

# IAN FREEBAIRN - SMITH

March 10, 1994

Dear Ivan,

In December of 1992 my wife and I had a meeting with an English teacher named Elizabeth Teare at the Harvard-Westlake School in Los Angeles. She is a summertime resident of western Montana, and when I told her I was reading Wallace Stegner's "Angle of Repose" she asked me if I'd ever heard of you. When I said that I hadn't, she recommended that if I wanted to get into your work, "Dancing at the Rascal Fair" would be a good place to start. I bought a copy, and spent a month of unforgettable evenings with it. I found it to be one of the most involving stories I've ever read. You have a rare ability to tell a story in the most direct and uncomplicated way, with such beautiful, literary prose at the same time. I was wrapped up in the saga of the McKaskills and the Barclays, grinning over alliterations and unexpected phrases. You must love those Montana Rockies, because you saved your most vivid and original metaphors to describe them.

Maybe the saga of Angus and Anna touched me so deeply because of my father's stories of his emigration by boat from England to America in the early part of this century, settling in the Pacific Northwest, and marrying a young woman from Canada whose parents had emigrated from Cambridge and settled in Vancouver. Whatever the reasons, I am grateful to you for giving me such wonderful experiences, not only in "Rascal Fair," but in "Winter Brothers," "Ride with Me, Mariah Montana," and all the others. I guess you could say I've become a fan.

I am a composer by trade, working in film and television, and also writing concert works, which help to remind me of my original reasons for all the study and practice. When I sat down last winter to write some audition pieces for my film scoring reel, the idea came to me to write a piece that reflects my feelings about the Two Country, and especially the Two Medicine River. The inspiration comes entirely from what you have given me in your writing — I've never seen that part of Montana. I've been thinking about sending you a copy for almost a year now, and have just now gotten up the courage to do so. I won't try to describe in words what I was trying to evoke in the music, I'll let the music do that. If you find it enjoyable, consider it a small repayment for the pleasure you have given me in your writing. If you can find time, I would love to know how you feel about it.

Gratefully,



11 April '94

Dear Ian Freebairn-Smith--

I inherited the usual Scottish musical talent, which is to say close to nil, but to my nonetheless appreciative ear "A River Called Two Medicine" sounds just dandy. I'm gratified that my books gave rise to it. I read somewhere once that all other arts aspire toward music, and I thought that sounded about right, too.

Excuse my slowness in replying, as I'm holed up at work on the next novel, set in Montana in the Depression, during the building of Fort Peck Dam on the Missouri River. Quite a bit east and prairie-ish, from my Two Medicine country, but a story to be told. I note that you do some work in films; the one of my books bought for filming, although there's no discernible motion in that direction, was my first novel, The Sea Runners. So, while it's not clear that I'll ever need a film score...

I should pass along, too, that out of the blue, the phone rang recently and it was an Ian Doig from Calgary, name-bewitched.

I hope your own work is going well, and truly, great thanks for the tape of "A River Called Two Medicine."

*Alan*