

## ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: TWENTIETH CENTURY VARIATIONS ON  
BORROWED THEMES

Kyung Nim Ko, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2005

Dissertation directed by: Professor Santiago Rodriguez  
Department of Music

Mergers and acquisitions are words that are usually associated with the modern business world. Such joint efforts toward improvement, however, existed long before our time, in the form of musical partnerships. It was not unusual for composers to share in each other's works, borrowing themes and recreating them to generate new meanings; in the process, new masterpieces were often created. My performance project, *Twentieth Century Variations on Borrowed Themes*, explores the fruits of such labor.

The main objective of this project is to demonstrate how certain composers of the twentieth century have taken famous themes and used them to create variations, imbuing their own creative ideas, musical styles and pianistic challenges.

This objective was accomplished by performing three recorded public recitals. These programs consisted of early to late twentieth century pieces that are based on borrowed themes, either in theme and variations form, fantasia form, paraphrase form, or transformatory variation form. I have selected the pieces based on their artistic merits and technical challenges, thus allowing me to grow as a pianist and artist. In addition, I wanted to choose some pieces that are rarely performed, as I believe the public delights in hearing unfamiliar gems.

The first recital consisted of the music of two legendary pianists: *Variations on a Theme of Chopin* by Rachmaninoff and *Goldberg Variations* by Bach/Busoni.

The second program featured Grand Fantasy on Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* by Earl Wild, *Sonatina No. 6 (Fantasy on Bizet's "Carmen")* by Busoni, and *Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini*, op.43 by Rachmaninoff.

Some unusual and seldom-performed pieces, as well as a familiar favorite, were spotlighted in the third recital. The pieces performed on this program were John Rea's *Twenty-one Transformal Variations on the "Kinderszenen" by Robert Schumann (Las Meninas)*, Muczynski's *Desperate Measures (Paganini Variations)*, Busoni's *Elegie No. 4 (Turandot's room)*, and *Rhapsodie Espagnole* by Liszt/Buson.

These composers artfully breathed new life into the material borrowed from others, and in the process, the "borrowed" themes became undoubtedly and uniquely their own music.

TWENTIETH CENTURY VARIATIONS ON BORROWED THEMES

by

Kyung Nim Ko

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  
2005

Advisory Committee:

Professor Santiago Rodriguez, Chair/Advisor  
Professor Larissa Dedova  
Dr. Cleveland Page  
Dr. Robert Provine  
Dr. S. Robert Ramsey

## **Program I**

Variations on a theme of Chopin, Op. 22.....Sergei Rachmaninoff  
(1873-1943)

Goldberg Variations BWV 988.....Bach / Busoni  
(1685-1750)(1866-1924)

## Program II

Grand Fantasy on Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* (1976).....Earl Wild  
(b. 1915)

Sonatina No. 6.....Ferruccio Busoni  
(Fantasy on Bizet's *Carmen*) (1866-1924)

Rhapsody on a Theme by Paganini, Op. 43.....Sergei Rachmaninoff  
(1873-1943)

### Program III

Las Meninas: Twenty-one transformal variations.....John Rea  
on the *Kinderszenen* by Robert Schumann (1991) (b. 1944)

Desperate Measures (1994).....Robert Muczynski  
(Paganini Variations) (b. 1929)

Elegies: Seven New Piano Pieces.....Ferruccio Busoni  
No. 4 – Turandot’s room (1866-1924)

Rhapsodie Espagnole.....Liszt / Busoni  
(1811-1886) (1866-1924)

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## Twentieth century variations on borrowed themes

by Ko, Kyung Nim, D.M.A., University of Maryland, College Park, 2005; AAT 3192697

### Abstract (Summary)

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