

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

© Copyright by
Shelby Sender
2013

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

Aaron Copland

1. Molto moderato

2. Vivace

3. Andante sostenuto

Piano Sonata No. 3, *The Forbidden*

Leon Kirchner

Intermission

North American Ballads

Henry Cowell

3. Down by the Riverside

4. Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues

First Piano Sonata

Charles Ives

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

Makrokosmos II

George Crumb

- 1. Morning Music (Genesis II) (Cancer)*
- 2. The Mystic Chord (Saggitarius)*
- 3. Rain-Death Variations (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

- [2] Graceful Ghost Rag
- [3] The Poltergeist

Henry Cowell

- [4] Aeolian Harp
- [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)
- [11] Night-Spell I (Sagittarius)
- [12] Music of Shadows (for Aeolian Harp) (Libra)
- [13] The Magic Circle of Infinity (Moto Perpetuo) (Leo)
- [14] The Abyss of Time (Virgo)
- [15] Spring-Fire (Aries)
- [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
- [3] Andante sostenuto

Leon Kirchner

- [4] Piano Sonata No. 3

Henry Cowell

North American Ballads

- [5] Down by the Riverside
- [6] Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues

Charles Ives

First Piano Sonata

- [7] First Verse: Allegro moderato
- [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
- [11] Third 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 (Saggitarius)
- [22] Rain-Death Variations (Pisces)
- [23] Twin Suns (Doppelgänger aus der Ewigkeit) (Gemini)
- [24] Ghost-Nocturne: for the Druids of Stonehenge (Night-Spell II) (Virgo)
- [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

- Bass, W. Richard, Jr. "Pitch Structure in George Crumb's *Makrokosmos*, Volumes I and II." PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 1987.
- Bunger, Richard. *The Well-Prepared Piano*. San Pedro: Litoral Arts Press, 1981
- Burge, David. *Twentieth-Century Piano Music*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1990
- Chase, Gilbert, ed. *The American Composer Speaks*. Louisiana: Louisiana State University, 1969
- Cowell, Henry, ed. *American Composers on American Music*. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1962
- Gann, Kyle. *American Music in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1997.
- Kirkpatrick, John, ed. *Charles E. Ives: Memos*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1972
- Yu, Yueng. "A Style Analysis of William Bolcom's Complete Rags for Piano" Diss. University of Cincinnati, 2007. Print.