

THE SOLO PIANO COLLECTIONS OF ROBERT MUCZYNSKI:
AN INTRODUCTORY SURVEY WITH EMPHASIS ON STYLE

by
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I hereby recommend that this document prepared under my
direction by Cheryl Villegas
entitled The Solo Piano Collections of Robert Muczynski: An
Introductory Survey with Emphasis on Style
be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Musical Arts.

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INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this study are twofold: to introduce to the public the solo piano collections of Robert Muczynski as valid concert and teaching material; and to discuss the style of these pieces in order to enhance familiarity with the music and insure a more correct performance. The discussion that follows does not conform to the music theorist's definition of the term "style", but is in fact a collection of ideas which a pianist feels will be useful in performing or teaching this music. Thus, this is a general discussion of style through the eyes of a performer and is not meant to be complete. It is the hope of this author that this introduction to the piano works of Robert Muczynski will spark an interest in this fine music which truly deserves to be better known.

The author would like to personally thank Professor Robert Muczynski for unselfishly giving his valuable time and support to this project. Also many thanks to Professor Richard Faith, whose help was invaluable in the preparation of the music to be performed.

CHAPTER 1

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE COMPOSER

Robert Muczynski was born in Chicago in 1929. Piano studies began at the age of five. In 1947 he enrolled at De Paul University where he studied piano with Walter Knupfer and composition with the distinguished composer, Alexander Tcherepnin.¹

In 1953, Muczynski was commissioned by the Fromm Music Foundation to write his First Symphony, "a work which reveals much depth and superb training".²

In 1954, he received a commission from the Louisville Symphony Orchestra which resulted in his First Piano Concerto. The work was performed by the composer himself in both the world premiere and in a subsequent historic recording under a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation.³ Since then he has performed the concerto with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Grant Park Summer Symphony (Chicago's annual series of Lake Front Concerts).⁴

In 1958, Professor Muczynski made his New York debut in

¹Robert Muczynski, Suite, Op. 13, Sonata for Flute and Piano, Op. 14, Six Preludes, Op. 6, Sonata No. 1, Op. 9 (Music Library Recordings, 6998).

²Muczynski, Suite.

³Muczynski, Suite.

⁴The Western Arts Trio, Vol. 2 (Laurel Record, LR 106, 1977).

Carnegie Hall with a performance of his own works.⁵ The concert was well received. The New York Times called him "a skillful pianist and convincing exponent of his own music".^{6a} The journal, Musical America, labeled him "an exceptionally gifted pianist" whose works "reveal a true sense of the dramatic".^{6b} Earl Wilson's column announcing the event added, "...We think the young man is very brave."⁷ And the Musical Courier described the performance thus:

An exceptionally gifted young pianist appeared on this occasion in a program of his own compositions, displaying in a somewhat personalized medium of expression technical skill and a profusion of musical ideas that have not quite "jelled" into an individual style. Mr. Muczynski is alert to interesting patterns and his tonal contrasts are descriptively acute. ...All that he writes is pleasant and accented by a true sense of the dramatic. Muczynski knows how to make the piano sing and backs his instrumental facility with cool intelligence. The program listed a Sonatina, Five Sketches, Variations on a Theme of Tcherepnin, Six Preludes, and a Sonata No. 1.⁸

In addition to these achievements, Professor Muczynski has received two Ford Foundation Grants, sixteen consecutive creative-merit awards from ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers), the International Society for Contemporary Music prize for the Suite for Piano, and in 1961 the Concours Internationale

⁵Gordon Epperson Plays Cello with Pianist Robert Muczynski, (Coronet Recording Company, 3000S).

^{6a}Gordon Epperson.

^{6b}Gordon Epperson.

⁷Robert Muczynski, Robert Muczynski (Pamphlet for advertising purposes, [n.d.]), p. 2.

⁸"New York Concert and Opera Beat", Musical Courier, Vol. 157, No. 4 (March, 1958), p. 20.

Award for Composition in Nice, France, for his Sonata for Flute and Piano.⁹

In 1965, his Symphonic Dialogues were performed by the National Symphony of Washington, D.C., at the Lincoln Center's Philharmonic Hall.¹⁰

In 1977, the Third Piano Sonata was selected as the required contemporary piano work at the Seventh Annual International Piano Festival and Competition at the University of Baltimore in Maryland. Noted contemporary artist David Burge said about this piece:

[The Third Piano Sonata] accomplishes some beautiful and effective things...The first movement is an ingenious mix of sonata-allegro and variation technique. There are a number of sonorous delights, of which the opening statement of the cantabile second theme stands out as particularly haunting.¹¹

Also in 1977, Muczynski received the Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award from De Paul University.¹²

To date, Professor Muczynski has had some forty works published by G. Schirmer, Inc., Shawnee Press, Associated Music Publishers, Theodore Presser Co., and John Paul Music. In addition, there are a large number of works still in manuscript including two piano collections, Five Sketches (1952), and the Variations on a Theme of

⁹Leslie Crane Rugg, Music for Flute and Piano by Four Americans (Laurel-Protone Records, LP-14, 1976).

¹⁰Robert Muczynski, Letter, Tucson, Arizona (10 January, 1981).

¹¹Muczynski, "Pamphlet", op. cit., p. 3.

¹²The Arizona Chamber Orchestra, Robert Hull, Conductor (Laurel Record, LR-110, 1978).

Tcherepnin (1955).¹³ He has also composed the music for ten prize-winning documentary films done in collaboration with the distinguished cinematographer Harry Atwood.¹⁴

His music has been recognized by musicians and critics across the country. Winthrop Sargeant of The New Yorker calls it "original and outstanding".¹⁵ George Anson of Clavier stated that "few American composers of the present day write as well for the keyboard as does Muczynski".¹⁶ And Paul Hume of The Washington Post called him "a polished composer and pianist. Muczynski's writing is skillful, neatly scored and highly expressive. He makes his statements convincingly."¹⁷

His piano music has become increasingly popular while receiving several prestigious performances. A number of young American pianists have performed the sonatas at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., Alice Tully Hall and Carnegie Recital Hall in New York City, and at Wigmore Hall in London, England.¹⁸

In 1965, Muczynski joined the faculty at the University of Arizona in Tucson. Currently he is chairman of composition and composer-in-residence there.

¹³"Robert Muczynski", Composers of the Americas, Vol. 9 (1963), pp. 103-104.

¹⁴Muczynski, "Pamphlet", op. cit., p. 3.

¹⁵Muczynski, p. 2.

¹⁶Muczynski, p. 2.

¹⁷Muczynski, p. 2.

¹⁸Muczynski, Letter, op. cit.

CHAPTER 2

STYLE IN THE WORKS OF ROBERT MUCZYNSKI

Currently there are thirteen published works for solo piano by Robert Muczynski. A complete list along with dates of composition are as follows:

Sonatina for Piano (1950)
Six Preludes for Piano, Op. 6 (1954)
Sonata No. 1 for Piano, Op. 9 (1956)
Suite for Piano, Op. 13 (1960)
Toccata for Piano, Op. 15 (1961)
A Summer Journal for Piano, Op. 19 (1964)
Fables, Nine Pieces for the Young, for Piano, Op. 21 (1965)
Sonata No. 2 for Piano, Op. 22 (1966)
Diversions, Nine Pieces for Students, for Piano, Op. 23 (1967)
Seven, for Piano Solo, Op. 30 (1971)
Sonata No. 3 for Piano, Op. 35 (1974)
Maverick Pieces for Piano, Op. 37 (1977)
Masks, for Piano, Op. 40 (1980)

A discussion of the three Sonatas is beyond the scope of this paper. The focus will be on the ten remaining collections.

The Sonatina for Piano was composed in 1950. It is Muczynski's earliest published work. Though short, the three movements show several elements of Muczynski's developing style. The opening theme (measures 1-6) of Figure 1 shows the rhythmic drive associated with Muczynski's music. In measure 7 the shift of both hands into the treble register creates an effective color contrast. The opening theme returns somewhat varied in measures 11 and 12 only to be followed again by the contrasting treble register texture in

in measures 13-17. In measure 18 there is yet another color change, this time to the bass register with the low octaves in the left hand and the rhythmic integrity maintained in the right. Along with lively rhythms, dynamic changes and color contrasts, the first eighteen measures also contain three meter changes. These elements of Muczynski's style will permeate his later works.

Allegro con spirito *L.H.*

(PED) 5

L.H. 10

f *marcato* *f*

15 *cresc.* *ff*

Figure 1. Sonatina, First movement, measures 1-18.

The Sonatina is in three movements with the tempo scheme of fast-slow-fast. The outer movements are in a miniature sonata allegro form with first and second themes, a short development and full-fledged recapitulation. The second movement is a small ABA form with emphasis on melodies in groups of four measure phrases.

The Six Preludes for Piano, Op. 6, were composed in 1954.

The Chicago Daily News described these pieces thus:

Muczynski's Preludes struck me as deft sketches, such as a gifted artist might make at a zoo, with a single quick line; each prelude caught the essence of a certain distinctive piano-sound as the artist might catch the distinctive (but elusive) cocking of an animal's head...¹⁹

The composer himself makes these comments about the Preludes:

I was fresh from the university, and those pieces were a kind of self-imposed exercise. I felt the need to tighten up, to make more of my ideas. In earlier pieces I had tended to ramble, to introduce too many things and not fully develop them. The Six Preludes are set in small forms, mostly ABA, and some of them seem to me to have been influenced by the music of Prokofieff, which I greatly admired, partly for its clarity.

I recall writing No. 6 on New Year's Eve. I had been invited to two parties that evening and had refused the second, having already accepted the first. At the last moment the first party fell through and I was left with nowhere to go, so I sat at the piano and wrote the last of the Six Preludes. You know that Beethoven rondo, Rage Over a Lost Penny? This relentless little toccata is a rage over a lost party, and probably more fun.²⁰

The Preludes contain all the stylistic elements of the Sonatina in addition to a commanding sense of lyricism. It is the

¹⁹Muczynski, "Suite, Sonata, Toccata...", op. cit.

²⁰Muczynski Plays Muczynski (Laurel Record, LR-114, 1980).

this lyricism which will become more prominent in Muczynski's later works.

The Suite for Piano, Op. 13, composed in 1960, won a top award from the International Society for Contemporary Music a year later. The piece consists of six movements. Descriptive titles were "selected for the purpose of identification and were suggested by the contents of the pieces".²¹

In the Suite, the composer experimented with new compositional techniques and different creative ideas, resulting in six highly contrasting movements. On paper, the Suite looks different from the previous compositions. The sound is also much different, perhaps suggesting a more mature style.

The first piece, "Festival", is described as a boisterous march-like movement "with strongly accented syncopated rhythms demanding articulate passage playing".²²

²¹Robert Muczynski, Suite for Piano, Op. 13, performed by Paulina Drake (Orion Master Recordings, ORS 75168).

²²"Robert Muczynski: Suite for Piano, Op. 13", Music Library Association Notes, Vol. 20, No. 4 (1963), p. 581.

Musical score for Suite, "Festival", measures 37-51. The score is written for piano and features complex rhythmic patterns, including hemiola and asymmetrical groupings of notes. It includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *sempre cresc.*, *f*, *sf*, *marcato*, *e cresc.*, and *poco*, as well as articulation marks like accents and slurs. Measure numbers 40, 45, and 50 are clearly marked.

a - c - c - e - l - e - r - a - n - d - o

Figure 2. Suite, "Festival", measures 37-51.

In Figure 2 above, notice the asymmetrical grouping of notes in measure 37. In measures 38 and 39, there is hemiola in the right hand part. In measures 40 and 41, the right hand figures fall into groups of two while the left hand remains in three.

Meanwhile the meter signature is frequently changing and in the 47th measure, the signature $\frac{10}{16}$ appears for the first time. The 51st measure contains a cluster chord.

In the second movement, "Flight", an "undulating triplet figure transfers the broken chords from right to left hands throughout".²³ This piece is built on "a scheme of broken triads, now major, now minor in scurrying unison passages, the hands alternating once legato and then 'seconda volta' (second time) staccato".²⁴ The music is written on one staff, a first for Muczynski. See Figure 3 below.

First time: Allegro moderato (*sempre legato*) $d = 94$
 Second time: Presto (*sempre staccato*) $d = 112$

The musical score consists of four staves of music. The first staff is the main staff, starting with a bass clef and a 6/8 time signature. It contains a complex, undulating triplet figure. The first time is marked 'Allegro moderato (sempre legato) d. = 94' and the second time is marked 'Presto (sempre staccato) d. = 112'. The score includes markings for 'r.h.', 'l.h.', 'sempre p', and 'senza ped.'. Measure numbers 5, 10, and 15 are indicated.

Figure 3. Suite, "Flight", measures 1-16.

²³Muczynski, "Suite"...Drake, *op. cit.*

²⁴"Robert Muczynski: Suite...", *MLA Notes, op. cit.*, p. 581.

The third piece, "Vision",

...deals with a sharp opposition of textures: sustained tones against gruff staccato chords, declamatory melodies in double octaves high in the upper register punctuated by marcato chords, an improvisational florid cadenza, the whole coming to a pensive conclusion.²⁵

Much of the music is written on three staves, another first for the composer. Figure 4, shown on page 12, illustrates the high double octaves and the florid cadenza mentioned in the above statement.

²⁵"Robert Muczynski: Suite...", p. 581.

agitato e cresc.

15

Tempestoso

allarg. molto

a - c - c - e - l - e - r - a - n -

12

lunga

- d - o

12

6

attacca

Figure 4. Suite, "Vision", measures 13-17.

The fourth piece, "Labyrinth", is

...a short perpetual motion in unison sixteenth notes, *molto allegro*, in the fashion of the last movement of the Chopin Sonata in B Flat Minor.²⁶ See Figure 5 below.

Molto allegro $\text{♩} = 48$
 (To be played without accentuation;
sempre p
leggero)

Figure 5. Suite, "Labyrinth", measures 1-5.

The fifth piece, "Phantom", serves as a short interlude. It exhibits "chordal writing with extreme dynamic contrasts".²⁷ Bitonality exists everywhere. In the second half of measure 6 of the following figure, a B minor triad in second inversion sounds simultaneously with a B-flat major triad in root position. In the next measure, the D-flat major triad in the right hand is juxtaposed over a second inversion A minor triad in the bass. This process continues throughout most of the piece.

²⁶"Robert Muczynski: Suite...", p. 581.

²⁷Muczynski, "Suite"...Drake, *op. cit.*

Lento assai $\text{♩} = 58$

5

10

15

Figure 6. Suite, "Phantom", measures 1-16.

The final piece of the Suite, "Scherzo", is a "brilliant, uninhibited, strongly rhythmic piece, demonic in character".²⁸ "Free in form though united by a plastic rhythmic design, this movement brings the Suite to a rousing conclusion."²⁹ Figure 7, shown on page 15, shows the extreme rhythmic complexity in the Scherzo.

²⁸"Robert Muczynski: Suite...", MLA Notes, op. cit., p. 581.

²⁹Muczynski, "Suite"...Drake, op. cit.

70

75

80

marc. *sf* *ff energico*

sempre stacc.

f

più f *molto marc.*

Figure 7. Suite, "Scherzo", measures 66-81.

Notice the hemiola in measures 69-72. From measure 73 and onward the dazzling octaves, changing meters, strong accents, and use of the low register of the piano remind one ever so slightly of the Ginastera Piano Sonata.

The Toccata for Piano, Op. 15, is dedicated to Ozan Marsh, a member of the piano faculty at the University of Arizona.

The work is constructed, largely, upon the interval of the "fourth"...and is cast in the form: A-B-A (varied) with Coda. An incessant drive, "Presto", and rhythmic complexities are the main substances of this explosive work.³⁰

Changes of meter, three staff writing, cluster chords, hemiola, as well as other elements of style already discussed are apparent. The style is similar to that of the Suite.

Three years elapsed before the appearance of Muczynski's next piano collection, A Summer Journal, Op. 19, composed in 1964. About these seven short contrasting pieces, the composer says:

In each piece I tried to capture the essence of what, for me, typifies the summer season: Morning Promenade, Park Scene, Midday, Birds, Solitude, Night Rain, and Jubilee. The music is subjective rather than "literally descriptive".³¹

The pieces in the Summer Journal are intentionally not as brilliant or technically virtuosic as those in the Suite or Toccata. Muczynski makes this comment:

It was my hope to write a set of short pieces which would be pianistically effective and yet remain within the technical "reach" of piano students. It occurred to me that so much of the contemporary piano literature, today, is extremely difficult and that this factor perhaps discourages the use of such music in student workshops and recitals. Realizing that there are numerous "easy"

³⁰Muczynski, "Suite, Sonata, Toccata...", op. cit.

³¹"American Composer Sketches: Robert Muczynski", Music Educators Journal, Vol. 53, No. 6 (February, 1967), p. 55.

piano works, and numerous "difficult" works, I tried to find a useful "middle ground", although the musical considerations were foremost in my mind.³²

The first piece, "Morning Promenade", is in two distinct sections. The first section is based on the motive of two sixteenths and an eighth note. This figure is incorporated into a melody which is exchanged between the hands in dialogue fashion.

By contrast, the second section consists almost entirely of quarter notes and is very rigidly homophonic in texture.

The second piece, "Park Scene", is written with a compound meter signature of $\frac{4+3}{8}$. It is this polarity between duple and triple meter that contributes to the rhythmic drive and intensity often associated with the music of Robert Muczynski. The piece contains five phrases with the structure of abb'ac. See Figure 8 shown on page 18.

³²"Bests of the Year 1966", The Piano Quarterly, 15th year, No. 59 (Spring, 1967), p. 18.

Allegro $\text{♩} = 120$ a

5 b

10 b'

15 a

20 c

Figure 8. A Summer Journal, "Park Scene", measures 1-21.

Also, measure 16 of Figure 8 requires the unusual technique of playing two notes with the thumb and then sliding off only the lower one, while still holding the upper one.

The third piece, "Midday", is written in a blues style. The alternation between G-flat and G-natural, the third scale degree in

the tonic key of E-flat, creates the feeling of the blues. In the first twelve measures alone (Figure 9), there are seven G-naturals and eleven G-flats.

A Andante con espressione $\text{♩} = 42$ (rather freely)

p con rubato

5 Eb: con ped.

10

B *poco allarg.* 15 *a tempo* *p* *poco allarg.*

f: 20 *poco allarg.*

a tempo *l.h. cross over rubato* *p* *sost. ped.* *poco*

a tempo *p sub.*

The musical score consists of six systems of piano and bass staves. The first system (measures 1-4) is marked 'Andante con espressione' with a tempo of quarter note = 42, 'rather freely', and 'p con rubato'. The second system (measures 5-8) is marked '5 Eb: con ped.' and 'mf'. The third system (measures 9-12) is marked '10' and 'p'. The fourth system (measures 13-16) is marked 'B', 'poco allarg.', '15 a tempo', 'p', and 'poco allarg.'. The fifth system (measures 17-20) is marked 'f:', '20', 'poco allarg.', 'a tempo', 'l.h. cross over rubato', 'p', 'sost. ped.', and 'poco'. The sixth system (measures 21-24) is marked 'a tempo' and 'p sub.'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings.

25 *rit. molto* **A'**
Tempo primo

30 $V \frac{4}{2}/bII$ $E^b:$ *cresc.* *mf* *f* *marc.*

35 *mf* *poco*

40 *meno mosso* *rit.* *p e sempre dimin.* *pp* *poco marc.* *ped.*

Figure 9. A Summer Journal, "Midday", measures 1-43.

The form of this piece is A-B-A'. The "A" section consists of four phrases. Phrases two and four are a varied repetition of phrase one. The third phrase contains entirely different melodic material. The "B" section begins in the supertonic key of F minor and modulates through several keys, finally ending on the dominant seventh chord of the Neapolitan key, E major (measure 26). By a clever descending passage, the return of the "A" section in the tonic key of E^b major

is accomplished. The phrase structure of this A' section is the same as that of the A section, the difference being that the melody is now in the left hand. The right hand embellishes an intricate, new countermelody above it. The concluding phrase of the "A'" section consists of a cadential extension based on the tonic major-minor seventh chord.

The fourth piece, "Birds", is in an ABA' form. The "A" section consists of two phrases. The first phrase (Figure 10, measures 1-4) begins with a repeated note motive on G-sharp. We will call this motive "a". Motive "a" is followed by a pattern of descending ninths (motive "b"). The second phrase (measures 4-8) is a variation of the first. It starts with motive "a" but motive "b" is different. The left hand of the "A" section is a varied ostinato.

The "B" section is built on sequences at the interval of a fifth higher or fourth lower. The section begins in measure 9 with a six measure phrase. The first two measures contain a pattern on C-sharp. This leads into the hemiola in the next two measures. Notice that the bass line in measures 11 and 12 begins the same way as in the previous two measures, but an octave higher. Measures 13 and 14 are an extension of this phrase with the same bass line.

The second phrase of the "B" section (measure 15) begins with the same pattern as the first phrase (measure 9), this time a fifth higher on G-sharp. The second part of this phrase (measures 17 and 18) are based on motive "a" from the "A" section.

Phrase three of the "B" section (measure 19) begins with a new pattern on A-flat. This pattern is immediately echoed a fifth lower on C-sharp.

Phrase four (measure 23) begins with yet another pattern, this time on D-sharp. This new pattern is curiously derived from motives "a" and "b", consisting of repeated notes and ninths filled in with fourths and fifths. This pattern is also immediately echoed a fourth higher on G-sharp and extended by the filled-in ninths. This marks the end of the "B" section.

The "A" section returns in measure 29 with a repetition of the opening phrase with motives "a" and "b". The second phrase (measure 33) contains a variation of motive "a", a fourth lower. The third phrase (measure 35) begins with a new pattern on C-sharp in the right hand. The left hand contains a pattern from the "B" section (measure 9). These patterns are immediately echoed in measure 37 on G-sharp, a fourth lower (measure 37). The piece concludes with an allusion to motive "a" (measure 39) and a final cadence on a C-sharp major triad in second inversion with an added D-sharp in the chord.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system is marked "A Vivace" and "fleggero". It consists of a right-hand melody and a left-hand accompaniment. The right-hand melody is divided into two parts: "motive 'a'" (measures 1-4) and "motive 'b'" (measures 5-8). The left-hand accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern. The second system begins at measure 5 and features "motive 'a'" (measures 1-4) and "motive 'b' varied" (measures 5-8) in the right hand, with the same left-hand accompaniment as the first system.

B

10

mf *p*

15

motive "a"

20

f (CROSS OVERT)

mf

25

f

Figure 10 shows three systems of musical notation for the piece "A Summer Journal, Birds".

- The first system (measures 1-34) features a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a bass clef. The first measure is marked "A" and "piu f". A bracket above the treble staff spans measures 1-30, labeled "motive 'a'". Another bracket above the treble staff spans measures 31-34, labeled "motive 'b'".
- The second system (measures 35-40) continues with the same clefs. Measure 35 is marked "f" and "marc.". A bracket above the treble staff spans measures 35-40, labeled "motive 'a' varied". A note in measure 35 is marked "f" and "marc.". A note in measure 36 is marked "f" and "marc.". A note in measure 37 is marked "f" and "marc.". A note in measure 38 is marked "f" and "marc.". A note in measure 39 is marked "f" and "marc.". A note in measure 40 is marked "f" and "marc.". A note in measure 41 is marked "p".
- The third system (measures 41-41) shows the final measure, marked "p".

Figure 10. A Summer Journal, "Birds", measures 1-41.

The fifth piece, "Solitude", is in two sections. The phrase structure of the first section is a-a'-b-a. The second section contains two long symmetrical melodic arches (measures 26-33 and measures 34-39). The bass line descends chromatically while the melody rises and falls in a perfect arch. See Figure 11 shown on page 25.

25 *allarg.* *a tempo*
p *legato*
(ped.)

30

poco rit. *poco meno mosso*
p *P*

35 *molto rit.*
pp *ppp*

Figure 11. A Summer Journal, "Solitude", measures 22-39.

The sixth piece, "Night Rain", is built on a three note ostinato bass over which the right hand plays embellishments in an improvised fashion. The form is dictated by the ostinato which serves as melody because the embellishments are of a harmonic nature. See Figure 12 shown on page 26.

Tempo giusto J. :ss

p

senza ped.

roco

p

5 *cross over*

f

p

Figure 12. A Summer Journal, "Night Rain", measures 1-7.

The finale of the set, "Jubilee", is a very spirited, highly rhythmic piece full of syncopations. It is cast in a rondo form, ABACA with Coda. The A section consists of two phrases, the second more syncopated than the first. The B and C sections are free in form and consist of linear one-part writing, which is divided between the hands. The alternation between the tonic C major and its tritone, F sharp, provide the harmonic basis for the Coda. See Figure 13 shown on page 27.

The image shows a musical score for piano, titled "Jubilee" from "A Summer Journal". The score is presented in five systems, each with a treble and bass staff. Measure numbers 45, 50, and 55 are clearly marked. The music is characterized by dense, rhythmic textures with many beamed notes and rests. Performance markings include "con brio" at the top right, "ff marc." in the first system, and "ff" in the fifth system. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4.

Figure 13. A Summer Journal, "Jubilee", measures 42-57.

The Fables, Op. 21 (1965), and the Diversions, Op. 23 (1967), constitute Muczynski's only teaching pieces. Each set contains nine pieces that appeal to intermediate level students. The pieces have a

folk-like quality and possess much lyrical charm. They fit the adolescent hand very well and can be used to teach much about dynamics, touch, phrasing, pedalling, as well as how to deal with tempo, meter changes, and hemiola.

The Fables and Diversions contain many of the same stylistic elements as the Summer Journal. In the seventh piece of the Fables, there is an alternation between B-flat and B-natural, the third scale degree in the key of G. This polarity between the major and minor mode is similar to the piece, "Midday", in the Summer Journal. See Figure 14.

Moderato $\text{♩} = 66$

p espress.
legato

5

10

p
espress.

15

mf

20

p
rit.
pp

Figure 14. Fables, No. 7, measures 1-20.

The ninth piece of the Fables is written in $\frac{5}{8}$ or $\frac{3+2}{8}$ meter, something also seen earlier in the Summer Journal. See Figure 15 below.

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. The title is 'Allegro' with a tempo marking of a quarter note followed by a dotted quarter note. The time signature is 5/8. The score is written for piano, with a treble and bass clef. The first system covers measures 1 through 5, with a 'senza ped.' instruction below the bass line. The second system covers measures 6 through 11, with a 'cantabile' instruction below the bass line starting at measure 10. The dynamics are marked 'f' (forte) and 'mf' (mezzo-forte).

Figure 15. Fables, No. 9, measures 1-11.

Seven, for Piano Solo, Op. 30, was written in 1971. Unlike the Summer Journal, Seven contains no programmatic titles. It is dedicated to the film producer Harry Atwood. The main emphasis is on rhythm and somewhat less on melody. The same recognizable stylistic elements are ever present and need not be re-examined here.

The Maverick Pieces, Op. 37, were composed in 1977. The set contains twelve pieces, the most ever included in a single collection. When asked about the title, the composer says:

These character pieces, which date from 1976-1977, are essentially preludes. It occurred to me that some of them are "mavericks", because they don't fit closely in conjunction with the others and because the collection was not necessarily intended as a suite where each movement is linked to its neighbor.

...These are twelve miniatures of varying difficulty that can stand as a set or be played separately--like Chopin Preludes. I hoped that they could not only serve as concert material, but might also have potential as teaching pieces.³³

Seven of the twelve Maverick Pieces have been chosen for discussion because they contain certain stylistic elements of interest.

The second Maverick piece is cast in the form ABA. The outer A sections consist of two phrases. The B section is twice as long, containing four phrases. All three sections are in C-sharp minor.

The fourth Maverick piece is also in ABA form. The outer A sections are based on the motive of a mordent in the left hand sounding simultaneously with an arpeggiated minor-minor seventh chord in the right hand. In measures 49-51, the cluster chords in both hands beginning fortissimo and ending piano create an effective conclusion. See Figure 16 on page 31.

³³Muczynski Plays Muczynski, op. cit.

40 *Tempo primo*

45

50

sempre rit. *molto* *molto meno mosso* *lunga*

mp *(pp)* */mp)*

pp *P* *ff* *p*

Figure 16. Maverick Pieces, No. 4, measures 40-52.

The B section introduces a beautiful melody which is repeated twice, the second time syncopated. The over-all feeling of this piece is one of a tonality because of the abundance of seventh chords. However, a closer glance shows that the piece seems to center around the single note D.

The sixth Maverick piece is in an ABAC form. The B and C sections begin the same way as the A sections but evolve into something quite different. The piece begins in E minor with the final cadence being in B minor.

The sixth Maverick piece is one of the most romantic pieces ever written by Muczynski, and it was for this reason that he was severely criticized for including it in this collection. The style is that of a Chopin Nocturne. See Figure 17 below.

Andante sostenuto $\text{♩} = 58$

mp sempre molto legato

ped. simile

poco rit.

5 *a tempo* *poco accelerando*

mp *cresc.*

10 *allarg.* *Tempo primo* *più f*

(ped. simile)

Figure 17. Maverick Pieces, No. 6, measures 1-10.

The seventh Maverick piece is pastoral in character, and is in an ABA' form. The A section introduces a charming melody over a long D pedal point. The B section is by contrast very vigorous and heavily accented. A long ascending scale passage marks the return to the A section which is now embellished with sixteenth notes. The pedal point is now on the note E.

The ninth Maverick piece is binary in form. The first section consists of a single line melody and a bare chordal accompaniment. The harmonic rhythm is very slow. In the second section, various major and minor triads are juxtaposed over one another in bitonal fashion. This increases the harmonic rhythm so that a chord change occurs on every eighth note.

The eleventh Maverick piece is through composed consisting of four phrases. The accompaniment is homophonic and moves in exactly the same rhythm as the melody resulting in what is called "familiar style" or "hymn style".

The twelfth Maverick piece is a toccata-like piece with dance rhythms and is in the form ABA' with Coda. The A sections are built around the motive of two sixteenths and an eighth note. The B section is by contrast very lyrical and is characterized by alternating duplets and triplets. The coda consists of virtuoso pianistic techniques; dazzling octaves and rapid sixteenth note scales both ascending and descending.

Masks, Op. 40, is Muczynski's most recent composition. It was composed in 1980. The motto on the title page reads, "commissioned by the Gina Bachauer Piano Competition of Brigham Young University and dedicated to the memory of Dr. H. D. Atwood".

The title of the piece is based on a quotation from Swift:

"Harlequin without his mask is known to present a very sober countenance."

When asked about this the composer maintains that the quotation gives some sort of clue as to the spirit of the piece. The music itself is not programmatic. The quotation was chosen after the composition was completed, similar to the process of Debussy putting the titles to his preludes at the end of the piece. Muczynski says that it makes more sense to think of the titles after writing the music or else one can be limited to thinking a certain way. The purpose of giving titles to this music is for identification. The relationship is purely subjective.³⁴

The style of Masks is a logical continuation of the nine previous collections. The interest of the piece is maintained in the two large contrasting sections and in the many tempo fluctuations throughout. In measures 1 and 2 of Figure 18, attention is drawn to the low, thick cluster chords. And in measure 8, there is a hint of parallel motion at the unison, similar to the technique used previously in pieces like "Labyrinth".

³⁴Robert Muczynski, Professor of Music, Chairman of Composition and Composer-in-Residence at the University of Arizona (Tucson, Arizona: Interview, 1 December 1980).

Figure 18. Masks, measures 1-8.

In summary, Muczynski's style can be characterized by a "strong, lyrical gift, rhythmic spontaneity, and a wide range of expression".³⁵ Although he is primarily a melodist, he also uses motivic patterns which will often be the basis for an entire section or piece. He also shows an affinity for other types of patterns, namely intervallic, ostinatos, and sequences.

In all of the pieces discussed here, one can find numerous examples of other stylistic elements such as 1) frequent meter changes, 2) hemiola, 3) cross relations or the alternation between the tonic major and minor triads of a given key, 4) lively dance-like rhythms, 5) dynamic and color contrasts, 6) cluster chords, and 7) compound meters.

Although Muczynski's music is very tonal, it is not predictably so. His music lacks one central approach to tonality. It embraces

³⁵ Muczynski, "Suite, Sonata, Toccata...", op. cit.

all types and styles.

In these collections of short pieces the composer has been shown to prefer the small forms, especially ABA, and to a lesser extent binary and through composed. His phrase structure is regular, often occurring in multiples of two and astonishingly predictable. The variation in phrasing is usually achieved by changing the rhythm.

Professor Muczynski maintains that in any composition, one can see the fingerprints of the composer. Some composers prefer certain intervallic or rhythmic patterns that are basic to their style. After all, Brahms sounds different from Beethoven. Since style is already inherent in the work of a composer, Muczynski tries to do something different in every piece. He claims, "I could have written more music but I didn't want to keep on writing the same piece over and over".³⁶ The result is a personal style based on contrasts and governed by a creative intellect.

How can an understanding of Muczynski's style assist the performer in interpreting his music? The answer to this question as well as the composers own thoughts on interpretation will be dealt with in Chapter 3.

³⁶Muczynski, "Interview", op. cit.

CHAPTER 3

GENERAL PERFORMANCE SUGGESTIONS

In general, the music of Robert Muczynski shuns virtuoso technical display for its own sake. But yet there is something about this music that makes it harder to play than it really looks. The requirements are a good sense of rhythm, solid technique, independence of fingers and hands, good muscular coordination, a full singing tone, and a large hand for there are many ninths and tenths in much of the literature.

Muczynski admits that he does not intentionally try to write difficult music. Technically, the music that he writes is very natural to him. He sees himself as a lyrical composer and likes his music to be played expressively. He shuns percussiveness in the playing of his music feeling that much twentieth century music is often too heavily accented. An accent should be in proportion to what has come and gone before it. It should fit into the flow of the music.³⁷

When asked about rubato, the composer admits that there should be some rubato in his music but only if done in good taste. Naturally, one would not use rubato in a piece like the Toccata. However, in some of the slower lyrical pieces, such as the sixth Maverick piece,

³⁷Muczynski, "Interview".

the opportunity for rubato is much greater. In other words, the amount of rubato depends on the type of piece.³⁸

Finally, the key to success in playing the music of Robert Muczynski is to understand his style. The compositional process is an intellectual one. The style of this music clearly exhibits a well organized approach. Only through careful study and analysis, can a thorough understanding of this music be reached. And a thorough understanding will give the performance direction and musicality. Thus the intentions of the composer and performer will be clearly comprehensible.

³⁸Muczynski, "Interview".

CHAPTER 4
PHILOSOPHY OF COMPOSITION AND TEACHING

When asked whether he would someday write avant garde music, Muczynski replied that it would not be sensible to make such a sudden change this late in his career.³⁹ His philosophy of composition and of music is

...that [while] music cannot continue to exist in a vacuum of sameness and predictability, it is also true that music cannot yield to anarchy. Some people may consider it "fun" to hear a typewriter amplified to ear-splitting proportions over a P. A. system, but, really, it is all so cynical. What is so sad is that a number of listeners are willing to endure the torture, finding this a fresh experience. Precisely-organized computer sounds constitute a valid experiment, but... what do they have to communicate musically? There is a vast difference...between sound as science, and sound as art. For this composer-pianist-teacher, music must produce an emotional-intellectual uplift.⁴⁰

As a teacher, Muczynski expresses his concern over the importance of music education in the development of American music.

"Our responsibility", he avidly enjoins, "is to bring to people an awareness of the meaningfulness of good music. Students need to learn that it is not a weakness to respond to beautiful sounds, words, and images." He is also concerned that music teachers seek to develop in their students a sense of selectivity,

³⁹Muczynski, "Interview".

⁴⁰"American Composer Sketches", op. cit., p. 55.

so they can distinguish the mediocre from the superb within all the various types of music.

Composing for the mass audience, the composer readily admits, is doomed to failure. "You cannot write music that will please yourself, the publisher, your mother, and the school teacher in Dubuque, Iowa. We all try, of course, but we always fail." Even the old masters, he reasons, failed in this, "so who are we to expect such impossible odds?" Foremost, Mr. Muczynski's⁴¹ approach is to "try to deliver a first-rate work".⁴¹

⁴¹"American Composer Sketches", p. 55.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

In conclusion, we have met the composer-pianist-teacher Robert Muczynski, perhaps one of the few remaining composers who also perform their own music. We have discussed the elements of his style that make his music personal and unique. We have seen how an understanding of this style can contribute to a better performance of the music.

What can we expect from Robert Muczynski in the future? As far as composition is concerned, the future is wide open. Muczynski says that he likes to write in the major genres and someday intends to write more sonatas and perhaps a Second Concerto for piano. However, he feels restricted to the shorter works because publishers are usually not willing to take the risk and publish works that are too difficult for a majority of people. Collections of pieces sell well, but after a while one gets tired of writing them. So he is torn between two ideals. But he plans to keep on writing piano and other instrumental music as the opportunity arises.⁴²

Currently, Professor Muczynski is busy composing a saxophone concerto. Also to appear in the future is a second album featuring the Second Piano Sonata and the remainder of his piano works.

⁴²Muczynski, "Interview", op. cit.

The first album, entitled Muczynski Plays Muczynski, was just released last November (1980). It featured the First and Third Sonatas, the Six Preludes, and the Maverick Pieces. The second album should be out by the end of this year (1981).

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