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William Bolcom: Twelve New Etudes for Piano
“Rag Infernal (Syncope apocalyptiques)” and “Nocturne”

Outline:

- I. William Bolcom (b. May 26, 1938, Seattle, Washington)
 - A. Currently Faculty-University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
 - B. Pianist and Composer
 - C. Major Awards:
 1. Two Guggenheim Fellowships
 2. American Academy of Arts and Letters
 3. Koussevitzky Foundation Grant
 4. Pulitzer Prize in Music (1988) for Twelve New Etudes for Piano
- II. Twelve New Etudes for Piano
 - A. Composition Period 1977-1986
 - B. Written for Paul Jacobs who died before the completion of the Etudes
 - C. Premieres:
 1. John Musto, pianist
 - a. February 1986, New York City
 - b. Premiered Three Etudes
 2. Marc-Andre Hamelin
 - a. July, 1986
 - b. Premiered First Nine Etudes
 3. Recorded Premiere
 - a. Marc-Andre Hamelin
 - b. January 21-23, 1987
 - c. Richardson Auditorium, Alexander Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey
 - d. New World Records NW 354-2
 - D. Publisher – Edward B. Marks Music Company, New York, 1988
 - E. Movements – Durations (Total Duration: 38 Minutes)
 1. Book I
 - a. Fast, furious (:54)
 - b. Recitatif (3:29)
 - c. Mirrors (1:46)
 2. Book II
 - a. Scene d’opera (2:47)
 - b. Butterflies, hummingbirds (2:02)
 - c. Nocturne (3:30)
 3. Book III
 - a. Premonitions (3:12)
 - b. Rag Infernal (Syncope apocalyptiques) (2:04)
 - c. Invention (3:00)
 4. Book IV
 - a. Vers le silence (6:10)
 - b. Hi-jinks (2:00)
 - c. Hymne a l’amour (6:59)
- III. Ragtime - Introduction
 - A. Origins Traced to 19th Century African-American Cultures and Traditions
 1. Plantation Folk Dance Forms
 - a. Cakewalk
 1. Two-step
 2. Formal, Exuberent Promenade or Grand March Form
 3. Open to Improvisatory Possibilities
 4. Rhythmic Feel of the March (alla John Phillip Sousa)
 - b. Quadrille
 1. French Dance
 2. Two or Four Couples Moving in a Square
 3. March-like
 4. 6/8 or 2/4 Meter
 5. 16 Measure Strains
 2. Use of African-American Folksongs in Melodic Quotation, Paraphrase and/or Style
 - B. Ragtime Developed and Brought to Maturation (c. 1890-1920)
 - C. Common Ragtime Strain Patterns (The “C” Strain, as in a March, is often in the Subdominant Key)
 1. AABBACCDD (the Maple Leaf Rag Form)

2. AABBCDD
 3. AABBCA
 - D. Common Meters – 2/4 and 6/8
 - E. Ragtime Characteristics
 1. Internally Syncopated Melodic Line Against a Straightforward Bass Line
 2. Melody – Often Borrowed or Paraphrased African-American Folksong or Similar Style Original Melody
- IV. “Missouri Ragtime” or “Classical Ragtime” (c. 1890-1920)
- A. Primary Practitioners
 1. Scott Joplin (1868-1917)
 2. James Scott (1886-1938)
 3. Joseph Lamb (1887-1960)
 - B. Midwest Phenomenon
 1. Joplin Worked Primarily in St. Louis and Sedalia, Missouri
 - a. First Publisher – Carl Hoffman of Kansas City
 - b. Hoffman Published Ragtime’s First Big Hit – Joplin’s Maple Leaf Rag
 2. James Scott Worked Primarily in Carthage, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri
 3. Joseph Lamb Worked Primarily in the New York and New Jersey Areas – Mentored by Scott Joplin
 - C. Classic Ragtime Primarily a Written Form
 1. Scott Joplin
 - a. Trained by a German Music Teacher (Probably Sent South by Reconstruction Policy)
 - b. Distinguished His Scores from Popular Music
 1. A More Correct Orthography
 2. Use of Dynamics and Phrasing
 3. Sophistication of Content
 2. Popularity Spread to White Middle-Class via Publication
 3. Ragtime Often Used for Jazz Improvisation
 4. Precursors of Ragtime Often Improvised
 - D. Tom Turpin’s Rosebud Café (St. Louis, Missouri)
 1. Popular Meeting Place of “Classical Ragtime” Composers
 - a. Scott Joplin
 - b. Arthur Marshall
 - c. Scott Hayden
 - d. Louis Chauvin
 2. Tom Turpin (ca. 1873-1922) – Ragtime Composer Himself
 - a. First Published “Rag” by an African-American Composer
 - b. Harlem Rag (1897)
 - E. Distinguishing Features of “Missouri Ragtime” or “Classical Ragtime”
 1. Lyrical Melodies
 2. Relatively Slow Tempos
 3. Folk-like Danceable Character
 4. Primarily Written for Piano (This Helped Spread Ragtime to the White Middle-Class Who Believed Having a Piano in the House Was a Sign of Culture.)
- V. Eastern Ragtime or “Urban Style” (c. 1910-1920)
- A. Primary Practitioners
 1. Charles Luckeyth Roberts (1887-1968)
 2. James P. Johnson (1891-1955)
 3. Eubie Blake (1883-1983)
 - B. Eastern Ragtime or “Urban Style” – A Later Form of Ragtime
 - C. Common Strain Patterns
 1. 16 Measure Strains
 2. Only Three Strains (Trio and Second Often Extended to Twice Their Usual Lengths)
 - D. Primarily a Written Form
 - E. Piano and Band Arrangements Found in Equal Proportions
 - F. Style
 1. Fast Tempos
 2. Technical Virtuosity
 3. Diversity of Style Obscures Clearcut Distinctions Between Ragtime, “Stride Piano” and Early Jazz
 - G. Dances (Urban)
 1. Turkey Trot
 2. Chicken Scratch
- VI. Bolcom: “Rag Infernal (Syncopes apocalyptiques)” Book III/No. 8
- A. Etude’s Objective
 1. Lateral Hand Jumps and Stretches
 2. Use of Practically No Pedal
 - B. Score Dated November 27, 1982, Ann Arbor, Michigan
 - C. Meter/Tempo/Measures
 1. Meter – 2/2
 2. Tempo (“Eastern Rag” Tempo)
 - a. Fast; steady tempo

- b. d=c.126-160
- D. Influence – Eubie Blake: Charleston Rag

- E. Form
 - 1. Overall Form – A (ms. 1-89) B (ms. 90-121) A (ms. 122-151) Arch Form
 - 2. Strain Structure

A	A'	B	B'	C	A''	D	D'	A'''	C'
(1-16)	(17-31)	(32-45)	(46-58)	(59-76)	(76-89)	(90-107)	(108-121)	(122-137)	(138-151)
16 ms.	15 ms.	14 ms.	13 ms.	17 ms.	14 ms.	17 ms.	14 ms.	16 ms.	14 ms.
- F. Harmonically Complex Chord Progressions (Using Traditional Chord Structures) in a Two-beat “Stride Piano” Structure
- G. Syncopated Tonally Complex Melodic Line Over Two-Beat Bass Harmonic Structure
- VII. Blues – Introduction (ca. Post-Reconstruction -)
 - A. Origins
 - 1. Plantation Work Songs
 - 2. Field Hollars (Possibly Originating in the savannah region of West Africa)
 - 3. Originally an Aural Tradition
 - B. Term – “Blues”
 - 1. Derived from 16th Century Slang Phrase “The Blue Devils” Meaning Depression or Melancholy
 - 2. United States – Popular Usage Phrase “Having a Fit of the Blues” (Post-Civil War) Meaning Depression or Melancholy
 - C. Often Understood a Performer will “Sing the Blues” or “Play the Blues” to Rid Him/Herself of the Blues
 - D. Blues Texts Often Describe Poverty, Hardship, Prison Life or Lost Love
 - E. Form
 - 1. Earlier Form – 8 Bar, Two Line Blues (I-I-IV-IV-I-I-IV/V-I)
 - 2. Later Form – 12 Bar, Three Line Blues (I-I-I-IV-IV-I-I-V-V-I-I)
 - F. Two Line Rhyme Schemes
 - 1. aa
 - 2. ab
 - G. Three Line Rhyme Schemes
 - 1. aaa
 - 2. abb
 - 3. abc
 - 4. aab (Became Most Common Form)
 - H. Blues Scale
 - 1. I, bIII, IV, bV, V, bVII, I
 - 2. Lowered Third, Fifth and Seventh Possibly Derived From African Folk Singing
 - I. Tonal Inflection – Possibly Derived From African Speech/Song Styles
 - 1. Growls
 - 2. “Affected” or Lowered Notes
 - 3. Slides and Glissando
 - 4. Bends
- VIII. Two Traditional Blues Styles
 - A. Classical Blues (c. 1920’s-1940’s)
 - 1. Primary Performers
 - a. Ethel Waters (1900- ?)
 - b. Sara Martin
 - c. Beulah “Sippie” Wallace
 - d. Ida Cox (1896-1967)
 - e. Bessie Smith (1894-1937)
 - f. Gertrude “Ma” Rainey (1886-1939)
 - 2. Term Applied to Urban Women Singers Based in New York and Chicago
 - 3. Performers Usually Bigger-Voiced Contraltos Usually Backed by Jazz Musicians
 - B. Southern Folk Blues (c. ? – 1930’s)
 - 1. Primary Performers
 - a. Blind Lemon Jefferson (c. 1897-1930)
 - b. Huddie Ledbetter (“Leadbelly”) (1885-1949)
 - c. Charley Patton (c. 1887-1934)
 - 2. Southern Blues Also Known as
 - a. Country Blues
 - b. Rural Blues
 - c. Downhome Blues
 - 3. Originated in the “Deep South”
 - 4. Usually Performed by Illiterate or Partially Literate Local Community Performers
 - 5. Performer’s Often Migrated to Urban Areas
 - 6. Style
 - a. Accompaniment
 - 1. Guitar
 - 2. Harmonica

3. Banjo
4. Whistling
5. Fiddle
6. Piano
- b. Vocal Style
 1. Moans
 2. Hums
 3. Low-Voiced Growls
 4. High-Voiced Lean Tone Singing

IX. Boogie Woogie

- A. Type of Piano Blues
- B. Originated in 1920's Chicago
- C. Style
 1. Ostinato Bass Figure Which is Sharply Rhythmic (Common Rhythm:)
 2. Right Hand Rhapsodizes Freely
 3. Usually Comprising Twelve Measures, Sometimes Eight
 4. Frequently Uses Riffs or Short Repeated Figures
- D. Performers
 1. Clarence "Pinetop" Smith (? – 1929)
 2. Jimmy Yancey
 3. Cripple Clarence Lofton

X. Bolcom: "Nocturne" Book II/No.6

- A. Etude's Objective – Absolute Contrast in Dynamics and Tone
- B. Score Dated April 1, 1981 (No City Given)
- C. Meter/Tempo/Measures
 1. Meter – 4/4, 5/4, 6/4
 2. Tempo
 - a. Very Controlled, Strict Rhythm
 - b. $\text{♩} = c. 72$
- D. Influences: Blues and Boogie Woogie
- E. Structure
 1. Repeated 8 Measure Blues Chord Progression (I-I-IV-IV-I-I-IV/V-I) With Chord Substitutions Becoming quite Complex
 2. Underlying Boogie Woogie Harmonic Rhythm
 3. Single Long Melodic Line Placed Over 47 Measures of Repeated 8 Measure Progressions (6 Repetitions)
 4. Melodic Line Reminiscent of Ivesian "Wrong Key" Melodies over a Harmony in a Different Key
 5. Melodic Form AAB (Common Blues Rhyme Form)

XI. Related Works for Piano by Bolcom

- A. Twelve Etudes for Piano (1964-1965)
- B. Piano Rags (pub. 1971)