ABSTRACT

Title of Document: INNOVATION IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN PIANO MUSIC

Shelby Leigh Sender, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2013

Directed By: Professor Bradford Gowen, School of Music

As traditional methods and goals of composition were challenged in the twentieth century, American composers played a critical role in the development of classical piano music. This dissertation focuses on the diversity of innovation that led to the evolution of classical music written for the piano. These innovations generally fall into two categories: musical construction and extended techniques of sound production.

Charles Ives and George Gershwin successfully merged elements of American popular culture with classical music. Ives included American hymn tunes in his First Piano Sonata and Gershwin’s Rhapsody in Blue was one of the earliest attempts to fuse jazz and classical music. Similarly, the piano rags of William Bolcom paved the way for the acceptance of ragtime in the concert hall.

In his Piano Sonata, Aaron Copland showcases his motivic method of composition. Each movement is largely composed of small motives that expand
and create a larger shape. Leon Kirchner’s *Piano Sonata No. 3* is an example of idiomatic piano writing in the 21st century, recalling compositions of the late 19th century.

Initiating the expansion of piano sonorities were American composers Henry Cowell and John Cage, who created what are now known as “extended techniques.” * Aeolian Harp was Cowell’s first piece written exclusively for “string piano,” a term which describes his technique of strumming and plucking the strings. Cowell’s invention paved the way for the “prepared piano,” an invention by John Cage that transforms the tonal range of the instrument. George Crumb’s monumental two-volume work for amplified piano, *Makrokosmos I & II*, further expands the possibilities of the instrument to create an unprecedented sound world. Frederic Rzewski’s set of folk-inspired pieces, *North American Ballads*, fuses American history, American folk music, and extended techniques with classical composition.

This dissertation comprises three piano recitals that were performed from 2011 to 2013 in Gildenhorn Recital Hall of the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center of the University of Maryland. The recordings are documented on compact discs that are housed within the University of Maryland Library System.
Innovation in Twentieth-Century American Piano Music

Shelby Leigh Sender

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts 2013

Advisory Committee:

Professor Bradford Gowen, Chair
Professor R. Gordon Kelly
Professor Donald Manildi
Professor Rita Sloan
Professor Mayron Tsong
Table of Contents

Recital 1 – October 30, 2011          Disc 1
  Program..........................................................1

Recital 2 – September 9, 2012         Disc 2
  Program..........................................................2

Recital 3 – March 30, 2013            Disc 3
  Program..........................................................3

Track List, Recital 1.................................4

Track List, Recital 2.................................5

Track List, Recital 3.................................6

Bibliography......................................................7
Dissertation Recital 1
October 30, 2011
2:00 PM
Gildenhorn Recital Hall

Rhapsody in Blue
George Gershwin
Elizabeth Brown, Piano

Graceful Ghost Rag
William Bolcom

The Poltergeist

Intermission

Aeolian Harp
Henry Cowell

The Banshee

Makrokosmos I
George Crumb

1. Primeval Sounds (Genesis I) (Cancer)
2. Proteus (Pisces)
3. Pastorale (from the Kingdom of Atlantis, ca. 10,000 B.C.) (Taurus)
4. Crucifixus (Capricorn)
5. The Phantom Gondolier (Scorpio)
6. Night-Spell I (Sagittarius)
7. Music of Shadows (for Aeolian Harp) (Libra)
8. The Magic Circle of Infinity (Moto Perpetuo) (Leo)
9. The Abyss of Time (Virgo)
10. Spring-Fire (Aries)
11. Dream Images (Love-Death Music) (Gemini)
12. Spiral Galaxy (Aquarius)
Dissertation Recital 2
September 9, 2012
2:00 PM
Gildenhorn Recital Hall

Piano Sonata

1. Molto moderato
2. Vivace
3. Andante sostenuto

Piano Sonata No. 3, The Forbidden

Intermission

North American Ballads

3. Down by the Riverside
4. Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues

First Piano Sonata

2a First Verse: Allegro moderato
2b Second Verse: "In the Inn": Allegro
Dissertation Recital 3
March 30, 2013
2:00 PM
Gildenhorn Recital Hall

Sonatas and Interludes

John Cage

Sonata I
Sonata II
Sonata III
Sonata IV
First Interlude
Sonata V
Sonata VI
Sonata VII
Sonata VIII
Second Interlude
Third Interlude
Sonata IX
Sonata X
Sonata XI
Sonata XII
Fourth Interlude
Sonata XIII
Sonata XIV
Sonata XV
Sonata XVI

Intermission

George Crumb

Makrokosmos II

1. Morning Music (Genesis II) (Cancer)
2. The Mystic Chord (Saggitarius)
3. Rain-DeathVariations (Pisces)
4. Twin Suns (Doppelgänger aus der Ewigkeit) (Gemini)
5. Ghost-Nocturne: for the Druids of Stonehenge (Night-Spell II) (Virgo)
6. Gargoyles (Taurus)
7. Tora! Tora! Tora! (Cadenza Apocalittica) (Scorpio)
8. A Prophecy of Nostradamus (Aries)
9. Cosmic Wind (Libra)
10. Voices from "Corona Borealis" (Aquarius)
11. Litany of the Galactic Bells (Leo)
12. Agnus Dei (Capricorn)
Dissertation Recital 1 Track List

George Gershwin

[1] Rhapsody in Blue

William Bolcom


Henry Cowell

[5] The Banshee

George Crumb

Makrokosmos I

[6] Primeval Sounds (Genesis I) (Cancer)
[7] Proteus (Pisces)
[8] Pastorale (from the Kingdom of Atlantis, ca. 10,000 B.C.) (Taurus)
[9] Crucifixus (Capricorn)
[10] The Phantom Gondolier (Scorpio)
[12] Music of Shadows (for Aeolian Harp) (Libra)
[13] The Magic Circle of Infinity (Moto Perpetuo) (Leo)
[14] The Abyss of Time (Virgo)
[16] Dream Images (Love-Death Music) (Gemini)
[17] Spiral Galaxy (Aquarius)
Dissertation Recital 2 Track List

Aaron Copland

Piano Sonata

[1] Molto moderato  
[2] Vivace  

Leon Kirchner

[4] Piano Sonata No. 3

Henry Cowell

North American Ballads

[5] Down by the Riverside  

Charles Ives

First Piano Sonata

[8] Second Verse: "In the Inn": Allegro
Dissertation Recital 3 Track List

**John Cage**

Sonatas and Interludes

[1] Sonata I  
[2] Sonata II  
[3] Sonata III  
[4] Sonata IV  
[5] First Interlude  
[6] Sonata V  
[7] Sonata VI  
[8] Sonata VII  
[9] Sonata VIII  
[10] Second Interlude  
[12] Sonata IX  
[13] Sonata X  
[14] Sonata XI  
[15] Sonata XII  
[16] Fourth Interlude  
[17] Sonata XIII  
[18] Sonata XIV and XV  
[19] Sonata XVI

**George Crumb**

Makrokosmos II

[20] Morning Music (Genesis II) (Cancer)  
[21] The Mystic Chord (Saggittarius)  
[22] Rain-Death Variations (Pisces)  
[23] Twin Suns (Doppelgänger aus der Ewigkeit) (Gemini)  
[25] Gargoyles (Taurus)  
[26] Tora! Tora! Tora! (Cadenza Apocalittica) (Scorpio)  
[27] A Prophecy of Nostradamus (Aries)  
[28] Cosmic Wind (Libra)  
[29] Voices from "Corona Borealis" (Aquarius)  
[30] Litany of the Galactic Bells (Leo)  
[31] Agnus Dei (Capricorn)
Bibliography


Chase, Gilbert, ed. The American Composer Speaks. Louisiana: Louisiana State University, 1969


