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  
Santa Cruz, 2/6/12