Three Pieces for Two Pianos
and optional interloods
2007

premiered by Joseph Kubera and Marilyn Nonken, Roulette, New York City, 2011

Three Pieces for Two Pianos was commissioned by the Barlow Endowment for Music Composition at Brigham Young University. In addition to the three pieces, there are a number of short optional "interloods" which may be played or not, in between the three larger works.

I is a study in mode and rhythm, more or less in variation form. Each section begins with a simple melodic idea, which is developed both harmonically (in terms of more complex use of the harmonic series), and in a related way, rhythmically, through the use of what might be called "incomplete grupetti."

II is an "arrangement" of a Stephen Foster song. Each piano plays from a different score. A simple computer program was used to stretch and compress the measures in each part, in a kind of canon, so that the two pianos begin and end together, but diverge in a number of ways over the course of the piece.

III, the longest, is composed entirely by computer using software written by the composer. On the surface level, it is a constant modulation between a number of invented modes. The beginning mode, a kind of C major/minor, is also the harmonic basis of the first piece. Every other aspect of the music is also the result of a similar set of time-variant "modulations," which consist of curved canonic trajectories in time. Each of the four hands is more or less treated as a separate instrument. Like many of the *interloods* that accompany this third piece, the notes, chords, and durations also use a computer algorithm which is an abstraction and significant extension of the *dissonant counterpoint* style of composers like Charles Seeger, Carl Ruggles, Ruth Crawford Seeger, and Johanna Beyer. The *interloods* for this piece each use that algorithm in a different way.

Larry Polansky
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