* by **John Novacek** (b. 1964) which pays homage to Scott Joplin’s iconic style, and *non-poem 4* by **Jonathan Ragonese** (b. 1989), which represents the jazz idiom through written compositions and improvised sections. These two pieces stand out for their technical intricacy, yet they also offer a vibrant and impassioned musical journey.

I feel incredibly fortunate to have collaborated with Jeremy Ajani Jordan for the majority of this album. His unparalleled ability to play both written and improvised

music sets him apart from any other musician I have worked with. I have to make note of the fact that Jeremy improvised through the recording sessions for the arrangements to Gershwin, Joplin, Johnson, and Monk. For those of you who are curious about sheet music for these works, I wish you the very best of luck since it lives in Jeremy's genius mind!

I also owe it to Jeremy for giving me the courage to record *Monk's Mood*. He introduced me to Monk's music, and although I was instantly drawn to his sound, I was uncertain if I could truly capture Monk's style on the violin. In this work, my goal was to emulate the vulnerable yet poignant long tones of John Coltrane's saxophone performance alongside Monk from the iconic 1957 *Live from Carnegie Hall* recording. Thankfully, the outcome has exceeded my expectations, making this perhaps my favourite track on the album.

The lyrical works on the album are represented by *Air* by **Kevin Puts** (b. 1972) and *Romance, Op. 23* by **Amy Beach** (1867–1944). I've woven these works within the tracks to encapsulate the ultimate essence of music – the emotional connection. Whilst we embrace the diverse sounds and the evolutionary changes, I truly believe that connecting with people on an emotional level always remains a constant throughout music history.

It's been quite a journey in bringing this album to life, especially since this is my very first curated album. Through recording and creating *American Sketches*, I've gained a voice and better understanding of myself. With the courage to share this album with the world, I've gained boldness and trust within myself. I'm embracing the changes that this process has bestowed upon me and eagerly anticipating how I will continue to evolve, bringing changes to my musical life.

Thank you for listening.

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Kristin Lee *violin*

Kristin Lee is a violinist of remarkable versatility who enjoys a vibrant career as a soloist, chamber musician, educator, and artistic director. 'Her technique is flawless, and she has a sense of melodic shaping that reflects an artistic maturity,' writes the St Louis Post-Dispatch, and The Strad reports, 'She seems entirely comfortable with stylistic diversity, which is one criterion that separates the run-of-the-mill instrumentalists from true artists.'

Lee has appeared with leading orchestras including The Philadelphia Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony, Hawai'i Symphony, Hong Kong Philharmonic, Ural Philharmonic Orchestra, Korean Broadcasting Symphony Orchestra, and The National Symphony Orchestra of the Dominican Republic, among others. She has performed on the world's finest concert stages, including Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Ravinia Festival, Louvre Museum, and Korea's Kumho Art Gallery. She is a longtime member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and is a founding artistic director of Emerald City

Music, a chamber music series that presents authentically unique concert experiences in Seattle and Olympia, Washington. An advocate for living composers, Kristin Lee has collaborated with many of today's prominent composers, including Vivian Fung, Andy Akiho, Patrick Castillo, Jakub Ciupinski, Shobana Raghavan, Steve Coleman, Jeremy Ajani Jordan, Michael Stephen Brown and Anthony Tidd, among others.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Lee moved to the United States and holds a Master's Degree from The Juilliard School. Her honours include the Avery Fischer Career Grant and top prizes in the Walter W. Naumburg Competition and the Astral Artists National Auditions. In addition to her prolific performance career, Lee is a devoted educator, and is an Assistant Professor of Violin at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Lee's violin was crafted in Naples, Italy in 1759 by Gennaro Gagliano and is generously loaned to her by Paul and Linda Gridley.

violinistkristinlee.com



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Jeremy Ajani Jordan *piano*

Critically acclaimed as ‘a clear technical virtuoso’, ‘a rare talent’, and ‘a true Wunderkind’ (*Chicago Sun Times*), Chicago-born Jordan burst onto the music scene at age nine playing Beethoven’s *Piano Concerto No. 1* in a televised performance. Jordan went on to appear on the acclaimed radio programme *From The Top* and *From The Top: Live from Carnegie Hall*, performing Liszt. Since then he has made his solo Carnegie Hall début performing Chopin, Liszt, Schubert, and Wagner.

After winning the 2006 Steinway Concerto Competition, Jordan delivered acclaimed performances with the Ars Viva Symphony Orchestra and concerto performances and recordings with the Chicago Sinfonietta and the Czech National Symphony Orchestra. Following studies at The Juilliard School, Jordan received undergraduate and graduate degrees on the Van Cliburn and Irene Diamond scholarships.

Acclaimed for his virtuosic deliveries of his Liszt/Horowitz, Wagner, and Saint-Saëns transcriptions, Jordan has also performed to thunderous applause in appearances at the United Nations Arts Council, the American Liszt Society, Concertgebouw, Tokyo Opera City, Prague’s Rudolfinum, and Chicago’s Ravinia Festival. Jordan has also performed in numerous music theatre productions with artists and ensembles including the Cleveland Symphony, The Philadelphia Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony, Audra McDonald, DeeDee Bridgewater, Phyllicia Rashad and Andy Einhorn.

Jordan continues to compose solo piano music, chamber music, orchestral music, and electronic music. His compositions have debuted on National Public Radio and have received world premières at New York’s National Sawdust and Ireland’s Sounds from a Safe Harbour.

jeremyajanijordan.com



Jun Cho *piano*

Pianist Jun Cho is a versatile musician who enjoys a multidimensional career as a soloist, chamber musician and educator. He has performed in many of the major venues throughout the United States, South Korea and Europe.

An avid collaborator, he frequently performs with musicians including Itzhak Perlman, Philippe Quint, Stefan Jackiw, Randall Goosby, and J.P. Jofre. Additionally, he is a regularly featured pianist of the Pedro Giraud Tango Quartet, the latest recipient of the Latin Grammy Award, performing an array of Tango music in some of New York's popular clubs such as The Iridium and Joe's Pub.

As an educator, Cho holds a position at Syracuse University as an assistant professor of piano. In addition, he is an artist-faculty member at the Perlman Music Program, and the studio pianist of violinist Itzhak Perlman at The Juilliard School. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees at The Juilliard School, and doctoral degree from the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University.



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Produced by **Kristin Lee** and **Ryan Streber**

Recorded by **Ryan Streber**

Edited and mastered by **Edwin Kenzon Huet** and **Ryan Streber**
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Album cover and page 8 by **Kevin Hsu, 12/34 LAB**

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Page 11 by **Jun Cho** • Pages 12 and 14 by **Victor Caccese**

Artwork by **David Murphy** (FHR)

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