

Constructions VII-XII

for solo piano

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To my mom, Karen Robilotta.

*Thanks for teaching me the
value of music & art.*

Composition Notes.

The 6 pieces for solo piano presented here began as miniature compositions exploring the merger of 17th century counterpoint and 20th century twelve-tone organization. This base material was slowly developed to exhibit some of my own ideas involving rhythm and form. These works exhibit my belief that a composer's work should always point to the future, but knowledge of the past can tell you which direction to point.

The pieces are presented as 3 pairs and revolve around the conceptual themes: Repetition, Space and Choice. The first of each pair (odd numbers) require less choice by the performer and the second of each pair (even numbers) require more choice. Each of these pairs share a unifying tone row and demonstrate a call and response between two artists; myself and the performer.

Beginnings.

In March of 2018 I began reading and working through the exercises in *Gradus ad Parnassum*, written in 1725 by Johann Joseph Fux. The exercises focus on species counterpoint and adherence to the rules of polyphony, as they existed in the Palestrinian Renaissance tradition.

I had studied species counterpoint in the past, but wanted to get back to basics and work on my composition chops. After a few months I had filled an entire manuscript book with renaissance and baroque counterpoint. I began thinking about how these techniques could be used to solve problems and generate ideas for the modern composer. Many mornings were spent drinking coffee and tinkering with various atonal counterpoint concepts, eventually developing my own style of serial counterpoint for 4 voices and writing some twelve-tone chorales. Two of these short experiments, written in early November of 2018, would become *Constructions 7* and *9*.

Back in 2007 I wrote 6 serial duets to be performed in a jazz trio configuration that I called *Constructions 1-6*. The word "construction" has always felt like an accurate title for the process of building pieces of music using only the mutations of a single twelve-tone row. When you build something in the physical realm the limitations of your material and environment demand ingenuity, creativity, and extensive planning. The same can be said about musical composition and especially serial music.

Over the past 11 years a lot of ideas for a new Construction series had come to mind, but none of them stuck, until now.

Performance Notes.

STOP! These performance notes are optional. If you'd like to play these pieces using your musical intuition don't read this section. If you're interested to know my intentions continue.

VII. & VIII. Based on the tone row from Arnold Schoenberg's *3rd String Quartet*.

VII. A small piece that takes up great space. All fermatas in this piece should hold until the tone has completely faded away. All rhythms can be interpreted freely.

VIII. This piece examines space on the page as well as space in time. The fragments spread across the page can be played in any order. The performer can choose how much time to leave between each fragment and the tempo of each fragment. The fragments can each be played once, for a strict twelve-tone interpretation, or multiple times. If fragments are repeated please avoid any discernable patters caused by repetition. The performers course of action may be planned in advance or spontaneous.

IX. & X. Based on the tone row from Anton Webern's *Variations For Piano*.

IX. The sustain and sostenuto pedals should be used as necessary to achieve the closest possible interpretation of the written music. Each voice should be as legato as possible. Dynamics, when not indicated, are left up to the performers intuition.

X. Each measure is a loop that can repeat as long as desired. The unequal number of notes in each hand should create a phasing effect. I originally conceived this piece with both hands playing the same pulse. But a polyrhythmic approach is also acceptable. I would prefer that the rhythmic choices made maintain a phasing effect throughout the piece and not simple one measure repeats. The pulse can breath, accelerating and decelerating as desired. Polyrhythms can change at any time to create variations within a single measure. Usage of any pedals is completely up to the performer.

XI. & XII. Based on the tone row from Alban Berg's *Lyric Suite*.

XI. This piece is a meditation on the idea that, time is fluid and constantly fluctuating but the elements of the universe are finite and unchanging. Dynamics are left to the performers intuition.

XII. This piece is written in the form of a lead sheet and should be performed with the performance practices of the American Jazz tradition in mind. The typical pattern of melody-solo-melody is not required. The melody should be played at least once and there should be some improvisation based on the harmonic structure. Chord symbols in parenthesis should not be played during the melody. The performers goal should be to make this piece their own.

VII.

Rhythmic approximation
Fermatas hold to maximum duration
Time is NOT essence.

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The treble staff contains several measures of music, including chords and melodic lines with slurs and accents. The bass staff provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. Dynamic markings are placed below the bass staff: *f* at the beginning, *p* and *pp* in the second measure, *ff* in the third measure, *f* in the fourth measure, *pp* in the fifth measure, and *mf* in the sixth measure.

The second system of the musical score continues from the first system. It also consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The music continues with similar textures and dynamics. Dynamic markings are placed below the bass staff: *mf* at the beginning, *pp* in the second measure, *mf* in the third measure, *p* in the fourth measure, and *ppp* in the fifth measure. The system concludes with a double bar line.

VIII.

Choose your path
through a field of fragments.
Some assembly required.

This image contains a collection of musical notation fragments, likely from a score. The fragments are scattered across the page and include:

- Single staves with notes and rests.
- Two-staff systems (treble and bass clefs).
- Chords and arpeggiated figures.
- Key signatures including one sharp (F#) and one flat (Bb).
- A fragment with an 8va (octave) marking.
- Various rhythmic values and phrasing slurs.

IX.

Pedals will be needed.
Compromises will have to be made.
Time Marches [on].

♩ ≈ 100

8va

8va



X.

Endless Loops...
Overlapping patterns change and progress.
The pulse of life is rarely static.

The image displays two systems of musical notation, each consisting of a treble and bass staff. The first system features a treble staff with a whole rest in the first measure, followed by eighth and sixteenth notes in subsequent measures. The bass staff contains a sequence of chords and single notes. The second system shows a treble staff with a melodic line of eighth notes, ending with a fermata and the text "wait...". The bass staff continues with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes and rests.

XI.

Only time changes,
the material of life remains.
we ebb and flow.

≈ 60 Floating $\frac{6}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{6}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{6}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ ≈ 80 Trudging

8va

8va

8va

5:4

3/4

End 8va

$\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{5 \times 5}{16}$ $\frac{6 \times 3}{16}$ $\frac{5}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4} \approx 106 \text{ bpm}$ $\frac{3 \times 3}{16}$ $\frac{7}{4}$ $\frac{1}{16}$ $\frac{3}{8}$ $\frac{7}{4}$ *Freely* $\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4}$

8va

lowest possible octave

$\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{5 \times 5}{16}$ $\frac{2}{4}$ $\frac{3}{4} \approx 85 \text{ bpm}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{1}{4}$ $\frac{4}{4} \approx 68 \text{ bpm}$ $\frac{1}{8}$ $\frac{4}{4}$ $\frac{9 \times 3}{16}$ $\frac{5}{2}$ $\frac{3 \times 3}{4}$

8va

End 8va

XII.

It's just a blues.
Look forward to your own way.
Play how you feel.

Ballad

F Δ 7/C D \flat sus Dm7 E \flat m




F Δ 7/E E \flat m/G \sharp Gsus A \flat sus



B \flat Δ 7 E Δ 7/B B \flat Δ 7 E Δ 7/G \sharp



F Δ 7 (A \flat m9) F Δ 7 (B Δ 7)



Cm (A Δ 7) B \flat m (G Δ 7)

N.C. N.C.



F Δ 7/C D \flat sus (F Δ 7/C) (A Δ 7)

