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AARON COPLAND'S PIANO FANTASY, A LECTURE RECITAL, TOGETHER
WITH THREE RECITALS OF SELECTED WORKS

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

By

Michael Lee Rickman, B. Mus., M. Mus.

Denton, Texas

August, 1977

JLR

Rickman, Michael Lee, Aaron Copland's Piano Fantasy, A Lecture Recital, Together with Three Recitals. Doctor of Musical Arts (Piano Performance), August, 1977, 16 pp., 11 illustrations, bibliography, 10 titles.

The lecture recital was given June 20, 1977. Copland's treatment of the fantasy concept was discussed along with compositional techniques used in the Piano Fantasy. The Piano Fantasy was performed.

In addition to the lecture recital, three public solo recitals were performed.

The first solo recital, performed on March 17, 1975, consisted of works by Mozart and Ravel.

The second solo recital, performed on November 17, 1975, included works by Beethoven, Bartók, and Brahms.

The third solo recital, performed on April 11, 1977, consisted of works by Beethoven and Chopin.

All four programs were recorded on magnetic tape and are filed, along with the written version of the lecture recital, as part of the dissertation.

Tape recordings of all performances submitted as
dissertation requirements are on deposit in the North Texas
State University Library.

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North Texas State University
School of Music
presents

Michael Rickman

in a

Graduate Piano Recital

Monday, March 17, 1975

8:15 p.m.

Recital Hall

PROGRAM

I

Fantasy in C Minor, K. 475 W. A. Mozart
Sonata in C Minor, K. 457
Allegro
Adagio
Molto Allegro

II

Le tombeau de Couperin Maurice Ravel
Prélude
Fugue
Forlane
Rigaudon
Menuet
Toccata

*Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts*

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY PRINTING OFFICE, DENTON, TEXAS

North Texas State University
School of Music
presents

Michael Rickman

in a

Graduate Piano Recital

Monday, November 17, 1975 5:00 p.m. Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Sechs Variationen, Op. 34..... Beethoven

Sonata, 1926..... Bartók
Allegro moderato
Sostenuto e pesante
Allegro molto

INTERMISSION

Sonata, Op. 5.....Brahms
Allegro maestoso
Andante espressivo
Scherzo-Allegro energico
Intermezzo (Rückblick) - Andante molto
Finale - Allegro moderato ma rubato

*Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree Doctor of Musical Arts*

North Texas State University
School of Music
presents

Michael Rickman

in a

Graduate Piano Recital

Monday, April 11, 1977 8:15 p.m. Recital Hall

PROGRAM

Sonata in C Minor, Op. 111 Beethoven
Maestoso; Allegro con brio ed appassionato
Arietta: Adagio molto semplice e cantabile

INTERMISSION

Préludes, Op. 28 Chopin

*Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts*

North Texas State University

School Of Music

Presents

Michael Rickman

In A

Graduate Lecture Recital

On

Aaron Copland's

Piano Fantasy



Monday, June 20, 1977

5:00 p.m.

Recital Hall

Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts

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AARON COPLAND'S PIANO FANTASY

The fantasy has seen many changes since its origin in the instrumental and keyboard music of the sixteenth century. The earliest specimens are characterized by strict imitative counterpoint, the later examples by a type of improvisatory writing with no particular formal plan. In the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, it is usual to see extensive virtuosic elements, figurations of all kinds, and sudden changes in harmony. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the fantasy developed into a more sectional structure, consisting of contrasting moods and themes and shifting tonal areas. Within the twentieth century, innovations in musical composition merit an examination of a significant modern work, the Piano Fantasy of Aaron Copland. This study will explore Copland's treatment of the fantasy concept.

Aaron Copland is one of America's most significant musicians, not only because of his highly original work in composition, but also because of his books, articles, and lectures on music. His interest in the promotion of contemporary music has been tireless. Copland, born November 14, 1900, in New York, did not have the background to point to his success as a musician. His parents, who were Lithuanian Jews, had moved to this country in the latter half of the

nineteenth century.¹ They provided piano lessons for each of their five children. His sister was responsible for the young Aaron's first piano instruction, but later there was piano study with Victor Wittgenstein and Clarence Adler. In 1917 theory lessons began with Rubin Goldmark, pointing to Copland's strong interests in composition. While attending the Fontainebleau School of Music in France in 1921, he met the now famous pedagogue, Nadia Boulanger. Following her to Paris after the close of that summer school session, he studied theory, orchestration, and composition with her for the next three years. At the completion of his studies just before his return to the United States, Boulanger asked Copland to write something for organ which she might use on her forthcoming tour to the United States. Copland's Symphony for Organ and Orchestra was premiered by her in January, 1925, with Walter Damrosch conducting the New York Symphony. Koussevitsky and the Boston Symphony Orchestra gave the second performance one month later.

Shortly after his return to this country, financial difficulties which Copland experienced were solved by the support of a generous patron. Additionally, he received the Guggenheim Fellowship in 1925 and in 1926. Many other honors and awards followed: the Pulitzer Prize (1945), the

¹Julia Smith, Aaron Copland (New York, 1955), p. 11.

Academy Award for The Heiress, and awards from the New York Music Critics Circle, to name only a few.

Copland has experimented with and composed in almost every conceivable style. His early works are primarily products of the student years in Paris. The works of his first years after returning to America explore the possibilities of jazz elements and their application to traditional composition. By about 1935 he had put aside these ideas and had begun to use advanced, more abstract techniques of harmony, counterpoint, and rhythm. The Piano Variations and the Short Symphony are products of this period. Realizing that these and the other works of this period were difficult for the average concertgoer to understand and to respond to, Copland turned to a more accessible style of composition. The successful film scores are products of this period (1935-1955) as well as many other works which are full of various popular idioms. American folk music is easily recognizable in the ballets Appalachian Spring, Rodeo, and Billy the Kid. Latin American idioms were used in El Salón México and in Danzón Cubano. The Third Symphony of 1946 contains no direct quotation of folk music material, but the writing clearly shows its influence. The same can be said for the opera The Tender Land (1954), except for one instance of borrowing from the American folk tune, "Courtin' Song." It was with the Piano Fantasy, completed in 1957, that Copland

departed from this accessible, appealing style. Influences of those earlier abstract years, as well as the lyricism of the latest works can still be detected. It was his desire to create an extended work for solo piano containing the spontaneity of the fantastic yet unified by means of distinct structural principles.² The work is in arch form with three distinct sections: slow, fast, slow. The outer sections are similar in content, with the rapid scherzo-like section coming between them.

Perhaps the most interesting and significant aspect of the Piano Fantasy is the way in which Copland employs the tone row. The tones of the row are arranged in such a way that the predominant intervallic relationships between them are fourths, fifths, and sixths. Generally composers



Fig. 1--Tone row of the Piano Fantasy

employing a tone row as a basis for composition arrange the notes in a more chromatic fashion. At the outset of the Fantasy only the first ten notes of the row are heard. The

²Aaron Copland, "Fantasy for Piano," The New York Times, October 20, 1957, Sec. 2, p. 107.

last two notes of the row, E and G#, do not appear until forty-eight measures later, where they function as a cadence point. The first four of the ten notes of the row are announced in long note values. Immediately following is the statement of the ten-note row in slightly shorter note values. Chords built on fourths, fifths, and sixths follow, displaying a study in keyboard spacing and sonority.³ Copland is quite fond of canonic devices, and the row appears in canon at measure twenty-nine. The row, transposed to the key of B, experiences ornamentation and free octave displacements.



Fig 2--Beginning of tone row transposed and in canon

The first cadence takes place with the appearance of the last two tones of the row, E and G#, at measure forty-eight. A slow cantabile section follows, with the melody of the first five bars in the original row. The underpinning of the short section is the last two tones of the entire row plus an A, serving as the cadence of the previous section

³Peter Evans, "The Thematic Technique of Copland's Recent Works," Tempo, LI (1959), 10.

and as a pedal point to this cantabile section. The harmonic motion is suspended with this prolonged cadence.

(♩=64) *un poco rubato*

r.h. *mf* *cantabile; caldo*

mf *mp*

(Sust. Ped.) (Sust. Ped.)

Fig. 3--Opening of slow, cantabile section

The notes E, G#, and A now initiate a homophonic section marked "restless, hesitant." The chords are again constructed from tones of the row or segments of it in various transpositions. Changes of time signature are frequent and confined to compound meter. Tremolo effects create a sense of urgency. For roughly forty-five measures the writing remains in two-voice counterpoint; measure signatures become rather irregular and the tone row is used rather freely. During this section (measure 139) an additive technique is applied to the row. Several notes of the row are heard immediately followed by their repetition, with the addition of more notes of the row. This additive technique is

coupled with an exploitation of the interval of a second, Copland's way of increasing musical tension.

The musical score consists of three systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. It begins with a dynamic marking of *sub. mf* and the instruction "well articulated". Above the staff, there are handwritten notes: "a tempo", "($\leftarrow d=d.\rightarrow$)", and "(r.h. as background)". The melody in the right hand features a series of descending seconds, with some notes marked with accents (>) and slurs. The left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system includes the instruction "(mark l.h.)" and several "Ped." markings with asterisks. The third system continues the melodic and rhythmic patterns, also featuring "Ped." markings.

Fig. 4--An additive technique applied to the row

This musical idea is transposed several times, always giving the effect of shifting tonal regions. The section marked "somewhat broader," at measure 146, exploits a short melodic idea in the bass accompanied by transparent chords in the treble. The music works itself to fortissimo octaves with seconds descending to a passage reminiscent of the opening of the work.

The fourth tone of the row, D^b , is extended in the bass. Over it there is an ornamented recurrence of a

sustained chord. After the third repetition of this chord, the interval of the sixth becomes important as it descends.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for piano, consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef). The music is written in a complex, modern style with various dynamics and performance markings. The top staff begins with a fortissimo (fff) dynamic and features a series of chords and melodic lines. The bottom staff starts with a sforzando (sff) dynamic and includes several chords, some marked with a pedaling instruction (* Ped.). The score is annotated with various symbols, including accents, slurs, and dynamic markings, indicating a reiteration of a harmonic idea.

Fig. 5--Reiterated idea similar to opening of work

In the music which follows, a reiteration of the harmony is prevalent, while the melodic ideas are slight. A section marked "delicate, uncertain," improvisatory in nature, begins at measure 205. The musical movement is static. A most interesting redistribution takes place as the notes of the dyads are reversed as well as being inverted and transposed to the key of A.⁴ This treatment of the row is quite liberal and not in keeping with traditional ideas of tone row usage.

A descending motivic idea of three harmonic intervals, a fifth, a sixth, and a fifth are constructed from the first three dyads of the row. This motivic idea is important in

⁴Arthur Berger, "Aaron Copland's 'Piano Fantasy,'" Juilliard Review, V (Winter, 1957-58), 23.

(♩=112) *Moderate tempo* delicate, "uncertain"

Senza Ped.

Fig. 6--Notes of the dyads reversed

this improvisatory section since it lends itself well to the addition of new melodic material over it.

(♩=96)

Fig. 7--Descending motivic idea built from dyads of the row.

The motivic intervals undergo several transpositions with the accompanying material rather freely varied. These

ideas lead into the large middle section of the entire piece, beginning at measure 307. This section, marked "quite fast and rhythmic," is in the character of a scherzo. The motivic idea on which the section is built can be described as fast detached notes, occurring chromatically and otherwise within an interval of a minor third.

(♩ = 176)

ff *secco* *dim. molto --*

7 3

Fig. 8--Motive of scherzo section of Piano Fantasy

The melodic or motivic ideas are developed simply by repetition or by an additive technique of extension. Underneath this two-part contrapuntal texture there is a strong sense of static harmony. Within this body of musical material there are contrasting areas where the texture thickens. Coupled with rhythmic irregularity is the shifting of accents. This, as well as more of Copland's frequent canonic treatment, can be seen at measure 500.

The row within this section is also at times developed additively. The scherzo is interrupted approximately two thirds of the way through by musical material marked "twice

The image shows two systems of handwritten musical notation for piano. The first system has two staves. The upper staff begins with a treble clef, a forte (ff) dynamic marking, and a series of notes with accents and slurs. Above the notes are circled numbers: (3), (5), (3), and (7). The lower staff has a bass clef and contains a similar melodic line with slurs and accents. The second system also has two staves. The upper staff continues the melodic line with slurs and accents. The lower staff has a bass clef and contains a similar melodic line with slurs and accents. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/8.

Fig. 9--Shifting of accents as well as voices treated in canon.

as slow, with humor." The motivic intervals, the fifth, the sixth, and the fifth which previously appeared, are presented here in broken formation. Copland's economical use of motivic ideas becomes more and more apparent. Music exploiting broken chords and other chordal devices closes the scherzo. The three motivic intervals which ushered in the scherzo appear in the musical figuration (measure 594). The texture gradually thickens towards the end of the section, but disintegration occurs as the broken chord figuration diminishes in tone and in rhythmic placement.

Following the grand pause which marks the end of the scherzo, the final third of the work is introduced by material previously used. The motivic intervals are present in the bass and treble voices but on different pitch levels. Twenty measures of slow-moving reiterated harmonic progressions follow. A suddenly fast tempo moves the music up the scale chromatically and otherwise. This material, along with other obviously contrasting textural material, culminates to fortissimo trills. This trilled section and the broken chords before it proceed to scale passages ascending and descending the keyboard. Arthur Berger described this material as "striving to get past the resources of the piano."⁵ Following the grand pause there are forte chords very similar to the ones of the opening measures.

The musical score shows two staves, treble and bass clef. The tempo markings are: "As at first (♩=76)", "poco accel", "tempo", and "poco decell". The score includes various chords, some with accents and slurs, and dynamic markings like "mf" and "p". Pedal markings are present at the bottom of the score.

Fig. 10--Chords similar to opening of work

The construction of these chords of course relies on the order of the tones of the row. This section might be

⁵Ibid., p. 19.

thought of as a recapitulation because of its similarity to the opening, but there immediately follows new musical treatment of the row. The section marked "quite slow" (measure 853) begins a long exploitation of the ascending sixth. There is increasing thickness of texture, rhythmic irregularity and displacement, an increase in dynamics and tempo, and the use of repeated tones and tremolos to bring the music to a more decisive recapitulation.⁶ The musical material here is like the chordal study of the opening of the work. But there is more development of the interval of the sixth (measure 960), which has served as a strong unifying element in the work. At this section the interval functions as a pedal point, entering into a static development of shifting beats and appoggiaturas. The sound diminishes with an ascent to the top of the keyboard. There is a final, canonic re-statement of the row.

Tempo of beginning (♩=76)

mp (bell-like) p (echo) mp

Ped. p mp

Fig. 11--Beginning of final statement of row, in canon

⁶Ibid.

The last two tones of the row, E and G#, with a B, form the three concluding chords of the work. An added A is heard with the last chord. Throughout the work the last two tones of the row have continually functioned in cadences. It is logical, then, that Copland would employ these two tones once again in the conclusion.

The liberal use of serial principles is in keeping with the concept of fantasy, and the use of a ten-tone row is a departure from traditional ideas of a row technique. Copland's reshuffling of the tones of the row and his additive techniques further abandon traditional ideas on serialism. However, he has still created a large-scale work of great variety; the contrasting moods are brought about by continual changes of a few basic themes, in their tempos and in the pianistic effects. The unity is further achieved by the return of materials similar to that of the opening, enabling one to view the overall structure as rounded. The work maintains consistently the improvisatory nature of fantasy.

The Piano Fantasy was commissioned specifically by the Juilliard School of Music to be played during the concerts and events celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the school. Since the work was not completed in time for that celebration, it was premiered at a later date by pianist William Masselos. Because of the intense scope of the work and the concentration it demands on the part of the

performer and the listener, at the premiere the work was played twice, before and after intermission, for better penetration and comprehension.⁷

⁷Nicholas Slonimsky, Music Since 1900, 4th ed. (New York, 1971), p. 1037.

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