

3-2019

# FROM IMPROVISATION TO ARTISTRY: A STUDY OF THE PIANO'S 12 SIDES BY CARTER PANN

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FROM IMPROVISATION TO ARTISTRY: A STUDY OF  
*THE PIANO'S 12 SIDES* BY CARTER PANN

by

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A DOCTORAL DOCUMENT

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Major: Music

Under the Supervision of Professor Mark K. Clinton

Lincoln, Nebraska

March, 2019

FROM IMPROVISATION TO ARTISTRY: A STUDY OF  
*THE PIANO'S 12 SIDES* BY CARTER PANN

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University of Nebraska, 2019

Advisor: Mark K. Clinton, DMA

Intended as a resource for pianists who may analyze or perform Carter Pann's *The Piano's 12 Sides*, this study provides biographical information on the composer and explores his professional relationship with the pianist for whom it was composed, Joel Hastings. Each piece from *The Piano's 12 Sides* is discussed in terms of form, melody, harmony, texture and Pann's approach to the pianistic compositional idiom. The composition is also examined with regard to extra-musical details and programmatic elements as well as inspiration and dedications that influenced Pann's compositional process.

Correspondence and interviews with the composer reveal the motivation and inspiration behind *The Piano's 12 Sides* as well as several other piano, chamber, and large ensemble compositions. This study sheds light on Pann's solo piano compositions and suggests the importance of considering them as viable additions to the contemporary repertoire for serious pianists.

## DEDICATION

To my piano teachers: Mark Clinton, DMA, Wei-Han Su, DMA, and Marilyn Lowe, MM for imparting wisdom and exhibiting professionalism as they have helped me grow both musically and personally throughout my career as a student.

To my wife, for her steadfast, unconditional love and companionship.

To my parents, for their constant love, encouragement, and sacrifice that brought me to this point.

To my sister, for her lifelong friendship and for proofreading countless papers throughout my education.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following individuals have provided support in the completion of this study for which I am extremely grateful:

Carter Pann, DMA

My teacher, mentor, and friend, Mark Clinton, DMA

My supervisory committee: Brenda Wristen, PhD, Pamela Starr, PhD,  
and Daniel Ciobanu, PhD

My friends and colleagues at the Glenn Korff School of Music:  
In Our Grit, Our Glory.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Biography.....	3
Compositional Style .....	8
Joel Hastings .....	13
 <b>CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW OF COMPOSITIONS.....</b>	 <b>17</b>
Solo Piano .....	17
<i>The Cheese Grater: A Mean Piano Two-Step</i> .....	17
<i>Two Lullabies</i> .....	19
<i>The Bills</i> .....	19
<i>Six Strokes</i> .....	22
<i>Fantasy-Inventions</i> .....	23
<i>Upstate: A Slow Drag</i> .....	24
<i>Five Serious Pieces</i> .....	25
Chamber Music .....	29
<i>Antares</i> .....	29
<i>Circumnavigator</i> .....	30
<i>Differences</i> .....	32
<i>Melodies for Robert</i> .....	33
Choral Music and Songs.....	35
<i>Poems for Jason</i> .....	35
Orchestra (with piano).....	36
<i>Piano Concerto No. 1</i> .....	36
Wind Symphony (with piano).....	38
<i>Concerto Logic (Piano Concerto No. 2)</i> .....	38
 <b>CHAPTER 3: THE PIANO’S 12 SIDES .....</b>	 <b>40</b>
I. “Silhouette” .....	42
II. “Figurines” .....	46
III. “Legend” .....	48
IV. “White Moon Over Water” .....	51
V. “Le Branle”.....	55

VI. “Classic Rock” .....	57
VII. “She Steals Me” .....	60
VIII. “Soirée Macabre” .....	64
IX. “Orion” .....	67
X. “Cradle Song” .....	69
XI. “Grand Etude-Fantasy” .....	71
XII. “An Irish Tune” .....	75
<b>CHAPTER 4: FINAL THOUGHTS</b> .....	<b>80</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	<b>83</b>
<b>APPENDIX A</b> .....	<b>86</b>
Interview Transcript .....	86
<b>APPENDIX B</b> .....	<b>108</b>
List of Compositions .....	108
<b>APPENDIX C</b> .....	<b>111</b>
Notes from Carter Pann .....	111

## CHAPTER 1: Introduction

The literature for solo piano is ever expanding as composers around the world continue to generate new works. It is safe to say that more music has been written for the piano than for any other instrument, especially if one considers the vast amount of chamber and other collaborative works that include piano. Therefore, it is nearly impossible for one individual to have a comprehensive knowledge of the repertoire. Further, virtually unknown music exists, but is worthy of the attention of serious performers and patrons of classical piano music. Within this study, I present a set of pieces that I believe falls into this category: *The Piano's 12 Sides* by Carter Pann. Included is a discussion of specific traits of Pann's music that form his unique and individual style and contribute to the success his music achieves on the concert stage.

Introductory material is followed by an overview of Pann's life and career, which is succeeded by a survey of his compositional output for piano. In this study, excerpts of personal correspondence with Pann illustrate specific points, illuminating important stories about his professional relationships and career, and offering a more in-depth understanding of the works discussed herein. An entire chapter devoted to *The Piano's 12 Sides* provides not only an overview of the entire work, but also a more thorough analysis of a select number of pieces from the set. The content of Pann's piano compositions is quite varied. However, the fact that *The Piano's 12 Sides* is a quirky compilation of multiple styles and genres contributes to its ability to stand as a unique musical journey from beginning to end.

Although Carter Pann has contributed a significant amount of piano music to the repertoire, his wind band music has been more widely studied and performed. Aside from



brief reviews and articles, nothing of significant scope has been published about his piano music to date. There are several qualities of his compositional style that justify a study of his keyboard music, one of which is the diversity of style within Pann's compositional output. In the twenty-first century, there is no such thing as a single style that defines classical music. Thus, Pann writes in a context that allows for his unique contrast in rhythm, figuration, harmony, and tonality. Additionally, the gestures within his musical ideas serves as a means of distinguishing this work from among other contemporary pieces of its nature. Carter Pann is a trained pianist himself and the essence of his compositions certainly reflect his skill in this regard. Because he writes through the lens of a pianist, his music contains qualities that are easily relatable to the piano. Virtuosity is more of a rule than an exception in his solo piano works, and his compositional idiom requires careful study and preparation. Specifically, each movement of *The Piano's 12 Sides* focuses on a unique color or character, evoking a different "side" of the performer's expressivity.

Because this study is the first serious study of Pann's keyboard works, a large portion of the information comes from a recent interview and correspondence with the composer and from the author's own analysis of the score. Previously documented interviews or conversations with the composer are referenced, as well as any other biographical information in existence regarding general elements of the composer's life and style. Appendix A contains a discussion of methodology and a full interview transcript. Additionally, a complete list of compositions can be found in Appendix B.

## Biography

Carter Pann was born on February 21, 1972 in La Grange, Illinois. According to the liner notes from his 2000 recording of the Piano Concerto and Dance Partita, Pann began studying the piano at an early age with his grandmother. In an interview with Vu Nguyen, he recalled his early years as a student of the piano, attributing much of his success to the persistence of his parents:

“After much tenacity on their part (I can only imagine!) through my pre-teen years I finally blossomed on the instrument, and, swiftly, my early success led to obsession. My parents no longer had to prod me to explore music, as I became a self-motivated little machine. All they had to do, which they so lovingly did, was support my interests and guide me in my growth as a normal human being. I never take for granted just how lucky I am to have the parents I do. I think about it every day.”<sup>1</sup>

At age ten, Pann began lessons with Doreen Sterba, with whom he studied for five years. Subsequently, he commenced lessons with Emilio Del Rosario at the North Shore School of Music in Winnetka, Illinois. The significance of this relationship was twofold: not only did Del Rosario serve as his mentor and introduce him to vast amounts of piano music, but he also directed Pann toward the study of composition. In 1988, Pann began studying composition with Howard Sandroff of the University of Chicago. In high school, he was well rounded, as he was involved in choral music as a vocalist, pianist, and even arranger. He played quarterback on the football team for a year before coming to the realization that an injury might hamper his ability to practice piano. He earned a Bachelor of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music where he studied composition with Samuel Adler, Joseph Schwantner, Warren Benson, and David Liptak

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<sup>1</sup>Vu Nguyen, "Carter Pann," in *A Composer's Insight: Thoughts, Analysis, and Commentary on Contemporary Masterpieces for Wind Band*, ed. Timothy Salzman, vol. 5 (Galesville, MD: Meredith Music Publications, 2012), 165.

and piano with Barry Snyder. Pann continued his education at the graduate level, earning a Master of Music degree from the University of Michigan in 1996 under William Albright, William Bolcom, and Bright Sheng.<sup>2</sup>

Pann stayed at Michigan to continue his graduate education, which ultimately led to the defense and completion of the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in the spring of 2004.<sup>3</sup> After the first year of his DMA studies, Pann took three years off to compose. His output during this time consisted of chamber and orchestral music as well as music for television and radio commercials.<sup>4</sup> Pann attributes burnout from teaching as a graduate assistant as the reason for this break, but the University of Michigan allowed him to come back immediately after the break. He now says, “that’s the only reason I could do [it].”<sup>5</sup> After graduation, Pann took another year off to follow a non-musical passion: chess. For a month, he stayed in Brooklyn with Wanda Fleck, who ran a chamber music society in New York City. He rode the A train into town daily to play chess and chain-smoke. “It was like the stupidest thing to do—I mean, I enjoyed it while I was there.”<sup>6</sup> Before going to New York, Pann had applied and interviewed for several faculty jobs, but he had his heart set on a job in Colorado. Midway through the summer, he had practically given up hope of finding a job that year. Finally, the phone rang. He recalled the event in a 2009 conversation with Nguyen:

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<sup>2</sup>Carter Pann, *Carter Pann: Dance Partita • Piano Concerto*, 2000, Naxos 8.559043, compact disc liner notes, 2.

<sup>3</sup>Carter Pann, interview by author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>4</sup>Vu Nguyen, "Carter Pann," in *A Composer's Insight: Thoughts, Analysis, and Commentary on Contemporary Masterpieces for Wind Band*, ed. Timothy Salzman, vol. 5 (Galesville, MD: Meredith Music Publications, 2012), 166.

<sup>5</sup>Carter Pann, interview by author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

“I was in New York, standing outside the chess shop on Thompson Street in the Village. I was taking a break from a game in the middle of the day in late June of 2005, and I received a call from the Dean of the music school at the University of Colorado, asking me if I would teach there in the fall. I had thought that my chances of obtaining a position at CU Boulder were nil because I hadn’t heard anything, and it was very late. I wanted to go there very much—they were at the top of my list—and I had interviewed at a couple different places that didn’t work out. I remember the scene standing there taking a break and thinking that I didn’t have to consider quitting music and becoming a chess player.”<sup>7</sup>

After completing his DMA, Pann moved to Steamboat Springs, Colorado where he lived for a few months in an earthship<sup>8</sup> that was embedded in the side of a mountain.<sup>9</sup> He borrowed an upright piano and dragged it up the hill into the “beautiful looking structure,” which he called home for a few months.<sup>10</sup> He was also battling identity theft at this time, but this did not stop him from writing music, including more commercials and a three movement piano piece commissioned by the American Music Institute for Eastman pianist, Barry Snyder, called *Fantasy-Inventions* (see Chapter 2).

Following his appointment at the University of Colorado Boulder as Instructor of Composition/Theory in 2005, he was promoted to Assistant Professor of Composition/Theory in 2008, and currently serves as Associate Professor. Among other awards, he received the Provost’s Faculty Achievement Award from CU in 2011 (for *Concerto Logic*) and 2017 (for *The Mechanics*). Pann was recently a featured performer on American Public Media’s “Performance Today” with his work, *The Extension of My*

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<sup>7</sup>Vu Nguyen, "Carter Pann," in *A Composer's Insight: Thoughts, Analysis, and Commentary on Contemporary Masterpieces for Wind Band*, ed. Timothy Salzman, vol. 5 (Galesville, MD: Meredith Music Publications, 2012), 167.

<sup>8</sup>An earthship is made of natural and upcycled materials (like cans and tires). The structure is partially embedded in the ground and is designed to be efficient through the distribution of passive solar energy.

<sup>9</sup>Carter Pann, interview by author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

*Eye*, for piano and chamber orchestra; he continues to make appearances across the nation as guest composer, performer, and lecturer.

Pann has won a number of awards and scholarships, including five ASCAP composer awards and two GRAMMY® nominations: one in 2001 for his Piano Concerto and the other for an album, *A Tent for the Sun*, which features his second piano concerto and a serenade for winds, plus two pieces by Dan Kellogg: one for wind ensemble with actor and one for string quartet and band.<sup>11</sup> One of Pann's works to receive special honor was his *SLALOM*, a nine-and-a-half-minute work written for wind ensemble (originally written for orchestra). As the title suggests, the piece depicts a downhill ski run, specifically inspired by Pann's own trips to Steamboat Springs. In a 2001 interview, Pann shared that he "tried to convey not only the speed of skiing, but also the beauty of the scenery."<sup>12</sup> He described the piece as a "cinematic-type tone poem,"<sup>13</sup> and he provided sensory cues to the performer in the score such as "Scent of Pine" and "On One Sky Gyration."<sup>14</sup> Pann's *SLALOM* was a finalist in BBC's 2001 International Masterprize competition.<sup>15</sup> In 2016, he was a Pulitzer Prize Finalist in recognition for his saxophone quartet *The Mechanics: Six from the Shop Floor*. The Pulitzer Prize is one of the most distinguished awards in classical music, and the organization described Pann's six

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>"Masterprize Semi-Finalist: Carter Pann," *NewMusicBox*, March 1, 2001, accessed September 25, 2018, <https://nmbx.newmusicusa.org/Masterprize-SemiFinalist-Carter-Pann/>.

<sup>13</sup>Molly Sheridan, "Masterprize Finalist: Carter Pann," *NewMusicBox*, August 1, 2001, accessed September 29, 2018, <https://nmbx.newmusicusa.org/Masterprize-Finalist-Carter-Pann/>.

<sup>14</sup>"SLALOM," Theodore Presser Company, accessed September 29, 2018, <https://www.presser.com/shop/slalom-for-orchestra.html>.

<sup>15</sup>"Masterprize | BBC World Service," BBC, 2001, accessed September 29, 2018, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/arts/features/masterprize/index.shtml>.

movement work as "a suite that imagines its four saxophonists as mechanics engaged in a rhythmic interplay of precision and messiness that is by turns bubbly, pulsing, dreamy and nostalgic."<sup>16</sup>

Though Pann has had considerable success as a composer, he originally set out to be a pianist. In fact, it was his piano instructor who steered him toward composition and his first composition teacher, Howard Sandroff. Pann remembers with a laugh, "So there I was, 17 I think, taking my first composition lessons ever with a man who sort of lives by Morton Feldman composition technique, which is five pitch objects and vectors and the usefulness of pitch grouping."<sup>17</sup> His real inspiration came after he heard Steve Reich for the first time. "I had no idea who he was, and I listened to his Octet. I just couldn't believe what I was hearing. I couldn't believe that music could be this beautiful today. I thought it was sort of dead."<sup>18</sup> From then on, he was like a sponge. "I would just absorb these new scores and these new pieces like a child. I couldn't get enough. Old and new, I was just sopping it up, and I wanted to try my hand at writing some of it."<sup>19</sup> The experience prompted him to seriously pursue studying composition and he landed at the Eastman School. Now, he "can't imagine doing anything else."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Sarah Kuta, "CU-Boulder's Carter Pann a Finalist for Pulitzer Prize in Music," *Boulder Daily Camera*, April 19, 2016, accessed September 29, 2018, [http://www.dailycamera.com/cu-news/ci\\_29784894/cu-boulders-carter-pann-finalist-pulitzer-prize-music](http://www.dailycamera.com/cu-news/ci_29784894/cu-boulders-carter-pann-finalist-pulitzer-prize-music).

<sup>17</sup>Molly Sheridan, "Masterprize Finalist: Carter Pann," *NewMusicBox*, August 1, 2001, accessed September 29, 2018, <https://nmbx.newmusicusa.org/Masterprize-Finalist-Carter-Pann/>.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

## Compositional Style

Pann recalls his early days in composition with Howard Sandroff, who introduced him to the indeterminate techniques of Morton Feldman. Prior to this time, he “was writing piano waltzes that were Chopin and Beethoven influenced.”<sup>21</sup> His creativity began to lose its authenticity and he fell into a pattern of writing what Sandroff wanted him to. One day, however, Sandroff gave him a recording of Steve Reich’s *Music for a Large Ensemble*, at which point Pann was shocked by the beauty and tonality of its content, as discussed above.

While he believes he matured a lot at Eastman, it was his graduate study at Michigan where Pann really discovered his own style as a composer. His choice to attend Michigan was based largely on the opportunity to study with William Bolcom, whom he now considers to be his most important mentor:

“Studying with Bill Bolcom is something one must be ready for. An hour with him is like a ‘Short Ride in a Fast Machine.’ His knowledge is unparalleled. You get the sense that he has seen it all... and that you cannot possibly bring anything new to show him. It was a humbling period of maturation for me. I tried to study with him as much as I could during my years at the University of Michigan. He and William Albright *were* the Music School for me. I started to wear my own compositional clothes... I started to be who I am and grow into my own skin.”<sup>22</sup>

Pann’s training as a pianist is influential in his compositional style. He nearly always begins the compositional process at the piano: “I’m very keyboard based, because it’s where I can get my hands into the dirt. Then, like a culture, it opens up and if I’m

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<sup>21</sup>Vu Nguyen, "Carter Pann," in *A Composer's Insight: Thoughts, Analysis, and Commentary on Contemporary Masterpieces for Wind Band*, ed. Timothy Salzman, vol. 5 (Galesville, MD: Meredith Music Publications, 2012), 165.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 166.

lucky, it just keeps going.” Composing then becomes “just a series of yes/no questions, almost binary, and the piece is sort of writing itself. You just have to ask if you’re going to do this or not.”<sup>23</sup> For example, while composing his GRAMMY® award nominated *SLALOM*, he worked on all of the instrumental parts simultaneously from beginning to end. “It’s not better or worse because of it, but it would have been different” if he had gone back and orchestrated it after the fact.<sup>24</sup>

Pann prefers to compose from either a studio in his home or a space near his home. “It’s not like I have a setup next to my bed—I used to, but you know, that’s when I was in college. I’ve worked in my office space and it’s not ideal—I don’t like it, but sometimes I don’t have a choice.”<sup>25</sup> Because he is a trained pianist, Pann does not feel that incredible breakthroughs have occurred throughout his career in writing for piano.<sup>26</sup> However, he feels that the music he writes for piano today is “smarter” than the music he wrote earlier in life:

“I’m never trying to push like a square peg through a round hole like I did with some of my earlier works. I don’t copycat as much. I used to copycat other music or other composers—dead and alive. I used to do that a lot and I don’t do that anymore.”<sup>27</sup>

The fact that Pann is a pianist himself not only influences the genesis of his compositions, but also the way in which he writes for piano. He strives to be “as idiomatic as possible for the piano, and yet, still do something seemingly fresh.”<sup>28</sup> He has

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<sup>23</sup>Molly Sheridan, "Masterprize Finalist: Carter Pann," *NewMusicBox*, August 1, 2001, accessed September 29, 2018, <https://nmbx.newmusicusa.org/Masterprize-Finalist-Carter-Pann/>.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup>Carter Pann, interview by author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*



played enough new music that he knows what people do not appreciate and what he “would never want to put a pianist through.”<sup>29</sup> His models for pianistic style include Messiaen, whom Pann says, “speaks the language of piano music” or Ligeti’s etudes; he says his own music is more difficult in a different way than these pieces, but that they serve as models.<sup>30</sup>

When discussing his own style in relation to previous composers, Pann mentioned the keyboard works of Bach, Chopin, Liszt, Brahms, Schumann, Debussy, and Ravel as being influential in his own music. He says, “I look at their music and see that everything is there. And so that’s what I aspire to in my own music.”<sup>31</sup> Pann is a self-proclaimed omnivore when it comes to composers he likes, but, he says, “if I had to put a composer’s name on my tombstone... it’s Chopin.”<sup>32</sup>

Given the nature of his compositional heroes, it makes sense that there are a lot of moving voices in Pann’s music. The fact that counterpoint is present in much of his music makes it unique among modern composers, but also makes it challenging. Since pianists have ten fingers to employ at any given moment, it allows three or four voices to occur simultaneously without much physical effort. “There’s no hiding in my music,” Pann added as he discussed the difficulty of his style.<sup>33</sup> The act of writing ambient music, spectral music, or tremendously minimalist music is not of interest to Pann.<sup>34</sup> Complexity

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

and intricacy in music is satisfactory to him – to a point, and then “just like anything else, musically beyond that [point] it just becomes too much.”<sup>35</sup>

Pann has a lot to say about why he pays special attention to details and why they are marked so clearly in the score. He says there is a “constant *crescendo* over time” of how much detail he indicates in the score for all of his music, not just that for piano. Not all of his markings are traditional, but he is “no longer timid” with regard to what he writes in the score.<sup>36</sup>

“I am who I am, and if I’m going to say something on my score that’s completely colloquial to how I grew up, or where I’m from, or it’s a little corny, or it’s a little cheesy, so be it. I’m trying not to go beyond the bounds of taste, but I don’t mind that anymore. I’m confident and I have the guts to do it.”<sup>37</sup>

Pann recalls how earlier in his career, he assumed that performers would understand his intentions.<sup>38</sup> Pann says it is good for people to perform his music without consulting him; he says that’s how it should be.<sup>39</sup> However, he has been burned enough times by misinterpretations due to lack of communication on the score that he decided to make a change. He acknowledges that “this can get to be too much,” and he as the composer can indicate almost “every way to turn the corner of interpretation as the piece goes on” (especially in large ensemble or band works), thereby robbing conductors of their own interpretation.<sup>40</sup> Pann says it’s not that he distrusts good musicians, but rather that we are

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Carter Pann, interview by author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

all human, and therefore, there is an inherent tendency to assume. Now, he chooses to “err on the side of more than less,” with respect to instructions to the performers.<sup>41</sup>

Pann remarks that in his compositional voice, it is not about his piano technique. Rather it is about his respect for and relationship with the instrument, combined with the fact that the keys are arranged perfectly “for someone with a compositional mind.”<sup>42</sup> He calls the piano a “series of buttons” that provide “all the tones of the orchestra.”<sup>43</sup> Then, anything can be imagined between these tones.

Pann periodically performs his own works. When asked if this fact influences the way in which he writes, he responded, “Yes it does. It does for the most part.” He then went on to explain that he avoids writing music that “kills you technically.”<sup>44</sup> He loves virtuosic show pieces and modern virtuosity, but he says, “music that is only executable by a small handful of performers because of the extreme virtuosity lacks something musically in it for me.”<sup>45</sup> Thus, Pann avoids this in his own works; he admits he is not practiced in that style of composing.

One may find it odd that a pianist like Pann has written such a large volume of music for wind band. Pann recalls his first wind band commission in 2002 when John Lynch, former Director of Bands at the University of Kansas, called and asked him to write a piece. Pann’s response was simply, “I’ve never written a band piece... I mean, I guess I could start.” He did not even know the instrumentation or how to arrange it on the score. As an alternative to this request, Pann proposed that he arrange an existing

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

orchestral piece for wind band. Lynch conceded by saying, “that’s fine; let’s do it – that’s the piece I love and that’s the reason I’m calling you to get a new piece, but if you want to arrange that piece, great.” The piece to which he refers is *SLALOM*, and it became internationally recognized not long after its completion.

Pianism is evident in all of Pann’s music. In fact, pianism is perhaps a reason why his large ensemble music is so challenging:

“I am a pianist, and growing up as a pianist, you don’t have to stay in time with anybody. So if you’re a very musical soloist, your tempi are elastic – as they should be. And then I actually compose that into my larger ensemble music, and that is what makes my music challenging. It makes modern music challenging when you can’t just engage in a tempo and go and everything is just written to be in that tempo grid. Instead, you have to actually perform things that we’re only used to doing in Beethoven. We’re only used to doing this in the Brahms overtures, you know what I’m saying? But that comes from being a soloist; I’m not a clarinetist that grew up being in bands, and therefore, writes music that [you] just sort of ‘pour, add water’ and it just kind of clicks like ‘the [Energizer] bunny.’”<sup>46</sup>

As a student of great composers, Pann had a lot to live up to musically. William Albright appreciated Pann’s music and said it is “always smiling... or that it’s always trying to smile.” The more one studies Carter Pann’s compositions, the more this seems accurate. Within his musical textures there lies a sense of optimism and a ray of hope, sometimes buried beneath the surface, but almost always present.

### **Joel Hastings**

Joel Hastings was an important figure in the life of Carter Pann’s piano music. A Canadian pianist born on July 22, 1969, he grew up in Ontario (specifically North Bay and Windsor). Hastings died of a massive heart attack on May 26, 2016 at the young age

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

of 46. He was survived by his wife, Charise, among several other family members.<sup>47</sup>

Upon his death, his pre-college piano teacher remarked that:

“[Hastings] was without a doubt the most brilliant student I ever taught. Enormously gifted both on organ and piano. He learned a lot of things on his own, too. He had a very clear sense of what kind of musician he wanted to be and he just worked and worked to become that kind of musician. He was a very quick learner and very communicative performer. He had an extraordinary gift for reaching his audience.”<sup>48</sup>

At the time of his death, he was serving on the piano faculty at the Florida State University in Tallahassee. He also held other appointments, such as visiting faculty at the University of Windsor, Ontario and other music festivals and retreats.

Hastings received a gold medal on his ARCT diplomas in piano and organ from the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, earning the highest score in the country. All of his post-secondary education was completed at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Here, he earned a Bachelor of Music degree in organ, as well as both Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees in piano. Between the undergraduate and graduate degrees, he took time to perform, teach, and record. Hastings won the 1993 International Bach Competition held at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. as well as the 8<sup>th</sup> International Web Concert Hall Competition in 2006. He also received multiple grants from The Canadian Council for the Performing Arts.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>"Joel R. Hastings - Obituary & Service Information," Joel R. Hastings Obituary, accessed September 29, 2018, <https://www.rbfhsaline.com/obituaries/Joel-Hastings-2/#!/Obituary>.

<sup>48</sup>Trevor Wilhelm, "Music Community Mourns Death of 'Brilliant' Windsor Pianist Hastings," Windsor Star, May 31, 2016, accessed September 29, 2018, <https://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/music-community-mourns-death-of-brilliant-windsor-pianist>.

<sup>49</sup>Aryeh Oron, "Joel Hastings (Piano)," Bach Cantatas, August 2017, accessed September 29, 2018, <http://www.bach-cantatas.com/Bio/Hastings-Joel.htm>.

Hastings was an internationally recognized Steinway Artist and performed solo recitals in Canada, the United States, and Europe. According to his bio on Naxos Music, his orchestral collaborations included the Toronto Philharmonic, the Detroit, Ann Arbor, Oakville, Okanagan, Windsor, Kamloops, Niagara, Racine, Timmins and Sault Ste. Marie Symphonies, the Kitchener-Waterloo and Michigan Chamber Orchestras, the University of Michigan Symphony Band, the Ann Arbor Concert Band, and the Florida State University Orchestra.<sup>50</sup>

Hastings's recordings have been praised in *American Record Guide* and *MusicWeb International*, among others. He was deemed "audience favorite" by a reporter following his performance at the Tenth Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, and another compared his "kinetic fingers" to that of his countryman, Glenn Gould.<sup>51</sup> His discography includes recordings of Liszt's transcriptions and Chopin's *24 Etudes*<sup>52</sup> as well as a world premiere recording of piano works by Jean Roger-Ducasse.<sup>53</sup> As established previously, Pann preferred to collaborate with this pianist. In 2014, Hastings recorded an album of Carter Pann's piano compositions on the Naxos record label.<sup>54</sup> This recording includes a significant portion of Pann's solo piano output: *The Piano's 12 Sides*, *The Bills*, *The Cheese Grater – A Mean Two Step*, and *Piano Concerto No. 1: III. "Cadenza: Your Touch."*

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<sup>50</sup>"Joel Hastings," History of Classical Music, accessed September 29, 2018, [https://www.naxos.com/person/Joel\\_Hastings/220320.htm](https://www.naxos.com/person/Joel_Hastings/220320.htm).

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Joel Hastings, *Roger-Ducasse: Piano Works*, 2017, Grand Piano GP724, compact disc.

<sup>54</sup>Joel Hastings, *Carter Pann: The Piano's 12 Sides*, 2014, Naxos 8.559751, compact disc.

Because *The Piano's 12 Sides* was written for Hastings, it is helpful to understand Pann's professional relationship with him. Hastings was two and a half years older than Pann, and the two were students together at the University of Michigan.<sup>55</sup> Pann recalls meeting Hastings while they were in school:

“When I got to Michigan in 1994, [Hastings] was already there doing a degree in piano performance with Dickran Atamian. That's how I met him – he was just another student. We didn't connect for quite a while though. We were acquaintances, but never became friends until well after we were there together. He graduated, left, got a church gig there – he stayed in Ann Arbor his whole life basically until he went to FSU. So that's where I met him.”<sup>56</sup>

In the program notes to *The Piano's 12 Sides*, Pann calls Hastings a “rare species” and says he possessed “huge helpings of raw piano talent.” When Hastings died, Pann was composing another set of pieces for him to perform: “it was supposed to be something like ‘The Piano's 18 Sides’... it was going to be big. So I stopped. I sort of derailed it in his memorial... and it was only five pieces at that time.”<sup>57</sup> Those five pieces are now known as *Five Serious Pieces* and will be discussed in Chapter 2.

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<sup>55</sup>Carter Pann, interview by author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER 2: Overview of Compositions

While Carter Pann has written a wide variety of music, an overwhelming majority of it includes piano. This chapter provides an overview and discussion of some major works for solo piano, small chamber ensembles, and large ensemble works that include piano. Not all of Pann's works are included in this review. For a complete list of compositions, see Appendix B.

### Solo Piano

#### *The Cheese Grater: A Mean Piano Two-Step*

Written in 1996, this work stands as one of the earliest solo piano pieces in Pann's catalog. He still has not invested in an electric cheese grater, despite having two specific injuries from grating cheese, which inspired the writing of this piece. Pann wrote this piece on Barry Snyder's Hamburg Steinway over the course of three days – he was housesitting for Snyder and his partner while they were on a summer vacation. The piece was not written for any particular individual, Pann says, "I just decided to go and write something insane."<sup>1</sup> He felt that ragtime was an appropriate style for this piece because his heroes, Bolcom and Albright, wrote rags about "mundane stuff"<sup>2</sup> (for example, Albright's *Onion Skin Rag*).

Pann wanted to make this piece "lean and mean and tough," which is precisely what he achieved in just under three minutes of music; he also alluded to the influence of "Scarbo" from Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit*.<sup>3</sup> After a short two-measure introduction, the

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<sup>1</sup>Carter Pann, interview by author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



main material emerges “possessed,” as the score indicates.<sup>4</sup> The rhythm of the piece is somewhat repetitive, much as is the motion of grating cheese. Pann explores the full range of the piano as motives move through a chordal texture. The accompaniment is typical of ragtime, with single notes or octaves on strong beats and chords on the off-beat. Occasionally, the left hand joins the right hand with syncopation or an arpeggiated figure. The drama and intensity of the piece is aided by stark contrasts in dynamics, such as in the “mean” section, where a “mezzo forte” immediately follows an “sfffz.” Pann’s use of fermatas and temporary tempo alterations like *ritardando*, also sets apart specific gestures and motives. The “vivo” section presents an unusual meter for piano rag: 3/8. Here, Pann writes on three staves: the top is a flurry of sixteenth notes (mostly two note clusters) in perpetual motion, and all of the accidentals are written individually in this layer of the texture as there are none indicated in the key signature. In contrast, the left hand part on the bottom two staves is written with a key signature of six sharps. This idea returns after “The Grater” section, which according to the composer, contains “an actual depiction of a cheese grater... you can hear it grating.”<sup>5</sup> The grating in this six flat section is evident in the rolled cluster chords. Following the return of the vivo section is a reprise of introductory material as well as returns of previous ideas with added drama, leading up to the final burst of energy at the close of the piece marked “Take off!”<sup>6</sup> As if the piece were not rolling along fast enough, Pann asks the performer to pull out all the stops for this final flourish. Organized insanity is perhaps an accurate description of this piece as

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<sup>4</sup>Carter Pann, *The Cheese Grater*, 2015.

<sup>5</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>6</sup>Carter Pann, *The Cheese Grater*, 2015.

the composer clearly articulates his intentions. When performed well, as on the Hastings album, the piece is certainly showy and exciting for appreciative audiences.

### *Two Lullabies*

*Two Lullabies*, also written in 1996, is another of Pann's earliest solo piano compositions. Both lullabies are relatively simple and they share metric characteristics since they are both in triple meter. Further, they both have a single line melody in the right hand, which occasionally expands to larger blocked sonorities. The accompaniment is nocturne-like as a single note bassline alternates with blocked chords. Extended harmonies add luscious color to the texture. In the first lullaby, a key harmonic feature is the fluctuation between tonic and subdominant. While clearly in a major tonality, the piece moves through a series of keys in the middle section before returning to the opening idea. The second lullaby begins in the parallel minor, but then becomes more melodically decorated, chromatic, and harmonically adventurous than the first. Additionally, the second piece ends on a dissonant sonority, thereby leaving the feeling of suspense in stark contrast to the finality of the first. Together, the lullabies last just over seven minutes in performance.

### *The Bills*

This set of rags, lasting just under ten minutes, was composed in 1997 – soon after *The Cheese Grater*. At this time, Pann was a graduate student in Michigan; thus, the influential figures for whom the set was named. Pann says these rags were written as “a tribute—let me write a couple rags directly for these dudes.”<sup>7</sup> The first piece, “William Albright – A Concert Rag,” stands in memoriam to Albright, who died during the piece's

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<sup>7</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

composition. Pann explained that Albright knew of the piece before his death, “even though he didn’t know that it was going to turn into his.”<sup>8</sup>

Pann describes this set of rags as “pretty idiomatic,” but “tremendously challenging.”<sup>9</sup> Upon hearing these pieces, the tunes may sound familiar, but according to the composer, there was no intentional reference to any other composition in the themes of the *The Bills*. Like many of his pieces, these began as improvised tunes. He simply asked himself how far he could go with the idea and this was the result. The role of improvisation has changed throughout the course of history, but during this discussion, Pann referred to improvisation and its importance to him:

“You have to understand, my favorite composers of old and dead are the best improvisers ever. This is Chopin, Liszt, Bach. So, for me, that’s an aspiration: to be able to improvise a tune. And then you have to write it down. I’m not improvising these things just as you see them, you know what I’m saying?”<sup>10</sup>

He continued to say that “improvising the kernel of an idea is enough” for him.<sup>11</sup> Thus, while *The Bills* are not based on previously existing material, the composer pointed out that the two pieces are closely related. They are written enharmonically with the same tonal center (C-sharp minor/D-flat major), and the main rhythmic motive at the outset of each is nearly identical. “It’s because they were so similar and kind of brotherly,”<sup>12</sup> shared Pann, presumably speaking of the real-life Bills.

In “William Albright – A Concert Rag,” the tempo is a key ingredient in the evocation of the tragic affect as indicated in the score. In this piece, Pann prefers enough

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

flexibility to make subtle expression through the use of *rubato*, especially at the end of phrases.<sup>13</sup> These pieces were written before the composer listed as much detail in the score, but he still gave clues regarding the desired character. For example, three changes occur simultaneously to usher in the section marked “ghostly”: the original tempo returns, the dynamic is softer, and the register of the right hand changes. This quickly gives way to a forte, expansive moment that provides even more depth to the emotion. The next section marked, “prayer,” is to be played “a little slower” with a “rich, beautiful” tone.<sup>14</sup> The overall settled nature of this piece is, according to the composer, what makes it sing. Key elements of a successful performance include allowing the music to breathe and taking advantage of the special moments Pann provides, like the “soulful, slanted” riff before the return of the opening.

In “William Bolcom – An Elaborate Fancy,” we find an entirely different series of expressions. After the introductory idea with straight sixteenth notes, the tempo becomes faster and the main motive emerges in which the sixteenth notes are swung. Both pieces in the set are clearly sectional, but in this piece, the contrasts are greater. Polyrythms and scalar figures are also used as character-defining compositional devices. In the “sly” section, chromatic, contrary motion chords evoke “a little ‘Hollywood’” and lead into a “grand” passage, which serves both as a conclusion to one section and a transition to another.<sup>15</sup> The feeling of surprise is subconsciously implied as the piece continues despite reaching points that sound nearly final. The tempo suggests the feeling of exasperation at the outset of the “con moto” section, but the feeling is short-lived as the section closes in

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<sup>13</sup>Carter Pann, personal communication with author, December 4, 2018.

<sup>14</sup>Carter Pann, *The Bills*, 2004.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

a straight “cheeky” rhythm. One of the most challenging passages of the piece begins at the “presto con brio” marking. The performer must be extremely agile to conquer the technical demands here, which are complicated further by the lack of regularity or pattern in the arrangement of pitches. Consecutive blocked intervals in the right hand of the measures leading up to the “accelerando” are a battle not easily won by the performer. Right hand tremolo chords set the mood for the kick-line “Grand Finale,” in which the melodic material must be voiced carefully with the aid of the damper pedal in the middle range of the piano. Unexpected change once again adds to the excitement as the “quick” ending is set apart by a brief allusion to the opening.

While the performer is presented with a series of technical challenges in this piece, the composer indicates that the tempo can be “flexible throughout.”<sup>16</sup> Pann shared that there is no need to try to play everything in a strict tempo, and he intended for the performer to take time in certain places to make the playing of certain passages more realistic.<sup>17</sup> Overall, the piece is masterfully crafted to convey a variety of moods and display numerous technical feats. When performed successfully, it is not only an audience favorite, but it is also quite exciting to play.

### *Six Strokes*

*Six Strokes*, composed in 2000, is a unique set of short pieces written for Winston Choi. Pann highly respects Choi’s ability at the piano, and the Grand Etude-Fantasy from *The Piano’s 12 Sides* was also written for him (see Chapter 3). Pann says that the title, *Six Strokes*, refers to the strokes of a paint brush and he calls them “appetizer-sized pieces

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Carter Pann, personal communication with author, December 4, 2018.

of piano music that are hyper-virtuosic.”<sup>18</sup> Pann wrote *Six Strokes* specifically for Winston Choi because he thrives on playing this type of difficult music. The six pieces are as follows: I. “Presto,” II. “Love ‘n Grin,” III. “TV Snow,” IV. “Cradle Song,” V. “Shrapnel,” VI. “Orion.” Each piece has a unique character and challenging quality. For example, in “Presto,” which lasts under a minute, the pianist covers most of the keyboard with extremely fast figurations in the right hand with broken chord accompaniment patterns in the left hand – perhaps reminiscent of some passages from Chopin’s Op. 10 Etudes. The fourth, “Cradle Song,” is completely opposite of the opening piece. Here, Pann paints a serene landscape focused on beauty rather than flamboyance. The piece immediately following, “Shrapnel,” succeeds in evoking explosive qualities with fragments falling in all directions. These bite-sized pieces provide the listener with a glimpse into six individual scenes – much as if one were scanning the halls of an art museum.

### *Fantasy-Inventions*

Composed in 2004 in Pann’s earthship (see Chapter 1), the three movement *Fantasy-Inventions* is a piece of vast proportion written for Barry Snyder. In the program notes, Pann writes that the piece demands a “muscular pianist,”<sup>19</sup> which speaks to the fact that he holds Snyder’s abilities in high regard. Together, the three movements, “March,” “Passpied,”<sup>20</sup> and “The Wheel” take about fifteen minutes to perform. Pann says the two outer movements are like “two grand gallop fantasies” and possess an “almost

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<sup>18</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>19</sup>Carter Pann, *Fantasy-Inventions*, program notes, 2017.

<sup>20</sup>Although derived from the traditional French dance, the composer chose a non-traditional spelling.

transcendental quality”); these two are separated by the shorter, intermezzo-like middle movement.<sup>21</sup>

Despite changing meters and syncopated rhythms, the first movement maintains an almost unwavering pulse, thereby simulating a march with its thick textures and frequent blocked sonorities. To be sure, there are contrasts and moments of seeming elegance, but the movement ends with firm resolve. The complex and intricate texture of the second movement harkens slightly to earlier centuries of passepied dance music, which makes sense, given Pann’s love for the keyboard music of J.S. Bach. The piece certainly has a modern twist woven around the almost constant moving lines. Pann’s reference to this piece as an intermezzo is also warranted, as it stands between two mammoth pieces. The final movement opens with a series of simple octaves and then spins out continuously in an unmeasured frenzy with occasional ad. lib. spacing as indicated in the score.<sup>22</sup> It begins with a more condensed texture than the opening movement, and is focused on agility and clarity of figuration. This is no hiding in this piece, as the performer is expected to avoid a “blurred wash of sound” and articulate clearly, “bringing out harmonic contour” in a highly virtuosic framework.<sup>23</sup> A slower middle section is somewhat reflective and grand before an extended return of the opening idea.

*Upstate: A Slow Drag*

Another example of Pann’s interest in ragtime is found in *Upstate: A Slow Drag*. Rhythmically, this piece shares some common ground with *The Bills*, but the texture of

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Carter Pann, *Fantasy-Inventions*, 2017.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

the right hand is thicker as we find several passages of parallel sixths and, overall, more blocked chords. The score is filled with accidentals as the piece begins and ends in C-flat major with an array of other keys thrown in between. Written in 2006 for Rob Auler, the piece was commissioned by ARTSwego through the Oswego College Foundation.<sup>24</sup> Auler recorded the piece on his 2009 album, *American Century*.<sup>25</sup> Traditional rag syncopation and accompaniment style combined with flexible tempos create a sense of elegance that stitch together the sections of this six-minute narrative.

### *Five Serious Pieces*

This sixteen-minute set of five pieces was originally conceived as a set of eighteen pieces for Joel Hastings, but Pann halted the compositional process when Hastings died suddenly of a heart attack. Now the dedication reads: “in loving memory of pianist and friend Joel Hastings (1969-2016).”<sup>26</sup> During the composition of this set, Pann had been in contact with Hastings and he remembers “sending edited snippets back and forth, directly from [his] piano to [Hastings’ piano].”<sup>27</sup> Pann describes the suite as “five very different character pieces for piano, at times introspective, charming, humorous, and brutal.”<sup>28</sup> While there is great contrast among the five pieces, together they point “to a thread of Joel’s artistry [Pann] came to lean on as a composer.”<sup>29</sup> This thread, found in many of Pann’s works, is an “uncommon level of technical fluency and [requires] the

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<sup>24</sup>Carter Pann, *Upstate: A Slow Drag*, 2006.

<sup>25</sup>Rob Auler, *American Century*, Laker Records (896971002286), 2009, compact disc.

<sup>26</sup>Carter Pann, *Five Serious Pieces*, 2017.

<sup>27</sup>Carter Pann, *Five Serious Pieces*, program notes, 2017.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.



utmost devotion from the artist who chooses to construct them.”<sup>30</sup> For successful handling of this suite, Pann calls up on the pianist “whose hands are both familiar with the great works of our instrument’s history” and one who relishes “climbing mountains of musical expression.”<sup>31</sup>

According to Pann, the titles are “loosely based on an affectation that inspired the music.”<sup>32</sup> The first piece, “This Black Cat,” was written after the composer had gotten his first cat—a black one with an attitude. Pann was attracted to this title because it is jazzy and it is “kind of a jazz slang,” which he says works well in this case.<sup>33</sup> The piece is full of personality and fast changes in emotion, much like his cat. The opening finds a “cool grove” and events are relatively calm until an acceleration toward allegro, then presto, in which rapid figurations roll throughout the range of the piano. Following the climactic middle section, we hear “giant steps” as the cat is seemingly winding down after a series of spasms into a “melancholy” state. These brief transitional passages lead to a condensed recapitulation of the opening idea before a “joyous” finish.<sup>34</sup>

Smart cars were designed to be compact and forward thinking, which Pann also achieved in his piece, “Smart Car.” The score lacks time signatures of any kind, but bar lines indicate grouping despite the frequent changes of measure length. Tempo and other performance indications clearly delineate sections of the piece. The opening is marked “presto” with the quarter note throbbing at 192 beats per minute. In the “running” section,

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Carter Pann, *Five Serious Pieces*, 2017.

the tempo is doubled as the eighth note is marked at 192 bpm.<sup>35</sup> Constant sixteenth notes (and later, thirty-second notes) in the left hand—and sometimes both hands—make this piece a real workout. Rhythmically, the piece is no luxury vehicle for the performer; seven against nine, nine against thirteen, five against three, and frequent alternation between groupings of three and four are just a few of the obstacles to overcome. No key signatures are used, but accidentals are found in abundance. While the piece ends on a B major chord, there is little evidence of common practice harmony here. This tumultuous journey is a true test of agility and dexterity.

“Claude Philipp Emanuel Saint - Brahms” is an exciting title to any lover of piano music. Pann says, the title relates to “how quixotic the styles are in that piece. So you take the names of that title and you can kind of assume the composers I’m talking about, and their styles are weaved throughout each other in that piece.”<sup>36</sup> How exactly Pann arrived at the combination of Claude Debussy, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Camille Saint-Saëns, and Johannes Brahms is a mystery, but he alternates frequently between styles that are recognizably related to specific composers. Further, he uses both French and German performance indications in the score as a way of reinforcing the intended style. Some sections use key and time signatures while others do not. The final section of the piece is a simple, single-voice line written à la CPE Bach. The composer intentionally halts the line mid-phrase, leaving the staff with jagged edges and no final bar line, thus indicating that the idea could continue indefinitely. From a technical standpoint, this

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

piece is much more straightforward than the previous two. In fact, Pann feels it is “the more accessible piece [of the suite] for most pianists.”<sup>37</sup>

“Rocket” opens with a thick, accented sonority and then launches immediately into an “urgent, driving” tempo indicated at “172+” beats per minute for the quarter note.<sup>38</sup> The title is indicative of *double entendre* as the score later instructs the performer to, “rock hard,” and the nature of the texture resembles pop music. Repeated blocked sonorities, recognizable common practice harmonic progressions, and a major tonic are all supportive of this premise. Pann writes in a few twists such as an occasional 3/4 or 3/2 measure, or fast ascending scalar runs that are certainly pianistic, but not characteristic of rock. This upbeat musical experimentation in popular music is certainly representative of the wide range of styles that Pann originally envisioned as he embarked on writing this set of pieces.

The way in which Pann chooses to close the suite in “Wagner’s Oracle” is extremely effective as it allows the listener a moment to process what has just been thrown at them in the last several minutes. The thick, rich sonorities of this piece are highlighted by a constantly singing line. The opening motive (or perhaps more fittingly, *leitmotif*) is established clearly and is revised slightly as it returns in several places throughout the piece. The absence of time signatures again allows for a bit more flexibility and Pann indicates places in which more freedom should be taken. Toward the end, he asks the performer to “leave measured time behind” with the phrase, “magical to the end,” helping to describe the intended emotional content.<sup>39</sup> The many moving parts of

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Carter Pann, *Five Serious Pieces*, 2017.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

the texture serve as Pann's way of orchestrating for the piano. Heightened emotional expression also draws listeners into a pseudo-romantic moment. Having heard Hastings perform other pieces by Pann, it is certainly conceivable that Pann wrote this piece with him in mind.

### **Chamber Music**

#### *Antares*

*Antares*, for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano, is a six movement work commissioned in 2003 by the Concert Artists Guild for the Antares Ensemble. It was premiered at the Kennedy Center in 2004 and released on Innova Records in 2005.<sup>40</sup> The Antares Ensemble is most famous for championing the *Quartet for the End of Time*, which was written by Olivier Messiaen while he was a prisoner of war in the French army during World War II.<sup>41</sup> Pann's *Antares* holds an interesting connection to *The Piano's 12 Sides*: the first and last movement of *Antares* were modeled on and inspired by the piano piece, "Orion" (see Chapter 3).<sup>42</sup> Movements two through four were each named after a member of the quartet ("Eric," "Rebecca," "Garrick," and "Vessko") and each piece features the instrument corresponding to the respective performer.

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<sup>40</sup>Carter Pann, Curriculum Vitae.

<sup>41</sup>Paul Griffiths, "Messiaen, Olivier," *Grove Music Online*, January 20, 2001, Accessed February, 13, 2019, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000018497>.

<sup>42</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

*Double Espresso!*

This encore for flute and piano was written in 2017 as a gift to Christina Jennings, a flutist on the faculty of the University of Colorado Boulder.<sup>43</sup> The short, two-minute composition is filled with highly active (one might say, caffeinated) passages for the soloist, which test both technical ability as well as rhythmic and breath control. The piece was designed to be showy, as is often the nature of an encore. The pianist's role is certainly not secondary; the writing is virtuosic for both players. Pann says he views the piano as an equal with the flute, which brought up the question whether this is the case in all of his chamber music. His response revealed a special insight into the organization of his music for small ensembles:

“Yeah! I mean, I do have, like, piano and violin romances; it's really for the violin. I mean, you know, I'm just accompanying the violin. But, like, my piano trio: everybody's equal. String quartet: everybody's equal. But... piano in chamber music – I'm a pianist, and... that's why there's a piano in almost all of my band music and my orchestra music – like, there's always a piano there.”<sup>44</sup>

Thus, this is a common thread among much of Pann's music; the piano almost always has a distinguished part and its role is usually not subordinate to other members of the ensemble.

*Circumnavigator*

*Circumnavigator* is a special composition in that it was written in 2012 as a piece for Hastings and Pann to perform together: “I wanted to write a piece because Joel was about to go on tour, and I wanted to write a piece where I could join him on stage and

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<sup>43</sup>“Double Espresso!” Theodore Presser Company, accessed January 09, 2019, <https://www.presser.com/shop/double-espresso.html?SID=e8320bd95a152d4c1e6ecdca6aa2fa5>.

<sup>44</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

play with him.”<sup>45</sup> This two-piano piece was intended for advanced pianists and both parts are quite challenging. Pann’s focus is clearly not on performing, but he has great skill at the piano that allowed him to keep up with Hastings. Lasting about thirteen minutes, the three movements take listeners around the world; thus, the name. The first movement, “Proposal in Positano,” begins in Italy. The texture of this movement is warm and full, evoking romantic qualities. The anticipation and emotion builds to a climax, which is reached only a few measures prior to the end – perhaps this is when the metaphorical proposal occurs. The second movement, “Intermezzo: ‘Dalle ma nabonu’ (Song for the Dead) - ancient Tongan legend,” takes us “somewhere in the South Pacific”<sup>46</sup> Here, minor sonorities illustrate the Tongan legend. Composed in a fairly straightforward framework, this movement is the most accessible of the three. The final movement was inspired by the famous singer and bandmaster, Cab Calloway.<sup>47</sup> Calloway’s orchestra was hired by the Cotton Club to replace Duke Ellington’s orchestra while they were on tour in the early 1930s. A mixture of jazz, blues, and rag is what we find in Pann’s, “Cab Calloway's Cotton Club, Harlem 1933: ‘It's all the Rag!’” The difficulty of this movement cannot be overstated. Several passages of fast, intense figuration are played in unison by both pianists and therefore require extreme precision and accuracy. Each part would be challenging as a solo, but when the two combine, demands increase. Presto tempos, complex swung rhythms, and quickly changing characters are only a few of the problems with which to wrestle. One of the highlights of the piece is the tune in the

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

“Fiddler’s Fling” section, which sets up an extended finale and brings home an otherwise endless array of virtuosic flare.<sup>48</sup>

### *Differences*

*Differences* is a unique set of five pieces composed in 1996 for cellist Derek Snyder and piano (a version for viola and piano is also in print). Within this work, Pann captures a wide variety of styles ranging from the Baroque to Pop. While difficult to describe, Pann calls this a “suite of character pieces” saying, “It’s not a sonata, it’s not even a Schumann Fantasiestücke... it’s just what it is. It’s eclectic.”<sup>49</sup> “Strand” embodies elements of Pop music through constantly changing meters and repetition of sonorities, which establishes a groove and creates some syncopation. Melodic material is simple and somewhat fragmented as is characteristic of the style. The second movement, “Air,” embodies qualities of the Baroque period with its clear, common practice harmonic progressions, long, singing melodic lines, ornamentation, and even the inclusion of a cadenza. Its name implies the bel canto style, which was popular at the time.<sup>50</sup> There is, however, one short passage before the cadenza that is distinctly not “Baroque,” as the music becomes chromatic and tonality is disguised. After this brief, four-measure episode, the opening idea returns. “Country Dance” is comprised of a simple “peasant” tune contrasted by “pastoral” sections.<sup>51</sup> Traditional country dances are written in 2/4, but Pann chose to compose in 2/2 while maintaining the same rhythmic feel of the dance.

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<sup>48</sup>Carter Pann, *Differences*, 2017.

<sup>49</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>50</sup>"Differences," Theodore Presser Company, accessed January 10, 2019, <https://www.presser.com/shop/differences-vc-pno.html?SID=88ced5f99c8d254e594b47b48e8fc42b>.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

When the main melody returns, the writing is more virtuosic and, following a brief lull, the piece closes with a flourish. At one point, Pann indicates in the score that the pianist should play at the same volume as the cello,<sup>52</sup> thereby standing behind his equal treatment of the piano in chamber music. “Blues,” which is perhaps the most interesting piece of the set, provides great contrast and variety. The way in which Pann achieves the blues style in the cello through small finger *glissandi* and slides is remarkable. Naturally, the piano part is full of riffs, tremolos, and coloristic sonorities, which contribute to the soulful feel. When asked how the blues style made its way into a cello piece, Pann responded:

“I was just writing a suite of character pieces for cello and piano. The blues movement contrasts the other movements – hence, the title of the whole thing. I mean, it was my attempt at like, ‘okay, what am I going to call this thing? I have five really distinctly different things and... they’re kind of all in genres.’”<sup>53</sup>

“Song” closes out the set with a steady drive – similar to the opening, but even more direct here as the rhythm is more straightforward and contrasts are achieved through dynamics and melodic style rather than meter changes.<sup>54</sup> The driving nature of “Song” is an exciting end to this fifteen-minute set.

#### *Melodies for Robert*

This two movement, nine-minute piece for flute, cello, and piano was written in 2017 as a commission from the SDG Foundation to honor the late Robert Vincent Jones, celebrated flutist, doctor, and great friend of the foundation.<sup>55</sup> The weaving together of

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<sup>52</sup>Carter Pann, *Differences*, 2017.

<sup>53</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>54</sup>*Differences*, "Theodore Presser Company, accessed January 10, 2019, <https://www.presser.com/shop/differences-vc-pno.html?SID=88ced5f99c8d254e594b47b48e8fc42b>.

<sup>55</sup>Carter Pann, Curriculum Vitae.



ideas and the careful way in which Pann uses instrumentation makes the music feel incredibly tight-knit. This piece is a prime example of Pann's use of tonal music within his own contemporary style to create beautiful singing lines. The two movements, *Sing* and *Listen* were written as arrangements of previously existing band pieces by Pann, because he was given very little time to compose the piece after receiving the commission.<sup>56</sup> "Sing" was based on *At Her Ladyship's Request* (another use of this theme is found in Pann's piano duet, *Olde English Suite*<sup>57</sup>), and "Listen" was derived from *Hold this Boy and Listen*. The practice of arranging preexisting tunes is not foreign to the composer.

"Every now and then I will retool things, which is very helpful when you're under the gun or when you want to actually massage – when the music is not done for you and you massage it into a different shape – because it becomes a different piece. It's kind of like if I had written a poem. I'm going to recite it here, and now I'm going to recite it here in a little bit different dialect. You can understand it, but it's the composer reciting it again."<sup>58</sup>

The Heare Ensemble performed the world premiere was on October 27, 2017 at The Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago, after which they remarked that the piece "contains rich harmonies, soaring melodies, and unexpected twists, but beyond the musical elements, it also has incredible depth of soul."<sup>59</sup> According to their website, the Heare Ensemble plans to produce an album consisting entirely of Carter Pann's music.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>"Melodies for Robert," Theodore Presser Company, accessed January 09, 2019, <https://www.presser.com/shop/melodies-for-robert.html?SID=5549749ad908da021fef5f589ea1b8cf>.

<sup>60</sup>"The Heare Ensemble," Jennie Oh Brown, accessed January 09, 2019, <https://www.jenniebrownflute.com/projects/the-heare-ensemble/>.

*Melodies for Robert* made its Nebraska Premiere during Pann's Glenn Korff School of Music guest artist residency on December 4, 2018, performed by John Bailey, Karen Becker, and Travis Worsham.

### **Choral Music and Songs**

#### *Poems for Jason*

Up to this point in his career, Pann has focused mostly on piano and instrumental music. Nonetheless, he loves writing songs, and he has recently been writing more music for voice, which he says will be published.<sup>61</sup> *Poems for Jason* is a set of three songs written for soprano and piano. The text was written by Meaghan Mahlberg, a friend and former student of Pann, after the passing of her brother. Mahlberg is a soprano who now works in music administration, but Pann recalls her as a student in the first class he taught in Colorado.<sup>62</sup> The songs create fresh new colors and moods while remaining idiomatic for the voice.<sup>63</sup> Each of the poems express a heartfelt memory of Jason. "In My Dreams" recalls, in first person, the events of the poet's childhood with her brother and the desire to return to such experiences once again. "Wings in the Sky," is the fast song of the set, and speaks in second person directly to Jason recalling his love for flight and how it has been "so long since those wings touched the sky."<sup>64</sup> The final and longest song, "He was so much of me," describes Jason's personality in third person: what others thought of him, but most importantly, what he meant to Meaghan. It closes with the anticipation that

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<sup>61</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>"Poems for Jason," Theodore Presser Company, accessed January 09, 2019, <https://www.presser.com/shop/poems-for-jason.html?SID=ea0cd9c861df3d4d4e2006b727d282eb>.

<sup>64</sup>Carter Pann, *Poems for Jason*, 2017.

the siblings will one day meet again. Pann’s use of time and space in the musical adaptation furthers the intensity with which the text speaks to the audience.

**Orchestra (with piano)**

*Piano Concerto No. 1*

Carter Pann’s GRAMMY® nominated piano concerto consists of five movements, which exceeds the number of movements found in many traditional concertos. He says, “I was just ambitious. I just wanted to write a big piece – this was going to be my first ‘big’ piece.”<sup>65</sup> The score of this twenty-five minute work is entirely handwritten. The first movement, “Piña Colada,” opens with dissonant sonorities in the orchestra followed by a playful piano entrance featuring a theme that serves as the backbone for the movement and is repeated in a variety of forms – sometimes “nearing a drunken state of redundanc[y].” A tropical atmosphere is created through the use of specific percussion instruments like güiro, claves, sandblocks, and bongos.<sup>66</sup> The inclusion of drum set near the end of the movement helps drive the “luau” home.<sup>67</sup> Pann calls this movement “dance music” and also says that it is a nod to American composer, Michael Torke (perhaps in reference to the main thematic section, which contains subtle minimalist qualities – an uncommon trait in Pann’s music).<sup>68</sup> The second movement, “Nocturne,” begins with a series of chords in the piano that continue to spin out while solo instruments in the orchestra focus on single pitches. Pann says, “one note sticks and

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<sup>65</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>66</sup>Carter Pann, *Carter Pann: Dance Partita • Piano Concerto*, 2000, Naxos 8.559043, compact disc liner notes, 2.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

[the] harmonies move around that pedal or that note.”<sup>69</sup> Pann’s program notes mention “Debussy-like restraint” in the “Nocturne,”<sup>70</sup> but he also considers it a nod to Ravel.<sup>71</sup> Thus, we can be sure of the impressionist influence and sound quality found here. The third movement, “Your Touch,” is a solo cadenza. It was designed to give the audience a break from the orchestra and to allow the performer to “get [their] hands around a solo.”<sup>72</sup> “It’s almost gospel,” Pann remarks about the cadenza, “I was at home over Christmas vacation – I just put my hands on B-flat major and said, ‘let’s just sound like I’m playing cocktail piano.’”<sup>73</sup> The compositional idiom here is to hold down a note and play chords around it, which Pann says appears in all of his music.<sup>74</sup> This discussion led to another general comment about his music:

“There isn’t a lot of information that I’m trying to convey beyond an affectation. So, things that will trip it for me are, say, images or smells or memories or thoughts of something or a person that I just met...and then it’s like, ‘okay, this is music.’”<sup>75</sup>

Thus, “Your Touch,” is, according to Pann, “just an exploration in bringing smoky lounge music onto the concert stage.”<sup>76</sup> “Blues,” the shortest movement of the concerto, serves as a way of picking up the tempo after the cadenza and preparing the listener for the finale.<sup>77</sup> This swung intermezzo is a unique blend of jazz combo style and full

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Carter Pann, *Carter Pann: Dance Partita • Piano Concerto*, 2000, Naxos 8.559043, compact disc liner notes, 2.

<sup>71</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Carter Pann, *Carter Pann: Dance Partita • Piano Concerto*, 2000, Naxos 8.559043, compact disc liner notes, 2.

orchestra with the piano standing out above the rest of the texture. The finale is a humorous twist on the orchestration style of Mozart and Beethoven and certain moments are quite convincing references to these two classical giants. The inclusion of modern percussion sounds and compositional devices distinguish this movement from previous styles, but its length and technical demands make it the most challenging of the concerto. Pann writes, “As the movement barrels to the end, the orchestra becomes a juggernaut of energy, racing towards its inevitable demise.”<sup>78</sup>

### **Wind Symphony (with piano)**

#### *Concerto Logic (Piano Concerto No. 2)*

Pann’s massive *Concerto Logic* is one of the pieces on his GRAMMY® nominated album, *A Tent for the Sun*. In 2008, Pann completed composition of the work for which he received a commission from a consortium of twenty-one leading United States college bands in conjunction with the College Band Directors' National Association.<sup>79</sup> The piece has received mixed reviews, perhaps because it is intended for a more musically sophisticated audience than the first concerto. Merlin Patterson cites the influence of Rachmaninoff and Ravel in the overall vocabulary of the work as well as Pann’s own ability as the piano soloist, but criticized “the work’s lack of memorable melodic material,” which he says, “made it fade from the mind as quickly as did its last note.”<sup>80</sup> Pann has described his melodic material as “melodic shapes,” rather than themes

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>"Concerto Logic," Theodore Presser Company, accessed January 10, 2019, <https://www.presser.com/shop/concerto-logic.html>.

<sup>80</sup>Merlin Patterson, "Serenade/Concerto Logic/A Tent for the Sun," *Fanfare*, July/August 2010.

or motives.<sup>81</sup> It seems that this is a more logical way to approach the material. The inspiration for this “zany”<sup>82</sup> composition came from Pann’s love of chance, logic, and strategy games.<sup>83</sup>

The opening movement, “Dogs and Jackals (C-minor Fantasy),” alludes to an ancient Egyptian game of the same name. However, Pann says that the music is not based on the actual game, but rather the “images of both animals, carved onto each set of pegs, as musical characters in dialog.”<sup>84</sup> The second movement, “Ern÷ Rubik's Magic Cube,” is a frantically frenzied attempt to express the trials and triumphs of solving a Rubik’s Cube. In the third movement, “Rondo Capriccio: Rage Over a Lost Pawn,” Pann once again returns to the solo cadenza, as in the first concerto, but now with a much different character showing off his virtuosic skill as a pianist. This movement is derived from Beethoven’s *Rondo alla ingharese quasi un capriccio, Op. 129* (“*Rage Over a Lost Penny*”)<sup>85</sup>. The final movement, “Dancing with Caissa,” is named after the goddess of chess, a fictional Thracian dryad.<sup>86</sup> The final cadenza provides an intensely turbulent close in which both soloist and ensemble are pushed to their limit. The piano is a major component in many wind symphony works by Pann, but none can match the intensity and virtuosity that is found in this concerto.

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<sup>81</sup>Rickey Hauoli-Deponte Badua, “The Maverick: An Analytical Study of Carter Pann's Symphony for Winds: ‘My Brothers Brain,’” DMA doc., University of Georgia, 2014, 8.

<sup>82</sup>Barry Kilpatrick, “A Tent for the Sun,” review of the Compact Disc, *A Tent for the Sun*, American Record Guide, September/October 2010.

<sup>83</sup>“Concerto Logic,” Theodore Presser Company, accessed January 10, 2019, <https://www.presser.com/shop/concerto-logic.html>.

<sup>84</sup>Barry Kilpatrick, “A Tent for the Sun,” review of the Compact Disc, *A Tent for the Sun*, American Record Guide, September/October 2010.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

### CHAPTER 3: The Piano's 12 Sides

This chapter will present an in-depth discussion and analysis of each piece contained in Pann's largest solo piano work, *The Piano's 12 Sides*. Each movement is considered in light of its style, pianistic qualities, traditional and non-traditional musical elements, as well as extra-musical details when applicable. Each piece evokes a specific affect or "side" of the piano's expressive ability, thus the title. As mentioned previously, Pann frequently uses expressive words and performance indications in the score. Within this analysis, descriptive words and phrases drawn from the score are presented within quotation marks. Further, the use of bar lines is inconsistent or lacking in "Figurines," "White Moon Over Water," "Orion," and "Grand Etude-Fantasy." Thus, for the reader's convenience, such sections are referred to by page and system based on the 2014 edition of the score.

First, however, we must consider the big picture. One may notice, after reading the previous chapter that individual character pieces comprise Pann's multi-movement works. In fact, Pann envisioned *The Piano's 12 Sides* quite simply as a massive collection of character pieces. "I'm attracted to sets of piano pieces because I grew up with sets of piano pieces,"<sup>1</sup> says Pann. Among others, he cites Grieg, Chopin, *Carnaval* by Schumann, Op. 118 by Brahms, and even *Vingt regards sur l'enfant-Jésus* by Messiaen as influential in his inspiration to write sets of character pieces.<sup>2</sup> He says that pieces of "living room length" usually appear in sets; this phrase refers to pieces that are short enough to perform in one's home as entertainment or for pleasure, but might not be long

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<sup>1</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

enough to stand alone on the concert stage.<sup>3</sup> Pann understands that this composition, as a whole, exceeds living room length, and says that he knew if people were going to perform *The Piano's 12 Sides*, they would do so in a piecemeal fashion. In this regard, three pieces from the set, "White Moon Over Water," "Classic Rock," and "She Steals Me," have been published separately as solo pieces because more pianists are likely to relate to their style and content. In other words, Pann expected that most pianists would not perform the entire set as Joel Hastings did in concert and on his recording. While he does not expect anyone else to perform the entire set, Pann says he would be "beyond thrilled and surprised" if another pianist did so.<sup>4</sup> Hastings recorded the album containing *The Piano's 12 Sides* in the spring of 2013.<sup>5</sup>

Pann dedicated each piece in *The Piano's 12 Sides* to a specific pianist with whom he also happened to be friends, which was simply a gesture of respect to these individuals. Pann did not intend that they would all perform their piece, and some have not yet done so. It is unclear when the piece was premiered, but according to Pann's curriculum vitae, the earliest date of performance is November 1, 2011 at the University of Colorado Boulder. According to the score, the piece was composed between 2011-12. Therefore, the score may have not been complete for the 2011 performance, or perhaps the composer edited portions of it at a later date. *The Piano's 12 Sides* is one of Pann's most recent works for solo piano as only a few others have been composed since this time, such as *Five Serious Pieces*.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Joel Hastings, *Carter Pann: The Piano's 12 Sides*, 2014, Naxos 8.559751, compact disc.



## I. “Silhouette”

According to the composer, no connecting device runs through the entire composition and each piece can function as its own entity.<sup>6</sup> However, “Silhouette” contains a number of representative ingredients and qualities that appear throughout the set.<sup>7</sup> Further, it is over ten minutes in length, making it the longest piece. This perhaps suggests that Pann worked out some important ideas here that would provide a foundation upon which to build the rest of the composition. The piece resembles a fantasy or tone poem in both length and content. Pann says he imagined “Silhouette” as a “Spanish love song” or a “slow tango” – at least in the section at m. 16 marked “verse,” where certain songlike elements stand out.<sup>8</sup> The recipient of dedication in the first piece is Maria Fernanda Nieto Pulido, an Argentinian pianist, whom Pann describes as having “a beautiful silhouette”<sup>9</sup> – thus the connection in the title. Pann acknowledges the fact that he is not a native South American. Therefore, the Latino influence of “Silhouette” is just Pann “trying to do something” within the style.<sup>10</sup> Before composing this piece, he looked at works by composers who had written representative works in this style, like Piazzolla, Albéniz, and Milhaud, in order to establish a palette for himself from which to work, but the resulting composition is not limited to only one style as we find contrasting moments as far-reaching as Debussy.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>7</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, program notes, 2014.

<sup>8</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

The piece opens with a written-out improvisation, which is no surprise given Pann's previous remarks on the importance of improvisation in his work. The lack of form and the changing meters in this opening contribute to the veiled quality indicated in the score.<sup>12</sup> Further, the use of deceptive cadences is one of the harmonic techniques employed in this piece. For example, before the "Animato subito" at m. 53, Pann sets up a D dominant seventh sonority; instead of resolving to G, the bass resolves up a half step to E-flat and the music takes an unexpected turn. This happens again before the return of the same motive at m. 66. The music exhibits cadential moments, but thick textures, chromaticism, and cluster chords disguise clear harmonic progressions. Much of the piece is written in the context of F minor, but the piece ends in F major after a glorious finale as described below.

At the outset of the piece, the ascending line creates a sense of anticipation, which is followed by a simple but elegant melody in 7/8 before the entrance of the main section, which Pann calls the "verse" (see Example 3.1). The songlike melody that emerges in this section lies at the heart of this piece. Its serenity paints the silhouette of which the title speaks. This continues until an interruption in m. 46 (marked "Slower, pesante"<sup>13</sup>), which leads to a series of animated sections where specific rhythmic and melodic motives become recognizable as they return in different contexts. A new melody appears in m. 74, which accelerates and leads to a climax in the section marked "Ballroom Dancing" in m. 87.<sup>14</sup> The tempo seemingly spins out of control as a series of virtuosic cadenza-like flourishes find their way up and down the keyboard.

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<sup>12</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, 2014.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Silhouette" from "The Piano's 12 Sides", measures 13-17. The score is written for piano and consists of two staves: a treble clef staff for the right hand and a bass clef staff for the left hand. The key signature is one flat (F major or D minor), and the time signature is 7/8. The tempo is marked "Verse: A tempo ♩ = 84 singing, serene". The score includes performance instructions such as "mp" (mezzo-piano), "legato molto", and "expansive". The music features a continuous trill in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand.

Example 3.1 “Silhouette” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 13-17

Abrupt changes define much of this piece. One such change happens in m. 117 where a continuous trill provides a backdrop for what the composer calls a “ticking” sensation evoked in the steady pulsation of the left hand material, which ascends in the treble while descending in the bass.<sup>15</sup> Ultimately, the trill material culminates in a dream-like passage, which sets up the return of the “verse” in m. 155 – this time, slightly slower and “more intimate than before.”<sup>16</sup> Here, the material is much more embellished, but is structured in a way that closely resembles the earlier occurrence of the “verse”; that is, until m. 180, where Pann embarks on a slightly different course.

The 7/8 section beginning at m. 183 sounds eerily familiar; a close examination reveals that it is a variation of the material presented in the “Walking” section from m. 9. Pann captures specific characters within the music by virtue of his attention to detail in the score. This particular section calls for “a different character,” but he provides an important clue with the indication “nefarious.”<sup>17</sup> In response, Pann evokes sinister qualities with an improvised feel as beautiful melodies soar across ever-changing meters (especially from mm. 183-211). This provides a canvas upon which the composer

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

transitions to a return of m. 9 material in m. 212. At the beginning of the piece, this material ushers in the “verse,” but here it serves as a means of establishing the finale.

The brilliance of the ending cannot be overstated, as Pann perfectly captures fireworks in this thick, three staff texture (see Example 3.2). The dense, accented chords represent the initial explosion of fireworks in the sky, with the mid-range chords signifying secondary reverberations of the initial explosion. The subsequent descending figure portrays the disappearance and decay of the bright color that lit up the sky moments earlier. This sequence happens four times and is then followed by one final blast; m. 229 is the point at which the fuse is lit on the ground and we hear the ascent into the sky in the final scalar run before the last chord. The F major conclusion sounds impressively triumphant following the relatively intimate feel in the rest of the piece.

**Fireworks! (same tempo)**  
 (accidentals pertain to individual staff only)

(8)

*fff* *sf*

*fff sempre*

*r.h.*

Example 3.2 “Silhouette” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, m. 224

## II. “Figurines”

The luscious harmonies and singing melodies of “Silhouette” take listeners out of reality and into a place of tenderness and bliss. Pann says he “needed something after “Silhouette,” which [he] knew was going to be first, to jar us out of that world and present something very, *very* different.”<sup>18</sup> Different is precisely what he achieved with “Figurines,” which Pann dedicated to Peter Collins. Of the twelve, this was the last piece to be composed, and when asked what he was thinking in terms of a tonal standpoint in this piece, the composer responded, “I wasn’t.”<sup>19</sup> He then continued to explain how this piece, especially the outer sections, is simply a written out improvisation. Pann mentioned that the section marked “Perpetual March” is “more thoroughly composed.”<sup>20</sup> Pann described the piece as a “tour de force,” but, at a length of only three minutes, it was intentionally kept shorter than the eleventh piece of the set, “Grand Etude-Fantasy” where he extended his exploration in virtuosity.”<sup>21</sup>

The form of this piece is fairly simple. Improvisatory material sandwiches a perpetual march and there is a brief return of march material at the end, functioning as a coda. As mentioned above, the composer had no intention of writing within a tonal context. While triads appear, their use is not harmonic, but rather, percussive. The score lacks bar lines in the improvisatory sections, thus giving the allusion to a tsunami of sound. Extremely fast tempo indications contribute to the virtuosity demanded here; the piece is certainly not for the faint of heart (see Example 3.3). Rhythmically, this section

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<sup>18</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

presents a number of challenges, namely the excessive use of four against three patterns. Pann says he tried to write “pianistic idioms that fit well under the hand.”<sup>22</sup> While a close examination of the score suggests that he succeeded in this for the most part, the performer must still overcome the fact that there are an excessive number of notes, which are not always arranged in logical patterns. Therefore, identifying motives and groupings within the music is imperative in order to translate this score into a performance. Certain motives repeat, albeit with different pitches, but with the same direction and similar intervallic content. For example, the opening gesture returns on page 15, system 2.

Presto leggerissimo ♩ = 100 (♩ = 200)  
 8<sup>va</sup> a virtuosic improvisation (“rubato” and “agogic” are illegals)

*p sempre*

Example 3.3 “Figurines” from *The Piano’s 12 Sides*, page 14, system 1

Relentless, almost constantly sounding eighth notes form the backbone of the perpetual march. A duration longer than an eighth note occurs only three times in the march (the downbeat of m. 14, the fermata in m. 19, and the downbeat of m. 42).<sup>23</sup>

Generally, the march is mechanical and somewhat barbaric; relief is rare and temporary as the light, “coquettish” feel (see Example 3.4) only lasts a few measures.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Measure one of the march begins where the score is marked *Perpetual March* on page 16, system 4.

Lightly - *coquettish* (same tempo)

Example 3.4 “*Figurines*” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 18-21 of the march

After a sudden halt in the march, the opening improvisatory figure returns, but lasts only half as long as the initial statement. A shortened march section constitutes the coda – now in an even faster tempo. Ascending chromatic intervals in the left hand lead to a climax before an unexpected break in the sound is followed by a duo of brief, witty figures (drawn from the improvisatory material), which leave the piece seemingly open-ended. In “*Figurines*,” Pann provides both aural and emotional contrasts for the audience while the performer must overcome both technical and cognitive hurdles.

### III. “Legend”

At the outset of “*Legend*,” the tonal center of G draws the ear’s attention; the opening melodic movement from D down to G is a strong aural pull in common practice harmony. Upon the arrival of m. 4, however, the composer begins to disguise harmonic implications by transposing the opening motive down a step. The opening idea returns in m. 9, but now it moves in a different direction leading to an E minor sonority in m. 18, which sounds somewhat centric.<sup>24</sup> The B major sonority on the downbeat of m. 19 and the additional E minor chord in the same bar reinforce the tonal pull toward E minor. The F-sharp centricity of the following measures can be heard as a secondary harmony

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<sup>24</sup>“Centric” or “centricity” refers to the tonicity of a particular pitch apart from common practice harmonic conventions.

leading to a half cadence on B in m. 24. Stacked parallel fourths in m. 29 and chromatic voice leading shield the ear from a specific tonal center thus making the music more ambiguous. Nonetheless, the centricity of B returns – this time with a major triad – at the conclusion of the section in m. 37. In fact, this is one of the strongest cadential points in the piece (see Example 3.5).

Example 3.5 “Legend” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 33-38

After the music slows and settles on B major, the original tempo returns, along with the material found at the beginning of the piece. Further, mm. 39-52 are identical to mm. 1-14. Following m. 52, the music progresses toward E centricity, especially at mm. 57-58, where the melody spells out an E minor chord and the bass moves from B to E.

Following this brief moment of stasis, one of the most harmonically unstable passages of the piece leads, with the help of smooth voice leading, to somewhat of a climactic elision at m. 68. This measure marks the end of the transitional descent of the bass and the return of previous material. The descending three-note motive in m. 68 is derived from the opening (here, with an F-natural instead of an F-sharp), but the bass is now on A and the top voice sings out a C (see Example 3.6). Pann calls this three-note motive “the adhesive that keeps the piece from unraveling.”<sup>25</sup> This texture, combined with a slightly slower

<sup>25</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, program notes, 2014.



tempo, begins to establish A as the pitch center. The final cadence, while not as strong tonally as some others in the piece, leaves us in A Dorian as the three note motive is turned upside-down to set up the final sonority.<sup>26</sup>

Example 3.6 “Legend” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 65-69

The tonal implications discussed above are byproducts of the composer’s attempt to avoid traditional tonal progressions. He says “Legend” was an attempt to see “how long [he] could go where you don’t have a dominant sense and a tonic sense. This is just your ear following the line that’s pulling you. That’s it.”<sup>27</sup> Pann says he tried to write something “almost banal at the beginning” to draw attention to the simplicity of the music.<sup>28</sup> While there are cadences within the piece, Pann points out that they “aren’t tonal. They’re just fifths and stuff.”<sup>29</sup> He was almost at a loss for words when discussing the harmony: “It also has a sort of other-worldly harmonic vocabulary. Sort of like Eastern European... something... I don’t know what it reminds me of, but it’s definitely not functionally tonal.”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

In some ways, this piece (dedicated to Rob Auler) was merely a compositional exercise for the composer: “it really is a study in simple stepwise motion melodies that get to certain cadences.”<sup>31</sup> From a technical standpoint, this piece is less difficult. There are no virtuosic hurdles to overcome, but to make this piece sing, the pianist must exhibit careful melodic voicing and conscious treatment of the harmony. In the process of writing “Legend,” Pann created an oddly sublime piece that does not lend itself to traditional analysis, but sings out melodically in a way that overcomes its harmonic instability and ultimately leaves the listener feeling a sense of inner calm.

#### IV. “White Moon Over Water”

The musical experience presented here is almost unmatched in Pann’s output.<sup>32</sup> The piece (dedicated to Avguste Antonov, who has dedicated his career to performing 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century piano music) requires full emotional immersion of the performer in order to capture the expressive quality intended by the composer. The inspiration for this piece came from a specific experience that the composer had in the summer of 2010 on the Damariscotta River in Maine, which he recalls vividly. He was staying with an artist-friend who lived near the river and owned a one-person kayak.<sup>33</sup>

“I decided to confront my fears and go out on the river in the kayak alone in the middle of the night. And there were no lights. It was just the sound of bugs along the forested shore. And I’m just out in the middle of the river looking up. It was a real *moment*. The sky was as bright as – you could see a million stars – it was just that. I just did something alone that I normally wouldn’t do and exposed myself to that. And the moon was very full and lighting everything up... over everything in the middle of the dark. It was great.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano’s 12 Sides*, program notes, 2014.

<sup>34</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

This memory that Pann described became the driving force for the composition of “White Moon Over Water.” Pann refers to the piece as “a musical aroma” and simply an “affect” that he wanted to convey.<sup>35</sup> The compositional approach behind the music also reveals its character: “this is not a melodic piece – not even the middle part.”<sup>36</sup> Similar to “Legend,” he wrote this as a composition exercise to see how long he could sustain the low D in each measure.<sup>37</sup> The influence of impressionism here is unmistakable, especially since water was a frequent element of impressionistic inspiration. Pann acknowledged that it resembles a “Debussy etude slowed down with a lot of pedal.”<sup>38</sup>

The form consists of three parts and could be considered as ABA’ since the return of A material is shortened and varied from the original. The opening A section contains a series of blocked arpeggiated figures over a long pedal tone. The harmonic motion is quite slow, as the figure ascends and descends as a mirror image of the same harmony – that is, until the first system of page 25 where the pattern coming down is slightly different than the one going up (see Example 3.7). The composer provides no bar lines, but on many lines of the score, he provides a number indicating how many quarter note groupings are contained within the system. This format continues throughout the first 4 pages of the score and returns after the middle section. Some variation exists in the subdivision of the beat, but the music continues seamlessly. Rhythmic regularity evokes the stillness of the night while constant movement represents running water in the river.

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

Example 3.7 “White Moon Over Water” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, page 25, system 2

Pann referred to this portion of the piece as being a long continuous line,<sup>39</sup> and it certainly tests the performer’s ability to play evenly with control, as if to evoke the surface of water under the moonlight. Pann’s performance instructions in the score reveal a great deal about the desired effect. He says the A section should be “Placid, Serene, and Magical, yet with very little expression” and to play “as if brushing across the keys.”<sup>40</sup> Sudden virtuosic transitional material on the first system of page 28 (see Example 3.8) sets up the B section, which provides contrast when the motoric motion of the A section drops out and a beautiful, spacious section marked “Celestial Canopy” emerges.<sup>41</sup>

Example 3.8 “White Moon Over Water” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, page 28, system 1

Here, Pann looks upward and paints the sky in its vast grandeur (see Example 3.9).

<sup>39</sup>Carter Pann, personal communication with author, December 4, 2018.

<sup>40</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, 2014.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*

The Celestial Canopy - Adagio Molto - Enchanted  $\text{♩} = 72$   
*exercising unusual patience and beautiful rubato*

*pp* ghost chords *pp*  
*clocking eternity*  
*p non espr. sempre*

Example 3.9 “White Moon Over Water” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, page 28, system 4

The B section seems to be where Pann allows listeners to see the special moment he described from his experience on the river in Maine. The second system of page 29 seemingly provides a transition back to earth, and the A material returns on the third system of the same page and continues until the second system of page 30 where the composer indicates dynamic and expressive markings, thereby breaking the rule set forth at the beginning of the piece. This change in character paves the way for a dramatic flourish on the fourth system of page 30 before an almost unsettled conclusion, leaving the feeling of suspense until the last second, where Pann allows the resolution to D major and satisfies the aural longing set forth in the everlasting pedal tone running through almost the entirety of the piece.

The emotional atmosphere created in “White Moon Over Water” is difficult to describe, but the D pedal tone sets up “a sort of serenity,” says the composer, “it’s sort of like you slip into a hallucinatory state where it’s serene, you’re drugged a little bit by that note... it’s not like dopamine... I don’t know what to call it...”<sup>42</sup> In the program notes, Pann describes the B section as being in “a timeless realm,” which seems like an accurate

<sup>42</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

description for a piece that evokes both running water and elements of extraterrestrialism.<sup>43</sup>

#### V. “Le Branle”

American pianist, Ryan MacEvoy McCullough, received the dedication for this, the fifth piece of the set. “Le Branle” refers to a type of French round dance originating from the twelfth century and later adopted by European aristocrats (c. 1450-c. 1650).<sup>44</sup> The side-to-side movement, which characterizes the dance, led to its name (the French word *branle* means “to sway”).<sup>45</sup> Performed to music in common time, the circle of dancers would take four large steps to the left, followed by four smaller steps to the right. Thus, the chain of couples, either intertwining arms or holding hands, moved steadily to the left in a circle or zig-zagged line.<sup>46</sup> Branle dances included anything from running, walking, gliding, or skipping, depending on the tempo of the music.<sup>47</sup>

It is hardly surprising that Pann chose to write his *branle* dance in such a fast “moto perpetuo” tempo notated in a driving 12/8 (see Example 3.10).

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<sup>43</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, program notes, 2014.

<sup>44</sup>Daniel Hertz and Patricia Rader, "Branle," *Grove Music Online*, January 20, 2001, Accessed February 13, 2019, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000003845>.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, program notes, 2014.

More drive, less swagger ♩ = ca. 128

Example 3.10 “Le Branle” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 1-3

While the dance itself was sophisticated, the English translation of *branle* implies a brawl, which is the element that the composer seeks to capture in this piece.<sup>48</sup> Pann says the desire to explore a specific texture provided a foundation for the composition of this piece.<sup>49</sup> “Number 5 was like a texture of music the way that if you pop open a book of Schumann’s music it almost looks like plaid: he did something and he just keeps doing it. That’s what this is.”<sup>50</sup> Pann’s use of the word “plaid” might be explained within the main theme of Schumann’s *Arabesque in C major, Op. 18* in which the same rhythmic motive is used repeatedly, thereby creating visual similarity on the score. Pann also made a statement about the general formal structure of *The Piano’s 12 Sides*:

“Most of my music, especially in the 12 sides, does something, goes to a different section, and then recaps differently. That’s, if I’m concerned with any structure, that’s the very basic thing that I’m doing. Also, my middle sections normally (of these pieces) are supposed to contrast greatly [with] the outer sections.”<sup>51</sup>

Pann achieves such contrast in “Le Branle” where he inserts a jumpy, repeated note section between the asymmetrical outer sections in an even faster tempo than began the piece. Melodic material is at best fragmented in this piece. Pann’s best attempt at lyricism

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

within this texture occurs in the second half of the middle section (see Example 3.11). *Marcati* and up-stems in the outer sections signify melodic motives, but they happen mostly within the context of chordal textures, making them less easily recognizable. On the topic of texture, Pann’s writing range is often demanding in terms of the interval span expected of the performer. Thus, in mm. 67 and 71, he offers an alternate voicing of a sonority, thereby reducing its range by a major third.<sup>52</sup> The original theme is restated in the “goading whistle”<sup>53</sup> of mm. 71-74 – this time, completely removed from its chordal disguise. A timid and reserved close is somewhat of a surprise, given the nature of the piece’s insistent character. The witty, comical ending helps transition to number six.

The musical score for Example 3.11, "Le Branle" from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, measures 47-49. It is written for piano in 3/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked "♩. = ca. 140, pressing". The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff for the right hand and a bass clef staff for the left hand. The right hand begins with a melodic line of eighth notes, marked *mf dolce*. The left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes, marked *ff*. The piece concludes with a fermata over a final chord in the right hand.

Example 3.11 “Le Branle” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 47-49

## VI. “Classic Rock”

In the program notes, Pann briefly explains his relationship with Jack Gaffney, whom he calls a “natural songwriter and pianist.”<sup>54</sup> Gaffney became one of Pann’s music theory and composition students at the age of twelve. He now has his own website ([www.jackgaffney.com](http://www.jackgaffney.com)), where more information can be found about his music.

<sup>52</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, 2014.

<sup>53</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, program notes, 2014.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*



Gaffney's style inspired Pann's writing of this piece, which he wrote for him "as an expression of [his] gratitude to him and to his parents and siblings..."<sup>55</sup>

One of the key elements of a successful song in any of the popular genres is a good hook. For this piece, Pann's hook is the opening material, which he calls an "unmistakable nod" to the third movement of Brahms's second symphony.<sup>56</sup> The motive reappears at the conclusion of the piece. Thus, the introductory material was his attempt to soften the blow of an idea and genre that are relatively foreign in solo piano repertoire. Aside from this brief reference to Brahms, the piece is "all classic rock."<sup>57</sup>

One way Pann captures the classic rock aura is in his use of rhythm. Beginning at m. 11, which he calls a "dark tango," syncopations and other offbeat emphases resemble that of a rock song.<sup>58</sup> Note especially the staccato chord on the second half of each downbeat in mm. 11, 15, 17, etc., which perhaps represents a lead guitar riff. In the case of bands with larger instrumentation, this figure might also correspond to an interjection from a small brass section (see Example 3.12).

Example 3.12 "Classic Rock" from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 7-12

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, 2014.

Within the confines of the B Aeolian mode, the piano in this setting still sounds quite elegant compared to a band, but these techniques help create an allusion to popular music. Beginning at m. 36, the music settles into a groove until m. 43 in which “a brilliant sheen”<sup>59</sup> guides the performer to a temporary, quasi-improvisatory gesture (see Example 3.13). This continues until m. 48 where a brief, two bar transition takes us back to the main rock theme at m. 50.

The musical score for Example 3.13, "Classic Rock" from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, measures 43-44, is presented in a two-staff format (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is B Aeolian (two sharps). The piece is in 4/4 time. The right-hand part features a melodic line with several slurs and accents. Performance markings include *dim.* (diminuendo) at the start, *mp* (mezzo-piano) in the middle, and *leggiero* (light) above a section of sixteenth-note runs. A *poch.* (poché) marking is shown above a wavy line indicating a temporary tempo change. The section concludes with *a tempo* and *p serene, legato* (piano, serene, legato) markings. The left-hand part consists of chords and moving lines that support the right-hand melody.

Example 3.13 “Classic Rock” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 43-44

The composer reprises the opening Brahms motive at m. 54, now with a final cadence on a G major seventh chord in second inversion. The use of this sonority makes sense, given the frequency with which major seventh chords were used in classic rock, but here it sounds less than conclusive, considering the overall tonality of the piece (see Example 3.14). The use of a popular style in “Classic Rock” has contributed to its success and made it more widely accessible to pianists and audiences.

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

As the beginning

*p*

slower, plodding

*f*

a solemn, bricked sound

Example 3.14 “Classic Rock” from The Piano's 12 Sides, mm. 54-58

## VII. “She Steals Me”

Pann attributes the success of this piece to the fact that it resembles a Brahms intermezzo. He says he was not trying to do “anything super special.”<sup>60</sup> “She Steals Me” is an ideal example of what Pann calls, “a living room piece.”<sup>61</sup> The piece begins with a beautifully voiced chorale in A-flat major, which makes its first entrance at m. 4 after a brief introduction built on A-flat fifths (see Example 3.15).

Rubato

with conviction and not too slow

*mf* drones

push and pull the phrasing with great expression always

*f* a bright and singing tone, legato sempre

sost. Led.

(con Led.)

Example 3.15 “She Steals Me” from The Piano's 12 Sides, mm. 1-7

The resemblance to Sibelius’s *Finlandia* in this chorale is unmistakable. Not only does Pann write in the same key as Sibelius, but his phrase structure also resembles that of the

<sup>60</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

famous tune. Pann denies any intentional borrowing here saying, “[*Finlandia*] may be a piece that’s just in the back of my brain, but I wasn’t trying to do that.”<sup>62</sup> The statement beginning at m. 17 initiates a shift away from this idea and transitions toward the theme that will soon become the main focus of the piece. M. 28 announces the arrival of this new idea, also in A-flat major, but Pann’s use of harmony in this moment defies the age-old treatment of subdominant and dominant progressions. In fact, he reverses their roles by placing the V chord before the IV chord, thus resulting in a I, vi, V, IV retrogression. Pann uses this pattern quite often in this piece (see Example 3.16 for one such occurrence).



Example 3.16 “*She Steals Me*” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 31-36

Notice the composer’s indication “... a rocking chair on the porch.”<sup>63</sup> The tempo is such that we almost feel the music in one, but the composer describes this section as “a plaintive Appalachian waltz.”<sup>64</sup> Therefore, a successful performance keeps the tempo in a range where the waltz can still be felt.

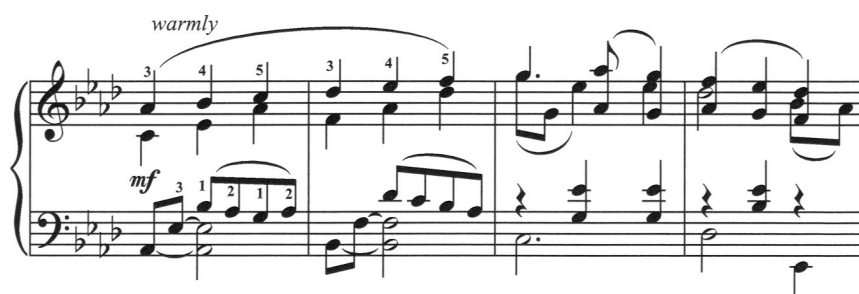
A simple ascending scale at m. 37 provides a break from main thematic material and serves as a simple, yet new theme (see Example 3.17). Regarding melody, Pann says that this piece is “really just a stepwise line.” He says he often thinks about the anatomy

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, 2014.

<sup>64</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, program notes, 2014.

of melody, which he defines as “the contour, the shape, the gesture – really the DNA” of the piece.<sup>65</sup> During our discussion of this piece, Pann referenced a talk by John Williams that he attended. He said that Williams, known for his memorable melodies, breaks down melodic ideas into “something completely unromantic to talk about.”<sup>66</sup> This experience with John Williams may have been a defining moment in Pann’s development as a composer because it helped him realize the simplicity of melodies in a way he had not thought of previously. He says, “‘She Steals Me’ is really just: let’s walk up the A-flat major scale and let’s come back down, but with some little hooks in there.”<sup>67</sup>



Example 3.17 “She Steals Me” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 37-40

Following a fermata in m. 49, the composer inserts a brief tease of new material that will be developed later in the piece. Here, it appears as a series of blocked chords forming a hemiola in mm. 52-53, which also characterizes Brahms intermezzos. Earlier themes reappear beginning in m. 55 until m. 68, where a transitional passage based on fragments of previous themes ushers in another use of the blocked chord hemiola pattern.

In typical Pann fashion, the middle section, beginning at m. 86, contrasts with the rest of the piece (see Example 3.18). The use of descending scales as left hand

<sup>65</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

accompaniment material creates a snowing effect as indicated in the score,<sup>68</sup> while the right hand plays a series of three seventh chords in third inversion, F<sup>m7</sup>, B-flat<sup>m7</sup>, and E-flat<sup>7</sup>, forming the hemiola effect first introduced in m. 52. This vi, ii, V pattern is easily recognizable as a common practice harmonic progression, and this motive is developed throughout the section. The composer inserts fragments of themes from the A section while he transitions toward the climax. M. 117 marks a shift in tempo, as syncopated blocked chords lead to an eventual “cacophony” of repeated sonorities.



Example 3.18 “*She Steals Me*” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 83-88

As the B section grinds to a halt, one can only help but wonder what will come next. Resolution to this moment of suspense occurs as a brief reprise of the waltz theme enters at m. 131. “*She Steals Me*” ends with a restatement of the opening chorale at m. 142, which now leads to a cadential conclusion. The final chord lacks the third of the triad, which leaves a feeling of open space despite its certitude. If Pann had written the full triad here, it may have sounded too final in the context of the larger work from which this piece is drawn.

The title begs the question, who is “she”? The composer explained that Kristin Kuster, for whom the piece is dedicated, is one of his “absolute best friends”; Kuster, a

<sup>68</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, 2014.

composer and pianist on the faculty of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, was also a friend of Joel Hastings.<sup>69</sup> Pann clearly poured his heart into the composition of this piece, and he still comes close to tears at certain points of “obvious sentimentality” in the music.<sup>70</sup> While the title gives a sensual appeal, Pann’s relationship with Kuster is non-romantic, and this piece simply stands as a beautiful tribute to their friendship.<sup>71</sup>

### VIII. “Soirée Macabre”

Originally composed as a commission in 2008, “Soirée Macabre” is one of Pann’s least favorite pieces in *The Piano’s 12 Sides*.<sup>72</sup> He decided to include it in the set because he felt that it fit well, and he had already composed and dedicated it to Nikki Melville, a pianist who serves on the faculty of Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. At the time of the commission, Melville was preparing a new album of thirteen pieces, each by a different composer. The only guideline from Nikki was that the piece be in a genre. Thus, she provided the composers a list of words to stimulate their creative minds. She did not want Mozart or something extremely abstract, so there were parameters, but they were fairly loose.<sup>73</sup> Pann embarked on the composition of “Soirée Macabre” with a personal deadline of two weeks from start to finish; he was already teaching in Colorado by this time and adding an extra task like this to his schedule was arduous.<sup>74</sup> Pann’s piano at the time was an “upright rinky-dink [Kroeger] piano from like 1908,” which he said had a distinctive sound.<sup>75</sup> Like many of his works, the piece began as an improvisation – this

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano’s 12 Sides*, program notes, 2014.

<sup>71</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

time, in F minor as the composer was playing around with “Hit the Road Jack” by Ray Charles.<sup>76</sup> He decided to use the concept of stride bass, but to make the harmonies more interesting. “I just put [all the harmonies] in the left hand and then just [did] something that’s really laid back and chill in the right hand.”<sup>77</sup> At first, Pann says it sounded like bebop or dance music, but then it began to take on a macabre quality, which led him to the version that was first recorded by Nikki Melville and now exists as part of *The Piano’s 12 Sides*.

The piece opens with a long string of chords, which naturally swing in 12/8. The sinister sound quality is established immediately, but in m. 6 with the entrance of the stride style, Pann combines dance-like rhythms with a slightly disturbing aura. Chromaticism in the bassline adds a special flavor to the harmony and allows the composer more room for color in the chord qualities. A sly, yet convincing melody enters at the end of m. 9, while the stride texture continues beneath. The introductory idea reappears at m. 17, but sets up a key change as the stride material returns in B minor at m. 22 in a slower tempo. M. 28 marks the beginning of a section written in 15/8 in which Pann slithers his way through fragments of A-flat, F, and G all the while maintaining an E-flat pedal tone. Pann uses the E-flat as a pivot point; it eventually turns into a D-sharp, which becomes the dominant of G-sharp minor, where he finally arrives in m. 32 as the 12/8 stride pattern resumes. A series of coloristic and chromatic chordal movement begins in m. 36 with a somewhat restrained passage marked “dreamy,” which is followed by much more intense motion toward an accented sonority on beat five of m. 39. A

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.



similar sequence follows as m. 40 calms back down to the return of more dream-like material at m. 41. Another burst of energy begins to unfold at m. 43 as the piece transitions to the return of the stride theme in F minor once again at m. 47. Here, Pann takes an existing theme that he has now established several times in different keys, but this time it is even slower and softer than before, which creates a haunted atmosphere. By m. 52, we are back in B minor, and just as in m. 22, special emphasis is given to the bassline (see Example 3.19).

**Poco più mosso (very heavy!)**

Example 3.19 “*Soirée Macabre*” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 52-54

However, now the pattern is loud and heavy, which then contrasts with the “ghostly” quality of the following measures and leads to more transitional material before m. 65 where we find a sudden return of the stride theme. At this point, the original faster tempo is established, which sounds much lighter given the thick, plodding qualities of the middle portion of the piece (see Example 3.20).

**With sudden elegance**  
(♩ = 120 as the beginning)

Example 3.20 “*Soirée Macabre*” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 65-67

Pann almost overuses the main idea, but he clearly works hard to disguise it in different tempi, keys, and moods, which help to create different characters throughout the piece.

For the most accurate description of the intended affect here, we turn to Pann's own description provided in the program notes:

“A piece of haunted salon music, imagine a cadaverous Vincent Price playing this ragged ghost-waltz to an audience of zombie socialites milling about at the grand escalier, a monstrous old chandelier hanging sentinel above the fray. The harmonies are blood-soaked and often imbued with hidden malevolence, mixing extravagance with the sinister.”<sup>78</sup>

### IX. “Orion”

Deriving its name from a prominent constellation, “Orion” takes us to the cosmic realm in a similar fashion to “White Moon Over Water.”<sup>79</sup> Around the time of composing “Orion,” Pann had been looking at piano music written for only the left hand, and he thought it would be compelling to write something for only the right hand. He was at the piano, as is his custom when composing, and he said his hands always end up finding diatonicism.<sup>80</sup> In this case, they found E-flat. “So eventually,” he says, “I couldn’t do it. The left hand joins because I [needed] more to be there; I [needed] more sonority to be built up.”<sup>81</sup> Thus, he composed a piece in which the first half is almost exclusively for right hand and the second half still features the right hand, but receives some left hand support. While the composer provides certain tempo indications, the piece is devoid of any time signatures, and therefore, it is intended to be entirely free. The composer presents the performer with an opportunity for “pure, uninterrupted listening” as “fleeting

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<sup>78</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, program notes, 2014.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

moments of tension” are “followed obligingly by release.”<sup>82</sup> In the spirit of extraterrestrialism, the compositional style employed here supports the feeling of expansive spaces with its constant flowing motion and lack of meter. The piece continues to reveal itself to Pann as he performs it, and he says it continually becomes more like a “yet-unwritten Debussy prelude.”<sup>83</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 2, “Orion” later became the basis for Pann’s chamber composition, *Antares*.

The construction of this piece clearly exhibits the element of improvisation. The first seven notes form a unique shape, which Pann explores and develops. The same idea returns in the last line of the piece leading to a final, expansive E-flat major cadence. The majority of the piece lacks any phrase markings, which requires the pianist to shape according to the gesture and let the music breathe naturally (see Example 3.21). The composer also indicates the silent depression of two stacked fifths (pitches E-flat, B-flat, and F), which are then held by the *sostenuto* pedal to allow the reverberation of overtones, and to give an illusion of more sound than is actually being played. This was presumably a technique employed by the composer when he set out to compose for only the right hand.

A flowing, even tone throughout ♩ = 108 (non cresc. sempre)

depress silently, applying sost. ped. before beginning.  
(loco)  
*p* intimate, with Ped. but not too wet.

Example 3.21 “Orion” from *The Piano’s 12 Sides*, page 49, system 1

Rhythms alternate in passages of sixteenth notes and thirty-second notes, thereby giving the music a natural push and pull. He also builds in moments of *ritardando* and *rubato*,

<sup>82</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano’s 12 Sides*, program notes, 2014.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*

which further define moments of time and space release. The last system of page 49 begins the build toward a climax, which happens in two waves. The first wave culminates within the first system of page 50, and primarily consists of a descending line of right hand triads alternating with left hand fourths and fifths. This gives way to a “tumultuous” build in the second system of page 50, which, with the inclusion of C-flat, F-flat, and G-flat accidentals, hints at minor (see Example 3.22). The music dissolves back into major on the third system of the same page, thus making this effect short-lived. Left hand sonorities support the texture sporadically, but they become more regular beginning at this point. Pann’s attention to detail is evident throughout the piece, but especially where he lists the order of pitches to be rolled on the last system of page 50. Dedicated to Pann’s composition faculty colleague, Hsing-ay Hsu, “Orion” stands as a testament to the potential for creative atmospheric painting in relatively thin, fantasy-like, pianistic textures.

Example 3.22 “Orion” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, page 50, system 2

## X. “Cradle Song”

Standing as the shortest and most straightforward piece in *The Piano's 12 Sides*, “Cradle Song” lasts just over two minutes, but still manages to present its fair share of pianistic challenges while evoking a specific character. Written in 6/8, the piece exhibits

a natural lilt, which is often associated with rocking infants to sleep. The opening line functions as an introduction, but also establishes a recurring harmonic motive that carries the piece. The melody enters at the pickup to m. 9, at which point Pann adds a third staff to separate the melodic material from the rest of the texture (see Example 3.23). The almost constant overlap between melody and harmony in the right hand makes such a notational strategy necessary. The challenge of this piece lies in the voicing; in fact, Pann considers it an “etude of voices.”<sup>84</sup> “Cradle Song,” originally conceived as a compositional study (like several other pieces in *The Piano’s 12 Sides*), tested Pann’s ability to write both melodic and harmonic material within the context of one hand.<sup>85</sup>



Example 3.23 “Cradle Song” from *The Piano’s 12 Sides*, mm. 8-14

The piece, while mostly diatonic to the key of A, is not in A. Pann mainly uses pitches indicated by the key signature, but the tonic is based on the sixth scale degree of A. The opening progression, moving from F-sharp to B to E, presents a convincing case for the Aeolian mode on F-sharp. This progression, while eliciting elements of darkness, carries with it hints of popular song. Pann calls it “a sort of nothing song – just repeated notes and a few moves here and there.”<sup>86</sup> The first half of m. 30 contains an unobstructed A major triad, but in the context of the phrase it functions as III moving to iv. Chromatic

<sup>84</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

movement from A-natural to A-sharp (for example, the downbeats of mm. 2-3) defines much of the harmonic construction and provides dissonance while simultaneously establishing character. Mm. 32-40 provide temporary stasis from the rocking motion (see Example 3.24). It is as if a caregiver has paused the rocking motion to see if the child is asleep. Then, the rocking resumes in m. 41 as the infant is gently lifted into its crib where it finds its resting place as a tonic ninth chord with an A in the bass provides a strange sense of calm. “Cradle Song” was dedicated to Steinway Artist, Marina Lomazov.

Example 3.24 “Cradle Song” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 30-40

## XI. “Grand Etude-Fantasy”

After “Cradle Song,” Pann felt that “it was time to climax in a tour de force of pianism.”<sup>87</sup> Number eleven was written for Winston Choi, whom Pann says has “fingers of steel” and learns music “in an incredibly protracted amount of time.” It may be recalled that Pann also wrote *Six Strokes* for Choi (see Chapter 2). The “Grand Etude-Fantasy” is without a doubt the most technically challenging piece in *The Piano's 12 Sides*, and one wonders whether the title is derived from Chopin.

The piece alternates between passages with and without bar lines. Pann uses numbers above long notes (half-, dotted half-, or whole notes), in which he indicates

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

groups of running eighth-notes (see numbers above the staff in Example 3.25). The effect here is to extend the duration of the long notes thereby eliminating the need to add ties, which keeps the score less cluttered.<sup>88</sup> While relentless in its contemporary virtuosic demands, the piece loosely adapts a traditional form. Pann says there is an element of rondo within the piece, but he chose to call it a fantasy because he liked the sound better,<sup>89</sup> and because the music does not rigidly follow rondo form.<sup>90</sup> Rondo form (in this case, ABACA-coda) manifests itself mostly in the return of the “Prestissimo” A material, originally found in the second system of the piece, after a brief chorale introduction (see Example 3.25).

Example 3.25 “Grand Etude-Fantasy” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, page 53, system 2

The A section ends with the appearance of what Pann calls “Vicious” material near the bottom of page 54. This section functions as a transition to the new B idea on page 55 (see Example 3.26), and the motive is continually developed in the following march section and beyond. One of the most convincing harmonic moments of the piece occurs in the 6/2 bar on the final system of page 55 (marked “Grand”), where a second inversion D-flat major sonority is present. Harmonic ambiguity continues in the following passage making this a fleeting moment of stability.

<sup>88</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, 2014.

<sup>89</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>90</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, program notes, 2014.

Example 3.26 “Grand Etude-Fantasy” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, page 55, system 2

After a brilliant cascading figure on the third and fourth systems of page 56, the A section returns where the score indicates “Starting slowly...” on the same page.

Gradually the tempo returns to “prestissimo” and this statement, while modified and containing brief interjections (like the “Pesante subito” in the middle of page 57), closely resembles the first A section. The end of the fifth system on page 58 marks the beginning of new material where the composer transitions into an almost cadenza-like fantasy and the performer is given ample opportunity to show off. In addition to harmonic ambiguity, substantial rhythmic and technical demands manifest themselves in this section. Parallel thirds in contrary motion between the hands (see Example 3.27) are one of the many challenges here.

Example 3.27 “Grand Etude-Fantasy” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, page 59, system 3

Material from the A section material returns at the “Prestissimo” on page 60, but Pann modifies the transition on the first system of page 61, allowing him to skip a portion of the original A section and shorten this statement. After the ascending scale on the third



system of page 61, this section suddenly comes to a halt and the coda begins. Pann was very pleased with the Hastings recording of this particular part of the piece:

“I can’t believe how Joel performs the coda – that whole piece – I mean it’s a recording, [and] he’s got I don’t know how many takes, but he just plays it with – he makes it sound facile, which is kind of the thing I appreciated most about that performance. He makes it sound facile, which speaks well of the composition of it. He makes me look good as a composer when he performs like that.”<sup>91</sup>

Pann used previously introduced motives as building blocks for the construction of the coda. For example, the 8/2 bar at the bottom of page 61 recalls the theme from page 55 shown in Example 3.26. Further, Pann pointed out that the “play ‘by eye’” chords on page 63 correspond to the opening chorale in that they both descend from G-to-G in octaves (see Example 3.28).<sup>92</sup> “By eye” likely refers to the fact that the performer must estimate the duration of each sonority to 4 seconds as indicated in the score. The version within the coda, while extended and much more dramatic, still creates this intentional connection and serves as a means of linking the opening and closing sections of the piece.

play "by eye" *accelerando poco a poco* . . .  
 (4 sec.)  
*fff* play these chords as if your fingers are percussion mallets  
 voice: Bb Ab F  
 a lot of low bleed-through . . . (Ed.)

Example 3.28 “Grand Etude-Fantasy” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, page 63, system 4

Pann’s use of tonality in “Grand Etude-Fantasy” is particularly interesting. In the program notes, Pann calls the piece “a bi-tonal exploration of Bachian frenzy.”<sup>93</sup> The bi-

<sup>91</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, program notes, 2014.

tonal element he refers to is found in the A section. It simply means that the two hands are not playing in the same key. While much of the right hand is based in C (notice the absence of a qualifying mode), the left hand mostly plays single note harmonies, thereby making it challenging to determine a single pitch center. Certain passages, like the B section (Example 3.26), exhibit more tonal agreement between the hands. Intricate counterpoint and general pianistic textures (in the A section, at least) resemble a Bach prelude and fugue and stand as examples of what Pann meant by “Bachian.”

Pann admits the difficulty of this piece in the program notes, saying, “I know I will never be able to perform this piece, and that fact fills me with frustration.”<sup>94</sup> In a matter of seconds, Pann called the piece, “over the top,” “outrageous,” and “outlandish.”<sup>95</sup> There is no easy way around the “Grand Etude-Fantasy,” and its ambitious nature should only be attempted by “a masterful pianist familiar with the quick juxtapositions found in more contemporary works.”<sup>96</sup> The piece as a whole provides evidence of Pann’s supreme understanding of the keyboard and demonstrates his advanced pianistic knowledge of physical and cognitive challenges.

## XII. “An Irish Tune”

Reaching a point of finality after such a lengthy set of character pieces is a seemingly unimaginable task, but one which Pann achieved quite successfully. “An Irish Tune” is the composer’s own arrangement of the traditional tune “Londonderry Air,” which has been scored and arranged for countless combinations and instruments

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>96</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano’s 12 Sides*, program notes, 2014.

throughout history. The tune serves as the basis of numerous choral pieces with varying texts, the most famous of which is the song, “Danny Boy.”

The decision to compose a piano piece around such a well-known melody was risky at the very least. Pann says he loves the tune, and he shared the story of how he arrived at this setting: “what happened is, I wanted to write something for Barry [Snyder], and it wasn’t just a dedication – I thought he might play it at some point, and the kind of tune for Barry – that’s just perfect.” Barry Snyder is no stranger to Pann’s music; he has performed Pann’s work and has even been the recipient of a previous dedication (*Fantasy-Inventions*, see Chapter 2). Pann said that upon receiving the piece, Snyder read through it and started crying as he was playing. “It affected him,” Pann said, “it really hit him.”<sup>97</sup> Pann compared Snyder’s ability to sing through the piano and manipulate the pedal to that of Vladimir Horowitz and Richard Goode, but he said, “Barry Snyder is somebody in the flesh I know who has prioritized that in his musicianship.”<sup>98</sup>

Inspiration for this arrangement came from a setting by composer and pianist, Percy Grainger, written for string orchestra. Pann was “in love” with Grainger’s arrangement, and called the adaptation “glorious.”<sup>99</sup> Pann was in attendance at many of the performances that Hastings gave on tour, and he said that the familiarity of “An Irish Tune” allowed the audience a few minutes to exhale after the “Grand Etude-Fantasy.”<sup>100</sup>

Pann’s arrangement, written in F major, opens with no introduction. The piece begins in the middle of the keyboard with a small, gradually widening range, which

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<sup>97</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

swells with the expansion of the phrase. Pann's uses of range and texture are scored as if he were writing for full orchestra. Thus, thicker textures represent places in the piece where more instruments would be employed. Further, the use of creative chord colors enhances the harmonic language, taking listeners to a place of hyper-Romanticism. Several meter changes reside in the first verse (see Example 3.29), but the performer is instructed to "lean through all irregular meters to achieve a natural flow."<sup>101</sup> Longer note durations function as written out *ritardandi*, and provide special emphasis at certain points of the melody. Pann carefully wrote both phrase and tempo fluctuations into the score making excess *rubato* unnecessary. At the opening, the analogy of "a hushed choir" provides atmospheric context to the performer.<sup>102</sup>

Simply ♩ = 76 - 84 (a hushed choir)  
 lean through all irregular meters to achieve a natural flow.  
 with a clear melody throughout

The musical score for Example 3.29, "An Irish Tune" from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, measures 1-6. It is written for piano in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked "Simply ♩ = 76 - 84 (a hushed choir)". The score includes performance instructions: "lean through all irregular meters to achieve a natural flow." (boxed), "with a clear melody throughout", "mp always warm...", "l.h.", "hazy", and "meno". The music features a complex, irregular meter structure with various rests and dynamics.

Example 3.29 "An Irish Tune" from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 1-6

The second verse, beginning at m. 33, is exempt from metric variations, and therefore, it moves forward more directly to assist with the long-range build toward a climax. The high point of the piece comes just before the end of the second verse in mm. 49-60. Here, the composer imagines "a gospel choir at the height of glorious pronouncement" (see Example 3.30).<sup>103</sup>

<sup>101</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, 2014.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>Carter Pann, *The Piano's 12 Sides*, program notes, 2014.

Example 3.30 “An Irish Tune” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 55-60

Following this passage of euphoria, Pann begins to search for ways to end the piece. The final section, like so much of *The Piano's 12 Sides*, exhibits an improvised quality. In m. 61, the composer begins a simple statement of the last line of the tune, in which the tempo is slightly slower and *rubato* is built-in through the use of longer note durations. The V7 at the end of m. 63 sets up a false ending, at which point Pann returns to the tag line once again (m. 64) in a texture resembling the opening of the piece (see Example 3.31). The end of the melodic phrase in m. 67 is harmonized with a borrowed chord (bVI in first inversion), and the left hand moves down from F to E-flat, then to D-flat and C in m. 68, which supports a Neapolitan chord in the right hand. Mm. 69-70 function as a V-suspension chord that is not resolved as expected, and instead moves straight to the final sonority: an openly voiced fifth of F and C. The absence of the third scale degree resembles the end of “She Steals Me.”

Example 3.31 “An Irish Tune” from *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mm. 64-71

If carefully voiced and played with control, the grandeur of this arrangement is difficult to match. Its sublime beauty proves that contemporary music can be

simultaneously tonal and tasteful. Pann's compositional skill and experience as a pianist allow him to arrange idiomatically in a way that is comfortable for the performer and does not sound awkward to the audience. Pann says "An Irish Tune" has become "an anthem" at the end of *The Piano's 12 Sides*.<sup>104</sup>

Pann says that in the process of determining the order of *The Piano's 12 Sides*, he thought of the project as "an album with twelve tracks."<sup>105</sup> Thus, he organized the pieces based on the intended experience for listeners. Therefore, despite Pann's use of multiple styles, genres, pianistic textures, and improvisatory ideas, the set forms a cohesive whole. As illustrated in this chapter, *The Piano's 12 Sides* is challenging and demanding, but offers something for everyone while pleasing both professional musicians and those who simply appreciate music.

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<sup>104</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER 4: Final Thoughts

A recurring theme in the previous chapters is that of improvisation as the basis for compositional creativity. The title of this study, “From Improvisation to Artistry...” is intended to represent a consistent trait among Pann’s music (specifically in *The Piano’s 12 Sides*) that illustrates the genesis of his work, and captures a specific quality of his compositions. Improvisation is a skill that, while once mainstream, is now atypical among most professional pianists. Many of Pann’s compositions began as improvised ideas or at least have an improvised quality about them, but the uniqueness of his work is the elegance and sophistication with which he composes. His style is not limited to a single harmonic approach, but rather his music combines both common practice and contemporary tonal practices. Pann writes music of a high caliber with great skill, regardless of the simplicity or complexity of its core elements. He takes seemingly simple ideas and imposes upon them a refined artistic quality as demonstrated in the preceding chapters; thus, the progression from improvisation to artistry.

While solo piano music is traditionally performed from memory, Pann does not find it necessary for pianists to memorize his music. He feels that since it is new music, audiences will not care, and he encourages the use of the score if it will improve confidence in performance.<sup>1</sup> Technical execution of certain passages requires memorization, and there is certainly no harm in playing from memory. Further, certain pieces from among Pann’s solo piano output lend themselves to memorization to a greater degree than others. The frequency with which Pann includes affective instructions

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<sup>1</sup>Carter Pann, personal communication with author, December 4, 2018.

in the score may also support the use of the score in performance. In the end, it is a personal preference left to the discretion of each performer.

Pann's work is indisputably recognized and appreciated in the greater music community. Wind ensembles across the country frequently program his music. Additionally, the popularity of his piano music is growing also as a result of recordings made by the late Joel Hastings. Prominent members of the creative community know and respect Pann's work, as evidenced by the recipients of dedication within *The Piano's 12 Sides*. While some of pieces were inspired by a particular individual, Pann says, "I'm not writing these pieces for these specific people to play. It's really just people of my appreciation and maybe old friendships."<sup>2</sup>

"I don't put the time into writing any music anymore that won't get published or that I'm not expecting to get published,"<sup>3</sup> says Pann. While discussing his compositional output, Pann shared that only some of the "very, very young stuff" in his catalog is unpublished.<sup>4</sup> The publisher is his primary means of publicity; he does not use social media or other forms of self-promotion. While his scores can be found on a variety of websites, Pann's music is disseminated primarily by Theodore Presser Company.

Pann does not struggle with the "fear of missing out," and he prefers human relationships to the busyness of posting YouTube videos or living within a fantasy of becoming a superstar.<sup>5</sup> What's more, he says, "I'm just going to do my best work and find the best people who appreciate it."<sup>6</sup> Pann is not only a gifted composer, but he is also

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<sup>2</sup>Carter Pann, interview with author, December 5, 2018.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.



an entertaining conversationalist. He does not come across as arrogant or conceited. Furthermore, he is extremely grateful for the attention that his piano music is receiving. Evidence of his kindness exists in the form of personal notes in Appendix C.

With this study as a guide, it is the author's goal and intention that pianists be equipped with the necessary knowledge to understand not only *The Piano's 12 Sides*, but also some of Pann's other worthy compositions. His demanding works offer a remarkable reward to both performers and audiences. *The Piano's 12 Sides* stands as a representative work, comprising both the variety and breadth of Pann's unique approach to piano music.

Classical piano music encompasses the richness of improvisation as well as traditional form, harmony, texture, and specific genres such as the sonata, concerto, and character piece. The twentieth century played host to a wide array of musical genres including neoclassicism, minimalism, serialism, jazz, blues, and rag, among many others. Here, within the first quarter of the twenty-first century, Pann's compositional voice brings together threads of both classical and contemporary styles making his music highly accessible and extraordinarily relevant to modern audiences.

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## Appendix A

It was the author's original intention to include a separate chapter containing a traditional analysis of each piece in *The Piano's 12 Sides*. Upon discussion with the composer, it became evident that such analysis was not necessarily the most useful way of describing these pieces. They all share similar form and Pann's unique use of tonality does not consistently employ harmonic progressions identifiable by a traditional Roman numeral analysis. This study seeks to answer questions that could inform a performer's interpretation of *The Piano's 12 Sides* and place the work in context both historically and within Pann's overall output. Furthermore, specific details shared by the composer and discovered by the author are preserved in this study for future scholarship.

Below is the transcript of an interview conducted by the author on December 5, 2018 with Carter Pann. The questions and areas of discussion were motivated by the author's preliminary research and initial analyses of Pann's music. The goal of providing readers with objective information about the construction of Pann's music directed the course of the interview. Pann frequently referenced the improvisatory nature of certain pieces from among *The Piano's 12 Sides* and the fact that some began as compositional exercises. Thus, the origin of the compositional process propelled a portion of the discussion. Pann also shared a number of personal stories and experiences that sparked his compositional creativity and contributed to the affectation portrayed in his music.

### Interview Transcript

[Introduction]

PANN: Alright I will spill my guts – ask whatever you want to...

CLAUSSEN: Sure! Let me tell you how I am thinking of organizing the document. I'll start with the first chapter of bio and some compositional style. And then I'll get into the second chapter overviewing your piano works and chamber music featuring piano (concerto and things like that). The third chapter will be focused on the 12 sides. Then the fourth chapter really kind of diving into a few of the specific pieces with an analysis. Then the fifth chapter will be summary.

PANN: Wow.

CLAUSSEN: Probably around 75 pages or so.

PANN: What a dissertation.

CLAUSSEN: Yeah, I think it will be fun!

PANN: And then you have to give a presentation on it?

CLAUSSEN: Yeah the lecture recital will be probably a 30-35-minute presentation and then 15-20 minutes of playing.

PANN: Recordings?

CLAUSSEN: No, my playing of the 12 sides – whatever pieces I end up with... so that will be, you know, after everything is written hopefully. Sort of a summary of the document in presentation form.

PANN: Makes sense... little bit of a PowerPoint presentation? Mm, cool! I wish I could be here for that. Well actually, that would be weird – ‘well we happen to have this man I’ve been talking about for’ – \*laughter\*

[Biography]

CLAUSSEN: So let’s start off with some bio stuff that I couldn’t find... a lot of stuff exists but it sort of drops off around 2009 or so.

PANN: There’s stuff in some books, but yeah...

CLAUSSEN: So you finished your DMA in what year?

PANN: Uh, 2003.

CLAUSSEN: From Michigan, right?

PANN: From University of Michigan. Well I defended in the spring of 2004.

CLAUSSEN: And your main teachers there were Bolcom and...

PANN: William Bolcom, William Albright, Evan Chambers and Andrew Mead – and Michael Daugherty.

CLAUSSEN: Now, did you take off sometime between Masters and DMA?

PANN: No, I didn’t. But in my doctoral degree I took a couple of years off. In the middle of that degree.

CLAUSSEN: In the middle, okay. Just sort of a composing break?

PANN: Composing break... I got burnt out from teaching as a graduate assistant... um, yeah I ended up doing a lot of tv commercials at that time – tv and radio commercials and I just said, I have to take a year or two – and they allowed for that and realized that they would take me right back when I came back.

CLAUSSEN: That’s great.

PANN: That’s the only reason I could do that.

CLAUSSEN: So you have a couple of Grammy nominations, right?

PANN: Yep, one of them is for the piano concerto – the first. And the other one is for an album called *[A] Tent for the Sun*, which is an album of my music and Dan Kellogg's music. Have you seen that album?

CLAUSSEN: I have not.

PANN: Okay, it's called *[A] Tent for the Sun* and it has two wind pieces of mine on it and one of them is the second piano concerto and one of them is a serenade for winds. And two pieces by Kellogg: one is a piece for wind ensemble and actor, and one is a piece for string quartet and band.

CLAUSSEN: Great. I'll have to check that album out. I wonder if it is on Naxos or –

PANN: It's not, it's on Klavier.

CLAUSSEN: Okay, I'll check it out. So really your career in Colorado – I read about how you got the job. Sort of a last minute kind of end-of-summer thing.

PANN: Yeah... um yeah... did I tell you about this?

CLAUSSEN: No...

PANN: I was... um... thinking about quitting composing and so I just went to New York City to stay with somebody in Brooklyn I knew very well who ran a chamber music society, her name was Wanda Fleck. And I stayed in her brownstone for a month and I was just playing chess in the village. I was just taking the A train in to Manhattan and all day everyday playing chess. It was like I was up in arms about the whole career and I was like this is like, you know, because I had applied to several places to get a job and I really wanted to be in Boulder – I really wanted the Boulder job the most – well over anything else I had interviewed for. And I got an interview in Boulder and I just wasn't hearing from them for much longer than I expected. I just wasn't hearing anything. And I started to get a little bit depressed. So I went to New York City I was chain smoking and playing chess. And it was like the stupidest thing to do – I mean I enjoyed it while I was there. Then I got a call in May – early May of 2005 and I was standing out on the street – Thompson Street. It was the then dean of the college of music at the University of Colorado asking me if I would be interested in coming to teach for them, which was great I wasn't expecting it at all. I had written that one off and so that was about three weeks in to my four week chess sabbatical and so that's how I was hired: over the phone in May to start teaching in late August.

CLAUSSEN: What year was that?

PANN: 2005.

CLAUSSEN: So just a couple of years after you finished the DMA.

PANN: About a year and a half – or a year. So after the DMA I moved to Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Bought a – borrowed an upright piano I should say. Dragged it up a hill to an earthship, which is a structure that is embedded into the side of a mountain. A home that I was renting from a lady. And the home was made out of pop cans – recycled material: cans and tires. You know, big rubber tires. And garbage cans and stuff like that. But it was a beautiful looking structure and I lived there for, I don't know, months. I was going through a nasty bout of identity theft at that time. Somebody had stolen all my stuff. I was getting cell phone bills in the mail for a thousand dollars.

CLAUSSEN: When there were no unlimited plans.

PANN: Yeah! But that's how I took my time from my degree to applying to Boulder. Still did a bunch of commercials, but wrote a big piece during that time for piano solo called *Fantasy-Inventions*, which was written in that earthship for Barry Snyder, Eastman pianist Barry Snyder. It was commissioned by the American Music Institute, which sounds very nothing, but it was a Rochester based (I think), where they were able to get the funds for this, affiliated with the Eastman School of Music. So during that interim time is when I wrote the piece: three movement, big fantasy, piano.

CLAUSSEN: So did you do your composing at that time at home or at work in the office?

PANN: In the place I was living. I still do that majority of my composing in a space that's either in or close to my home. And it's generally designated studio. It's not like I have a setup next to my bed – I used to, but you know that's when I was in college. I've worked in my office space and it's not ideal – I don't like it but sometimes I don't have a choice.

CLAUSSEN: So really since you've been in Colorado I guess not much has been written about your professional appearances or presentations. Any highlights like that you want to share?

PANN: I should just give you my CV.

CLAUSSEN: Yeah that would be great.

PANN: My CV is like a rolling timeline.

CLAUSSEN: Perfect. That would be great and would fill in any details.

PANN: Yeah, I'll do that.



[Compositional Style]

CLAUSSEN: Good, we will move on to compositional style.

PANN: Alright.

CLAUSSEN: So for solo piano, how would you describe your compositional style and I guess following up to that, what elements of your style that you recognize have changed over the course of your career – for solo piano? And how has it evolved?

PANN: \*brief pause\* Hm, you know my relationship to the piano has always been extremely intimate and close. And so I haven't had incredible – I don't feel like I have had true breakthroughs over the years in writing for that instrument. But what I do feel is the difference is that the music I write for piano now is just smarter. I'm never trying to push like a square peg through a round hole like I did with some of my earlier works. I don't copycat as much. I used to copycat other music or other composers – dead and alive – I used to do that a lot and I don't do that anymore. I'm now these days more concerned – a priority of mine is to be as idiomatic as possible for the piano and yet still do something seemingly fresh, you know what I mean? Yeah, I've had to play so much new piano music in the past that it's like I know what I would never want to put a pianist through. *The Bills* for instance is kind of in an early middle period for me – early I should say, I was a masters student. That's pretty idiomatic, but it's tremendously challenging... but it's challenging in a way that's like I'm not asking a pianist to like “stand on his head” and execute something that's just out of this world. There's nothing inside the piano and it's very idiomatic and speaks the language of piano music. And that's kind of my favorite stuff anyway. I mean you know Messiaen speaks the language of piano music. It's tremendously challenging, but... – Ligeti's etudes... I mean these are models, but my music is more difficult in a different way than those pieces. But yeah, so that's the progression, the progress.

CLAUSSEN: You've said in other interviews and articles that you usually begin your compositional process at the piano. Could you discuss your training as a pianist and perhaps how that has influenced your composition overall? Do you think your writing as a composer would be different if you weren't a pianist?

PANN: Absolutely, yeah. So I gravitate toward – in terms of piano composers let's think about it... like the keyboard works of Bach, or Chopin's whole output, or Liszt, or Brahms, Schumann... just think of the piano masters – Debussy, Ravel – I look at their music and see that everything is there. Everything that needs to be there is there. And so that's what I aspire to in my own music. There's a lot of counterpoint in my music. There are a lot of moving parts. Also, I said this in a group thing yesterday. Were you in that? Oh no, you shouldn't have been because you were performing that night and I had to do this sort of right before that... There's no hiding in my music. That's a quality about all music that I really love and I appreciate it. I'm not interested in writing ambient music. I'm not interested in writing spectral music. I'm not interested in writing even tremendously minimalist music. I love minimalist composers, but the piano for me is a

jumping off place. It actually determines everything that I write – my relationship to the keyboard. It's not necessarily my relationship to the keyboard as a guy who can play these incredibly romantic and florid pieces – it's not about my piano technique, it's about my respect and relationship for the instrument and how perfectly lined out it is for somebody with a compositional mind. It's just a series of buttons that are giving you all the tones of the orchestra. And then you can imagine things in between these tones, but you have the whole orchestra there. I'm lucky that I'm not a trumpet player trying to be the composer that I am. I would never try to be a composer that I am if I was a trumpet player – who had no relationship to the piano or was afraid of it. I'm glad that I have – the reason I have contrapuntal music and the reason it's so difficult and you can't hide is because I have ten fingers and three or four voices on a staff I can perform. So there's a complexity and intricacy that satisfies me... up to a point. And just like anything else, musically beyond that it just becomes too much.

CLAUSSEN: You've performed some of your own piano pieces. There are some recordings of you out there on YouTube and things like that. Does the thought of performing your own compositions influence the way you write them?

PANN: Yes, it does. It does for the most part. I'm not writing extremely complex Boulez sonatas or things like that because I'm always imagining... 'geez what if I have to do this – or I'm living vicariously through a pianist that I'm writing for so I want to present them something that's not going to kill them and it works. Plus, music that kills you technically – only a little of that kind of music really does it for me. Only certain types of that music does it for me. Usually, music that is only executable by a small handful of performers because of the extreme virtuosity lacks something musically in it for me. I mean I love – I love virtuosic show pieces or modern virtuosity. But, I'm not practiced as a composer in that style. As a composer, it's just like being a pianist. You practice a certain style and then it becomes your thing. Like, I can play the D-flat major scale all the way up and down the piano faster than anybody else because I've been doing it for years (that's not true, but it's kind of like that).

CLAUSSEN: So I know someone who believes that they heard Bolcom say that he likes surprise in his music.

PANN: Oh really, that's cool. No I haven't heard that from him... that's cool to hear. William Albright said that my music is always smiling... or that it's always trying to smile. That's what he appreciated about it, I remember that.

CLAUSSEN: Just a little about wind band here. What was your first exposure to wind band? And why did you travel down that path as a pianist?

PANN: I started writing for winds in 2002 when somebody called me up to ask to commission me for a band piece – just called me out of the blue. I didn't know who he was. He happened to be John Lynch, the Director of Bands at the University of Kansas, at the time. I said to him, "well I've never written a band piece, I mean I guess I could start... I don't even know the instrumentation or how to arrange it on a score." And I

said, “well would you mind if I tried to arrange an orchestra piece of mine to be my first band piece?” And so he was like, “yeah that’s fine, let’s do it – that’s the piece I love and that’s the reason I’m calling you to get a new piece, but if you want to arrange that piece, great.” That was Slalom, which was an orchestra piece from 1999 – January 1999. And then it just kept taking off. Bands are not like orchestras and band directors are not like orchestra conductors. Orchestra conductors have the best music that the world has ever seen. They have the greatest music – they don’t have to look anywhere or call anybody. They’re all dead.

CLAUSSEN: What about your favorite composer? Or someone that you most identify as perhaps being an influence in your own work?

PANN: Well, there’s not one, you know? There’s just not one. I’m kind of an omnivore in that regard so... it’s Chopin, Bach, um, Prokofiev... I could keep listing my favorite composers to you... but if I had to put a composers name on my tombstone... it’s Chopin.

CLAUSSEN: Last question about style... is there a genre of music or specific instrumentation that you don’t enjoy writing for?

PANN: Yes, actually this is a good question. I never really have had to put this into words... I have to myself, but – it’s not an instrumentation answer. It’s a music for use answer. So what I’m not interested in is spending time writing a new piece of music for an event. Meaning like, a non-musical event. Like I could have written a piece for Midori, um but it was going to be a piece for her to play in front of an orchestra of a hundred very little kids. And I didn’t want to do it. I knew I could write a simple piece – I can write easy music, but it’s much harder for me to do that. Even my easy music is difficult. I also knew that it would probably live once and die fast. It just wouldn’t have legs, you know what I mean? So, when I’m spending time giving birth to these little babies, I want them to grow up. I don’t want this to be “oh, I’m going to write a piece for the St. Louis Symphony, but it’s going to be about the bridge between this community and this community and they’re doing the inauguration of the bridge... they’re going to crack a champagne bottle over it.. and the piece has to be about the architect... it has to be a tribute to John blah, blah, blah, who made the bridge in 19—” you know what I’m saying? I don’t like Gebrauch music... which is, you’ve heard that expression it’s German for “music for use.” I don’t think music needs that. I just don’t like to do that. And that can be for any instrumentation. It can be children’s concert music, which actually is not bad. I would do that. I don’t know, I just don’t like to hear children playing my music... that sounds bad, but um other people can do that much better than me.

[Joel Hastings]

CLAUSSEN: So let’s talk a little bit about Joel Hastings. How did you first meet?

PANN: Joel and I were students together at University of Michigan. He’s two and a half years older than me. When I got to Michigan in 1994, he was already there doing a

degree in piano performance with Dickran Atamian. That's how I met him – he was just another student. We didn't connect for quite a while though. We were acquaintances but never became friends until well after we were there together. He graduated, left, got a church gig there – he stayed in Ann Arbor his whole life basically until he went to FSU. So that's where I met him.

CLAUSSEN: So did you guys have plans for more collaboration prior to his passing?

PANN: Yes, he passed suddenly. I was at that time writing a new set of piano pieces for him.

CLAUSSEN: *Five Serious Pieces*?

PANN: *Five Serious Pieces*, yeah, exactly. But it was supposed to be something like *The Piano's 18 Sides*.

CLAUSSEN: Okay, so it was going to be bigger than the 12 Sides?

PANN: Yes, it was going to be big. So I stopped. I sort of derailed it in his memorial... and it was only five pieces at that time. And the title is a little... they're not all serious pieces, but yeah...

CLAUSSEN: A little bit about the titles of the pieces you just alluded to. For pieces like "This Black Cat" or "Smart Car" – are those titles that come after you've written the piece?

PANN: Did I send that to you?

CLAUSSEN: No, I just saw it on your publisher's website.

PANN: Huh, I hope you didn't buy it because it's a screwed up publication. "This Black Cat" and "Smart Car" and those other titles... it's just sort of continuing the legacy of *The Piano's 12 Sides* because those pieces are all titled. And you know, I had always had it in the back of my mind to write groups of character pieces for piano. I wasn't really attracted to just churning out piano etudes as a composer, I mean, there is a composer who's got like nearly a hundred of them. Do you know this composer, David Rakowski? He has something like almost a hundred etudes and they're in like 13 or 14 volumes. And etudes are fine, but one of my teacher's growing up, Emilio Del Rosario, saw the composer in me and he's the one who shoved me into private lessons with a composer for the very first time as a high schooler. He said, "you know, what the piano world needs is like a composer who writes just sets of character pieces. We don't need any more etudes; we don't need preludes..." you know that kind of thing. So that is what I embarked on with *The Piano's 12 Sides*, hence all the titles... hence they're very different... and now *Five Serious Pieces* are very different as well and there were going to be about 18 of them. So the titles are loosely based on an affectation that inspired the music. Like, I just got my first cat, she's black (this was a couple years ago), and had real attitude this cat –

and we've broken her down, but she had real attitude – and I love the title “This Black Cat” because it's kind of jazzy and that's kind of a jazz slang – it works like that as well.

CLAUSSEN: What about “Claude Phillip Emmanuel Saint Brahms”?

PANN: \*laughter\* Well, that has to do with how quixotic the styles are in that piece. So you take the names of that title and you can kind of assume the composers I'm talking about, and their styles are weaved throughout each other in that piece. That piece, by the way, is probably the more accessible piece for most pianists.

[*The Piano's 12 Sides*]

CLAUSSEN: Let's talk about the 12 Sides, and specifically some questions about some of the pieces, but if you want to interject anytime, please do. First, you mentioned writing character pieces in sets. Is that really the inspiration for such a long piece of solo piano music? Did you anticipate them being performed alone or as a group?

PANN: I'm attracted to sets of piano pieces because I grew up with sets of piano pieces. Everything from Grieg to all the Schumann sets to the Chopin sets... so I think of piano music as being – if there's piano solo pieces of what I call “living room length” they usually appear in sets... so even the Brahms Op. 118 say, or whatever. So that's how I think of it. I truly, truly love certain sets like *Carnaval*... even *Vingt Regards [sur l'enfant-Jésus]* by Messiaen that's a big set... so that's what it was and I knew from the get-go that if anybody was going to perform *The Piano's 12 Sides*, mostly they would perform them piecemeal, or they would perform them in sets of 1 to 12 instead of just like what Joel did with it on a tour, which was just play the whole thing. So, I think he did that because it was for him... and I'm not expecting that to happen again. There are sets out there like Robert Schumann's *Carnaval* that hardly ever gets played piecemeal anymore. That's a set and you play it. It's treated like a sonata. These pieces are a little bigger than his pieces... I do not expect them to be performed all at once. If there's another pianist who does it, I'll be beyond thrilled and surprised. I think they go well in groups of 3 and 4. There's a pianist in Michigan who's doing it right now – or at least a lot of them, Yu-Lien The, she premiered and recorded my new saxophone sonata. She's a piano teacher at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. She fell in love with *The Piano's 12 Sides*, but she's not Joel in that she doesn't feel obligated to learn them all now. She's learning them piecemeal and building it up.

CLAUSSEN: You talked a little bit yesterday about your indications in the score and how you have come to a point where you include more indications than you once did. Why the change? Was it because people were not interpreting your scores the way you wanted?

PANN: Well, I think for two reasons. There's this constant crescendo over time of how much I will indicate in my scores – this isn't just piano music, this is all my music. It's because, two things: I am now no longer timid to do it, and I am who I am and if I'm going to say something on my score that's completely colloquial to how I grew up or where I'm from or it's a little corny or it's a little cheesy, so be it. I'm trying not to go

beyond the bounds of taste, but I don't mind that anymore. I'm confident and I have the guts to do it. And then the other reason is because I've been burned enough in the past by people who perform my music without consulting me, which is a great thing and it should happen, but then they miss something because it just wasn't indicated because it was assumed. So I've stopped assuming. It's not that I don't trust good musicians... they're human, and that's a reason too, they're human. They decide not to assume something... so I have to assume it for them or I have to actually spell it out for them. And sometimes this can get to be too much, especially for a large ensemble work or a band work where I, the composer, have indicated almost every way to turn the corner of interpretation as the piece goes on. And what that does is that can rob a conductor of his or her own interpretation. So, you don't want to go there – I've gone there, I had to come back with that. I like to err on the side of more than less, that's all.

CLAUSSEN: You dedicated each piece to a specific individual...

PANN: Can I interrupt for a second? I won't remember this so I have to say it. Over-notating your music can make for a challenge, but the reason I think my large ensemble music is so challenging is because I am a pianist and growing up as a pianist you don't have to stay in time with anybody. So if you're a very musical soloist, your tempi are elastic – as they should be. And then I actually compose that into my larger ensemble music and that is what makes my music challenging. It makes modern music challenging when you can't just engage in a tempo and go, and everything is just written to be in that tempo grid. Instead, you have to actually perform things that we're only used to doing in Beethoven. We're only used to doing this in the Brahms overtures, you know what I'm saying? But that comes from being a soloist. I'm not a clarinetist that grew up being in bands and therefore write music that just sort of "pour, add water" and it just kind of clicks like "the [Energizer] bunny."

CLAUSSEN: Each piece was dedicated to a specific individual in the 12 sides. Are there any of those that you can recall off the top of your head that you could explain the significance of the dedication and your relationship to them?

PANN: Mm, yeah sure! Well, let's take the last two. Number 11 & 12. Number 12, the Irish tune, dedicated to Barry Snyder because that piece was written for a pianist to be able to sing and manipulate the pedal in a way that is just incredible haunting, world-class – manipulation of pedal and tones everywhere, and Barry Snyder, more than anybody I know, does that. I mean, more than anybody I personally know. So, you know, Horowitz on his jacked up piano, could do that, and Richard Goode sort of does that. But Barry Snyder is somebody in the flesh I know who has prioritized that in his musicianship – that's his priority. So writing a song for the end piece – and I didn't care, it was an arrangement – great, that's fine. The Etude-Fantasy was for Winston Choi and he was a student at the University of Indiana. He's just a little younger than me, but Winston is one of those pianists, I mean he won the Elliot Carter Competition in Europe and was then given all these concert dates. He has fingers of steel and he can learn things in an incredibly protracted amount of time. He has that kind of brain where he can learn the most insanely difficult – I wrote a set of pieces just for Winston called *Six Strokes*. Six...

like brush strokes, *Six Strokes*, was an earlier piece of mine written just for Winston and it was like a real sort of appetizer sized pieces of piano music that are hyper-virtuosic. It is because I knew that this kid, at the time, ate that stuff up. Winston has since been all over the world blah-blah. So in writing this piece for Joel I decided to embark on... okay I'm looking at the Winter Wind Etude and that's the 11<sup>th</sup> of the set of op. 25 [referring to Chopin's Etudes, Op. 25]. Let's do something for the 11<sup>th</sup> of this set that separates itself as maybe the most technically demanding of the pieces. It actually sits well under the hand, it just takes a lot of brain to play it. But for Winston, it's just exactly the kind of stuff that is in Winston Choi's wheelhouse. He has not played it yet... I've only heard two pianist play it – three! Three pianists have played it and one is Joel, and Winston hasn't gotten around to it. I think Winston is busy or it's just not on his radar and it didn't matter to me. I don't care. I'm not writing this pieces for these specific people to play... it's really just people of my appreciation and maybe old friendships.

CLAUSSEN: Let's walk through the set here. We have the first, "Silhouette." What types of devices were you using to unify the composition? Are there any that permeate all 12 pieces? Are there any cyclic themes that you had in mind?

PANN: No.

CLAUSSEN: Or is each piece sort of its own –

PANN: Yeah. No there's no line through all of the pieces. The "Silhouette," is my imagining of a sort of a Spanish love song, or if you will, a slow tango – at least the verse... there are things marked "verse" in there; it's like a song. And all the stuff around that song, and it comes back, is a fantasy – it's a real fantasy. "Silhouette" is just a very sort of... um... it's like a Spanish Silhouette but it's ... the woman that it is dedicated to... she has a beautiful silhouette... I mean I'm not, you know, we never were together, we were never a couple or anything like that – she's married to one of my best friends. But she's a pianist! And I've known her before they were married. And she's Argentinian. But this is kind of a Latino tune or a tango, maybe a South American tango. Smoky. I'm not native. It's me trying to do something – it's almost like third string or something. But it is a poem – I call it – it's like a poem fantasy to start the set off. It's one of the longer pieces, it's like the second longest or maybe the longest I don't know. Yeah, that's it. I just wanted to write a song, and there's some Debussy in it. I mean I coax some other... I've looked at a lot of Piazzolla and I've looked at a lot of Albéniz... Like Goyescas... slow... or the Saudades [do Brasil], you know Milhaud's Saudades – those Brazilian pieces? So it's kind of got that flavor.

CLAUSSEN: So in "Figurines" then, there's the contrast between the march and the flourishing sections. The moving forward nature I guess helps to connect those sections of the piece. What were you thinking in terms of a tonal standpoint here?

PANN: I wasn't. "Figurines" was the last piece of the set to be written. I needed something after "Silhouette," which I knew was going to be first, to jar us out of that world and present something very, *very* different. I think what I was doing was I was

writing in certain idioms, certain pianistic idioms that fit well under the hand. So, that was it. It's an improvisation that is written out. The outer sections are really an improvisation. The middle section is more thoroughly composed... the march... it's like a perpetual march, right? Yep. Yeah, it has a different, contrasting section – it was really just a tour de force. I wanted that to be a tour de force that could not be as long as the etude.

CLAUSSEN: So in “Legend,” there's this Dorian ending. And you have this beautiful melody sort of contrasting to the previous piece. It's more of a simple, gorgeous –

PANN: Yeah, it's back again. We're back again to the singing in the piano.

CLAUSSEN: So was your goal to avoid settling on a particular tonal center? Until the end? You kind of save the cadential stuff for the end.

PANN: Well, there are some interior cadences, but they aren't tonal. They're the fifths and stuff. It was, again, an improvised little piano piece based on voice leading – it was just voice leading. One of the movements of one of the pieces tonight is that – Legend. Because it lent itself to wind instruments' voice leading. I wanted to write something almost banal at the beginning – it just goes up in step and comes down. It's an exercise in simplicity – it really is a study in simple stepwise motion melodies that get to certain cadences. It also has a sort of other-worldly harmonic vocabulary. Sort of like Eastern European... something... I don't know what it reminds me of, but it's definitely not functionally tonal. I wanted to see how long I could go there where you don't have a dominant sense and a tonic sense. This is just your ear following the line that's pulling you. That's it.

CLAUSSEN: [Yesterday] we talked about “White Moon Over Water” as being this continuous line and sort of an exercise in being able to play seamlessly...

PANN: Yeah and actually compositionally though that was an exercise in how long can I sustain the low D every bar? How long can we as listeners take that pedal point and follow? And I did it with all those brush strokes over it. It's kind of a Debussy etude slowed down with a lot of pedal, or something like that. One of my students said this sounds a lot like a very famous Japanese video game composer and I went and listened, and I can see why he would say that. But that piece was directly inspired by a moment that I had... did I write this in the notes? So, I'll just tell you. I spent a little bit of time in the state of Maine at an artist's hut. She had a kayak and it was on the river and it was the middle of the night – it was like 10 something, I don't know – dark. And I decided to confront my fears and go out on the river in the kayak alone in the middle of the night. And there were no lights. It was just the sound of bugs along the forested shore. And I'm just out in the middle of the river looking up. It was a real moment. The sky was as bright as – you could see a million stars – it was just that. I just did something alone that I normally wouldn't do and exposed myself to that. And the moon was very full and lighting everything up... over everything in the middle of the dark. It was great. So I wanted to try something like that memory and haunting me... and this is not a melodic



piece, not even the middle part. It's just an affect... it's a musical aroma. Sometimes it's just nice to hear the piano like this under the hands of a very skilled musician. When we set that D pedal for as long as it is set, we get a sort of serenity. It's sort of like you slip into a hallucinatory state where it's serene, you're drugged a little bit by that note... it's not like dopamine... I don't know what to call it... it's a different musical experience than most pieces that I've written.

CLAUSSEN: Number 5 ["Le Branle"], you mention is a spinoff of a 12<sup>th</sup> century dance. It's very sectional. Do you think of traditional forms when you're composing at all?

PANN: Yeah, I do. I think of traditional forms, but most of these pieces including this one, number 5... number 5 is a texture I wanted to explore. Number 5 was like a texture of music the way that if you pop open a book of Schumann's music it almost looks like plaid: he did something and he just keeps doing it. That's what this is. It's kind of jazzy and it's kind of pop-y. Most of my music, especially in the 12 sides, does something, goes to a different section, and then recaps differently. That's, if I'm concerned with any structure, that's the very basic thing that I'm doing. Also, my middle sections normally (of these pieces) are supposed to contrast greatly the outer sections. And I think in "Le Branle," it does it. I think that the middle section is *\*repeated note sound\** and before that it's kind of bouncy all over the place. There's kind of a melody in it. It's jumpy. It's trying to be a little urban. I don't know, It's nothing like anything I've ever done. Joel Hastings said that number 5 was like nothing he's ever seen – good or bad, it's just different.

CLAUSSEN: You mentioned the Brahms opening of "Classic Rock." You said you just sat down and that's sort of what happened. Were you playing Brahms before you wrote that?

PANN: No, but I sat down at the piano and that just came to me in my head. When certain things come to my head I just try to improvise them and *find* them on the piano. Obviously, that's not exactly the Brahms – it's not exactly how it goes. As a pianist, maybe the piano version of it would do that – romantically. So I just did that. It's a very catchy sort of little 'hook.' And I thought, okay this could be the outer little section to a tune I already knew I was going to use to make this thing – I needed an introduction. Sometimes you just need an introduction. Like, I don't want to just hit you over the head with that tango. I'm shameless with that: if something comes to me, I'm just going to do it. It's kind of like outrageous to do that and I wanted to do that.

CLAUSSEN: "She Steals Me" has become a popular piece. A lot of people play it, I think...

PANN: Yeah, I think that's because it resembles a Brahms intermezzo. I think it's just a little bit of that. It's in A-flat. It's not trying to be anything super special. It's not trying to be more clever like number 5. Again, it's like a living room piece.

CLAUSSEN: Was there any Sibelius in there? Any *Finlandia*?

PANN: Oh, no... I don't... well maybe... you hear *Finlandia*? That may be a piece that's just in the back of my brain, but I wasn't trying to do that.

CLAUSSEN: You mentioned Schubert and Stravinsky in the program notes.

PANN: Yeah, you hear *Finlandia*...? Well, that's cool. I hear Schubert in like some of the G-flat major impromptu. Or like the middle section of some of the other impromptus. It's kind of the impromptus of Schubert that I know – and songs! But again, it's really just a stepwise line. If we talk about the anatomy of melody, I think about that a lot. So that's the contour, the shape, the gesture – really the DNA of a melody. You can construct good melodies with the purpose of constructing good melodies. We're not all John Williams who can just come with these things, but he does it too. I actually saw him in a talk and of course, everybody asks him the same question: how do you come up with these melodies everybody knows and blah-blah-blah. Well then he just breaks them down into something completely unromantic to talk about. And it's like, "oh my gosh he's really just doing that? That's how he thought of it?" So, "She Steals Me" is really just: let's walk up the A-flat major scale and let's come back down, but with some little hooks in there, but that's really what it is. And it's in a piano texture that's very familiar, which is why when you say that this piece is getting played more often than the other ones... that's why.

CLAUSSEN: Was there a special person in the "she" part of the title?

PANN: Well it's dedicated to Kristin Kuster. I've never had a romantic relationship with her. The title kind of sounds like that. She and I are maybe... she's one of my absolute best friends who is also a composer who is also a pianist. She is on the faculty of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and we were in school together and she [knew] Joel. So just another friend.

CLAUSSEN: In number 8 ["Soirée Macabre"] you mix extravagance and sinister as you mention in the program notes. What inspired this theme? Any particular pieces here? You mentioned the horror pictures of Vincent Price.

PANN: "Soirée Macabre" was one of the first pieces that was written in the set. "Orion" is the first that was written. "Soirée Macabre" was written for Nikki Melville, who back in 2008 commissioned 13 composers to write a piece per composer so that she could come out with an album of 13 pieces and she went through the motions (this was well before *The Piano's 12 Sides*) and what she said to all of us (and I knew all of them – all the other composers, we knew each other – it was like a reunion)... So she said, "my only contractual request for you is to write a piece of music in a genre – write it in a style that's maybe popular, maybe bluesy—" she gave us like words. She didn't want a Mozart piece; she didn't want a piece of just like straight up modernism, whatever that is, you know, abstract. So I gave myself two weeks to write that piece. I said, "okay, I've got to write this piece in two weeks." I was in school, I was teaching; I was already at the University of Colorado teaching. I had an upright rinky-dink piano from like 1908; it was

a Kroeger – it was a box grand if you know what those are, those living room – so it had the sound. And [I was] like, this just wants to be that piece, like a stride piece. So I was playing around with F minor – I don't know why I just played around with F minor and I was walking down like “Hit the Road Jack” by Ray Charles. It was like, how can I make these harmonies more interesting? And I just put them all in the left hand and then just do something that's really laid back and chill in the right hand. It was sort of bebop-y or I don't know what you would call it – like dance music. And then all of a sudden it started to sound “Macabre” – it started to sound like – well you've read the notes. It sounded like that visual image that I conjure up in those notes. And you know, it's got some romance in it; it sounds like big ole shiny chandeliers in the middle – you know the middle sort of slower thing and it comes back. So Nikki Melville was the first person to play that and record that piece, and it's on one of her albums back in the past. That was like, okay this piece is done I want to make this part of the Sides – it's already dedicated. I think that's one of my least favorite of the set.

CLAUSSEN: So in “Orion,” we're back in the cosmic realm. You mention the Debussy nature in the program notes.

PANN: Debussy prelude?

CLAUSSEN: Yes, I believe so.

PANN: Yeah, that piece started out – it was going to be, can I write a piece for just one hand? Because I had been looking at a few pieces just for the left hand. You know, there are quite a few pieces out there that are just for the left hand – both old and modern. And I was like, I'd like to do something just for the right hand. So I just started playing – and my hands – when I put my hands on the piano – when I'm composing anything my hands go on the piano – that's the first thing I do. What they always end up doing is they end up finding diatonicism. They end up finding a mode, whether it's a Messiaen mode or a whole tone or octatonic or major/minor or something like that. This found E-flat and that shape... that shape that starts the first six or seven notes. This piece, “Orion,” was an implosion of a chamber work. So it didn't start as a solo. It started as a – oh no, I'm sorry, Louis, it started as a piano piece – I turned it into a chamber piece. The chamber piece is called *Antares*. The opening and last movement of *Antares* is “Orion” for quartet for the end of time ensemble. Do you know that piece? Messiaen. It's piano violin, clarinet, and cello. Great piece. You should play that at some point. That's awesome. Messiaen wrote it in prison. So eventually, I couldn't do it – the left hand joins because I need more to be there; I need more sonority to be built up. And again, it's a fantasy. I don't think there's a single meter in it, is there? It's free. So that was – I don't know how I described it in the notes. Sort of like, massage therapy for the right hand. So that was, can I keep a line going that's too fast to sing – this is not a singable melody, but I want it to feel like it's right; I want it to feel like it's inevitable, that kind of thing.

CLAUSSEN: You talked a little bit about the complexity of the “Cradle Song” yesterday in terms of the melodic voicing. Not necessarily your typical nursery rhyme though – kind of dark sounding.

PANN: Well, it's got some sort of popular harmonic things in it. Yeah, that's like a song, and that never really existed in any other way. That was just, kind of a sort of nothing song – just repeated notes and a few moves here and there. And I wanted to actually again – compositional study – I wanted to actually write around it in the same hand so that it was a study. It's actually like an etude – like a voicing etude – an etude of voices. It's got the cradle in it – or you know the sort of lilting 6/8 or whatever that it's in – that's the cradle song. Yeah, it's pretty straight forward.

CLAUSSEN: So the etude-fantasy is kind of a shock following that. What determined the order that you put these pieces in and obviously they were written in a different order than they are now...

PANN: Well I thought of it as an album with 12 tracks. So it wasn't so much about the experience that the pianist would have if he played all of them. It was the experience of the listener. You have to understand, the last few pieces in the set: "Cradle Song," then "Orion," and then "Soirée [Macabre]," and before that, "She Steals Me" – those aren't distinctly virtuosic pieces – not even "Soirée [Macabre]." So those are like just sort of moderate or slow. And it was time to climax in a tour de force of pianism. There's a thought out structure of this etude – it's still a fantasy, but you could even call it etude rondo. That's kind of the structure of it, but I didn't like that sound.

CLAUSSEN: You mentioned bitonal in the program notes –

PANN: Yeah, it's got this sort of Bach – it's something he would do almost at the micro level. And then you've got these notes in the left hand that have no real relationship to that, but work for me somehow, they kind of work. And that became an improvisation. I just ripped through things and wanted to see what I could do that would be sort of fantastical for a pianist that wouldn't be tremendously difficult. Like, if I practiced my guts out, I could play this, but I'm not going to do that.

CLAUSSEN: You alternate between using bar lines and not using bar lines. Any particular reason for that?

PANN: The opening section didn't need bar lines. Sometimes it's just an intuition. And then the march or something else happens and it's like, this is structured – this is metric. I really appreciate Messiaen's piano music: there's no meter. There are bar lines, but there are no meters. You don't need meters. So, kind of like that... do I even put meters? I do.

CLAUSSEN: Maybe a couple times, but not consistently.

PANN: Yeah, yeah. But can you see how it's kind of a rondo?

CLAUSSEN: Yeah.

PANN: That stuff – that bitonal stuff – comes back three times. And there’s different stuff between, but it’s also similar, like, it’s just more pronounced the second time... that piece is over the top. And actually those were the words to live by writing that piece. It’s outrageous. It’s sort of outlandish. And then it has this ghost part near the end. It’s almost like the coda is coming... let’s do something... we’ve all heard this kind of playing... I can’t believe how Joel performs the coda – that whole piece – I mean it’s a recording, he’s got I don’t know how many takes, but he just plays it with – he makes it sound facile, which is kind of the thing I appreciated most about that performance. He makes it sound facile, which speaks well of the composition of it. He makes me look good as a composer when he performs like that. And the opening brash chords start with a high G and go all the way down in octaves on G, and I think the same thing happens at the end starting with those “play by eye” chords... so there’s that, let’s just do this, you know, all the Bach fugues are almost within an octave and they do this, and do this, and do this, and do this... so that’s kind of a Schenkerian middle ground thing I like to do.

CLAUSSEN: Then you close with an arrangement of the Irish tune. Why that tune, is it just something you had been wanting to do for a while?

PANN: I love that tune. I think what happened is, I wanted to write something for Barry, and it wasn’t just a dedication – I thought he might play it at some point and the kind of tune for Barry – that’s just perfect. When I sent it to him, he read it, he saw that it was dedicated to him and he just cried when he was playing through it, he was like this is just – you know, it affected him... it really hit him. I’m in love with Percy Grainger’s string orchestra arrangement of it. Of all the composers, Percy Grainger, who was a great pianist, by the way, did a string orchestra arrangement of it, and I was like, that tune is glorious. Let’s just make this a beautiful way to close this onslaught of pieces and so at the end of all of Joel’s complete performances that I was there to see (a lot of them), when he would get to the end of the Irish tune... that piece allows everybody three and a half minutes to exhale after the grand etude. When you watch somebody do that grand etude... it allows everybody to exhale over three and a half minutes and it slowly winds you down, and winds you down. The tune is familiar, and if it’s not, it becomes familiar immediately. It’s kind of an anthem at the end of this set of character pieces.

[Other Piano Pieces and Chamber Music]

CLAUSSEN: Great. Well do you mind if we talk about a few chamber pieces?

PANN: Sure!

CLAUSSEN: A little bit about the piano concerto. Five movements. Any reason why you chose five as opposed to a more traditional four or three movement structure?

PANN: I was just ambitious. I just wanted to write a big piece – this was going to be my first “big” piece. So... I should send the score to you... it’s handwritten.

CLAUSSEN: I have “Your Touch” – just played that on my recital.

PANN: Oh yeah, yeah... the whole score is handwritten. I've had to play from it. But yeah, I wanted to write a big piece, and I wanted to have a solo cadenza. My second concerto, which I should give to you, is four movements and the third movement is the solo cadenza. I really enjoy that structure. You know, it gives our ears a break from the orchestra, and it allows the pianist to actually just really be a feature. Get your hands around a solo. I'm glad you played "Your Touch," I hope you enjoyed it. It's almost gospel.

CLAUSSEN: Yeah it's like very hazy and that's not particularly characteristic of your style, necessarily, that slow...

PANN: Yeah I was just noshing on that early on... I think this was 1996 or 1997 – playing that – I was at home over Christmas vacation I just put my hands on B-flat major and just said, let's just sound like I'm playing in the cocktail piano. This, and then chromatic this, and then this... that finds itself in all of my music: holding a note and doing chords... you know what I mean?

CLAUSSEN: Here, it's just slowed down a little, I guess.

PANN: Yeah, it is. It's just slowed down. It's just, I wanted something to be smoky, and you know... this is a general comment to my music, there isn't a lot of information that I'm trying to convey beyond an affectation. So things that will trip it for me are, say, images or smells or memories or thoughts of something or a person that I just met or – and then it's like, okay, this is music and it can just be like – "Your Touch" is really just an exploration in bringing smoky lounge music onto the concert stage. That's it.

CLAUSSEN: So then is "Nocturne" more of a nod to Chopin, perhaps?

PANN: No, it's actually, if anything, a nod to Ravel. And it has that thing, one note sticks out and these harmonies move around that pedal or that note. It's more like Ravel. The first movement is a nod to like Michael Torke – it has a corny little title; it's dance music...

CLAUSSEN: I think it was Monday you mentioned that your works have origins in something else, a lot of them. I think you said that in the masterclass. What about *The Bills*? Are there any particular tunes that you had in mind?

PANN: No. Those two bills are very related. Like musically, they're in the same key/mode. And then they da-da-da-da-da... same rhythm and all that. It's because they were so similar and kind of brotherly. Those two were just explorations in – again, improvised tunes. They were improvised tunes – how far can I go with this, that's pretty good. You have to understand, my favorite composers of old and dead are the best improvisers ever. This is Chopin, Liszt, Bach. So that's, for me, that's an aspiration: to be able to improvise a tune. And then you have to write it down. I'm not improvising these

things just as you see them, you know what I'm saying? Neither are they – I mean they could – some of them could – Mozart could do that –

CLAUSSEN: Beethoven.

PANN: Beethoven could do that – exactly, improvise these cadenzas that go forever. But no, I mean improvising the kernel of an idea is enough for me. Otherwise, I'm starting out with charts of numbers and I'm starting out with drawings and pictures and I'm starting out with – I don't want to do that. For me, that's not what I want from my music.

CLAUSSEN: What's the title mean to you, *The Bills*?

PANN: William Albright and William Bolcom.

CLAUSSEN: I see, yeah. Great. So did they hear them, I'm sure...

PANN: Yes, actually Bill Albright died in the middle of the writing of it, but Bolcom knows them. And Albright knows his, even though he didn't know that it was going to turn into his. When he died it was like, okay this is his. This is in memoriam of Bill because Albright wrote a ton of rags just as Bolcom did. So it was like a tribute – let me write a couple rags directly for these dudes. And you know, they've got their whole volumes – they have Joplin volumes of rags, you know.

CLAUSSEN: Dr. Clinton actually plays the *Garden of Eden [Ragtime] Suite*.

PANN: Oh, that's Bolcom. Have you played "Night on Rag Mountain"? That's Albright. *That's cool.* "Night on Rag Mountain."

CLAUSSEN: So have you invested in an electric cheese grater since you –

PANN: Ha! No, I still risk it.

CLAUSSEN: So why the two step feel of *The Cheese Grater*? Is that just imitating the motion of grating cheese?

PANN: Well *The Cheese Grater* is... there's an actual depiction of a cheese grater in the middle... you can hear it grating. That's all. I had recently injured myself [from grating cheese], and I wrote that piece on Barry Snyder's piano where he lived in Rochester, New York. He had a Hamburg Steinway, and I was house sitting for them for three days – he and his partner. They were traveling and this was during the summer and I was at Eastman and I spent the summer still in Rochester and I was house sitting for them. And I just decided to go and write something insane. It wasn't particularly *for* anybody – I don't know if it's even still for anybody. So I just decided to depict that incident and because the rag time that I knew at that time was still Bolcom and Albright and they would write rags about mundane stuff. You know, there's the onion peel rag, the peach tree rag – you know, Joplin would do the same thing. I was like, okay this is *The Cheese Grater*. It's not

about anything else. Let's make it lean and mean and tough... and bring them out.. there's a little "Scarbo" [from Ravel's *Gaspard de la nuit*] in there too. And so Joel decided to play it on his concerts, and then put it on a CD.

CLAUSSEN: Speaking of the rag then, you mentioned *Circumnavigator* rag also, the two piano piece.

PANN: That's right! *Circumnavigator* is three movements, it's two pianos. The last movement is like a real virtuosic ragtime – have you heard that piece?

CLAUSSEN: I think so.

PANN: Okay, well it's online. I wanted to write a piece because Joel was about to go on tour – and I wanted to write a piece where I could join him on stage and play with him. That's all. But that last piece is like – I was inspired by Cab Calloway, for real – you know who that is – he was in Harlem and he ran the cotton club in Harlem in the thirties and you know, Duke Ellington was, I think, just before him. Cab Calloway is also in the movie, *The Blues Brothers*, you know, he's a famous black blues artist: singer, bandmaster, is what they would call him. It's fun to play with another pianist. But the movements go around the world – like the titles – it's why it's called *Circumnavigator*. The last movement is in Harlem, the middle movement is from somewhere in the South Pacific, and the first movement is in Italy.

CLAUSSEN: So I know we didn't get to hear Differences last night, unfortunately. It would have been great to hear Karen [Becker] play that on cello. So, the blues style. Why the blues style for cello? Was that something that you had in mind for Derek Snyder to play?

PANN: The blues movement? Oh, I was just writing a suite... I was just writing a suite of character pieces for cello and piano. The blues movement contrasts the other movements – hence, the title of the whole thing. I mean it was my attempt at like, okay what am I going to call this thing? I have five really distinctly different things and they're in genres – they're kind of all in genres. There's a pop tune, then there's a baroque air, then there's a country dance, then a blues, and then a song.

CLAUSSEN: So it's really just a set of character pieces.

PANN: It is. It really is. It's not a sonata, it's not even a Schumann *Fantasiestücke*... it's just what it is. It's eclectic. I went through a period of really eclecticism and I'm not there anymore. I used to quote a lot as I told you, but yeah.

CLAUSSEN: In *Melodies for Robert*, which we heard last night... a commissioned work, right?



PANN: Yes.

CLAUSSEN: Did you choose the instrumentation yourself?

PANN: No, this was a commission for that instrumentation: piano, flute, and cello. And I had a very, very short period of time to do it in so I arranged two works. So, the movements of that piece are “Sing” and “Listen.” And the first movement had already been written as a movement of a band piece called “At Her Ladyship’s Request,” and then the second movement called “Listen” is actually an implosion of another band piece, which is called *Hold this Boy and Listen*. So every now and then I will retool things, which is very helpful when you’re under the gun or when you want to actually massage – when the music is not done for you and you massage it into a different shape – because it becomes a different piece. It’s kind of like if I had written a poem I’m going to recite it here, and now I’m going to recite it here in a little bit different dialect. You can understand it, but it’s the composer reciting it again.

CLAUSSEN: The piano duet from last night [*Olde English Suite*], did it have one of the same themes?

PANN: Yes, that’s one of those movements from that band piece that became the first movement of *Melodies for Robert*, but the piano duet, called *Olde English Suite*, the entire thing is this theme. So this band piece had a piano duet in it. Two people play with the band.

CLAUSSEN: Are you doing that tonight?

PANN: No, they’re doing a different piece. So I took that piano duet and just took all the band out of it and fleshed it out, and it’s now the *Olde English Suite*. Because the subjects are the same it’s an old English suite, it’s about a queen... so really, that’s why you heard that piece twice last night.

CLAUSSEN: A question about your treatment of piano in chamber music. Do you view the piano as an equal member in terms of... like your recent flute encore, *Double Espresso!* Is the piano an equal member there or is that a flute solo?

PANN: Yes, no, it’s equal.

CLAUSSEN: Is that generally your rule for all chamber music?

PANN: Yeah! I mean, I do have like piano and violin romances. It’s really for the violin. I mean, you know, I’m just accompanying the violin. But like my piano trio, everybody’s equal. String quartet: everybody’s equal. But piano, piano in chamber music – I’m a pianist, and it’s – that’s why there’s a piano in almost all of my band music and my orchestra music, like, there’s always a piano there.

CLAUSSEN: Finally, your vocal chamber music for choir or voice. You haven't written too much – well, haven't published too much – I don't know if you have other vocal music.

PANN: Not a lot. I do have some.

CLAUSSEN: Is that just something that you don't –

PANN: I recently have been writing more vocal music. It's getting published and it's just something I haven't – I've been more of an instrumentalist – more of a practicing pianist. I love writing songs. Love it.

CLAUSSEN: You did some work with *Poems for Jason*. So is that something you might do again?

PANN: Yeah! Right, that's a little set for soprano and yeah, I will do that again.

CLAUSSEN: Is Meagan a colleague of yours in Colorado?

PANN: She was a student of mine who stayed around long enough to become administration. But she had always been a friend. She was in my first class I taught and I was like 31-32. She's just a friend. Yeah, a really good friend, and she wrote these poems about her brother. Do you have that? Did I give it to you?

CLAUSSEN: No, it's online. I think her performance is on YouTube with a pianist I'm not familiar with. So that leads me to the last question. What percentage of your work is unpublished still?

PANN: Only the very, very young stuff. Some of it. And then, only a couple current pieces, like new pieces because they're just not *yet* published. So everything I write is going to get published. Eventually. It goes through the mill; you know what I mean? It goes through a timeline. So, yeah, I don't write any music anymore – I don't put the time into writing any music anymore that won't get published or that I'm not expecting to get published. Because I am not a social media maven. I don't have FOMO – I don't have that at all – fear of missing out. So I'm not like pumping myself out there. So I need the publisher, who doesn't even pump me out there, but you know what I'm saying? I want to distribute my music. You can find it on Amazon, you can find it on da-da-da. I've stopped posting YouTube videos, I've stopped – it's too much time. I would much rather have relationships, like human relationships. And I've got enough – I don't know why I'm going here with all of this – but there's enough in my life, enough stuff. And the music is not grinding to a halt, yet. And it won't. It will never grind to a halt. I'll always do it and I'll always, yeah. I've given up the “pie in the sky” idea that I'm going to become this like most performed yadda yadda yadda, whatever. I don't care about that. I'm just going to do my best work and find the best people who appreciate it – or who like it. You know what I'm saying? And there are plenty of those, actually. Do you know what I'm saying? But I don't feel like a stranger in amongst them. I get to know them.

## Appendix B

### List of Compositions

#### Solo Piano Works

- *The Bills* [I. “William Albright – A Concert Rag,” II. “William Bolcom – An Elaborate Fancy”]
- *The Cheesegrater*
- *Fantasy-Inventions* [I. “March,” II. “Passpied,” III. “The Wheel”]
- *Five Serious Pieces* [I. “This Black Cat,” II. “Smart Car,” III. “Claude Philipp Emanuel Saint-Brahms,” IV. “Rocket,” V. “Wagner’s Oracle”]
- *The Piano’s 12 Sides*
- *Six Strokes* [I. “Presto,” II. “Love ‘n Grin,” III. “TV Snow,” IV. “Cradle Song,” V. “Shrapnel,” VI. “Orion”]
- *Two Lullabies*
- *Upstate Rag*
- *Variation on a Theme by Anton Diabelli*

#### Instrumental Solo Works

- *The Dove’s Lyric* (Flute solo - lost)
- *Emerald’s on Artemis* (Harp solo)

#### Chamber Music

- *Antares* [I. “Antares,” II. “Eric,” III. “Rebecca,” IV. “Garrik,” V. “Vessko,” VI. “Antares-Reprise”]
- *Angela’s Waltz* (String Quartet)
- *The Bach Buch* (18 transcriptions of J.S. Bach for chamber winds)
- *Bitten at the Opera* (an encore for Violin and Piano)
- *Boléro, in the Buff* (Quintet for the CU Wind Faculty: flute, oboe, clarinet, sax, bassoon)
- *Capitol Punishment* (an encore for Saxophone Quartet)
- *Cinema Paradiso by Ennio Morricone* (arr.)
- *Circumnavigator* (Three movements for Two Pianos)
- *Differences* (Cello or Viola and Piano) [I. “The Strand,” II. “Air,” III. “Country Dance,” IV. “Blues,” V. “Song”]
- *Double Espresso* (an encore for Flute and Piano)
- *Duo for Alto Saxophone and Bass Trombone* [I. “Lyrical Lois,” II. “Chopper’s Rag”]
- *Duo for Flute and Bass Trombone* [I. “Lyrical,” II. “Chopper’s Rag”]
- *Giantess* (Flute and Piano)
- *Golliwog’s Cakewalk* (arr.)

- *Love Letters* (String Quartet No. 1) [I. “Prayer,” II. “Serenade,” III. “Limbo,” IV. “Passions”]
- *The Mechanics* (Saxophone Quartet) [I. “Hoist,” II. “Drive Train,” III. “Belt,” IV. “Flywheel,” V. “Balance,” VI. “Trash”]
- *Melodies for Robert* (Flute, Cello, Piano) [I. “Sing,” II. “Listen”]
- *Minuet Antique* by M. Ravel (arr.)
- *Mots D’Heures: Gousses, Rames* (Six Poems by Luis d’Antin Van Rooten)
- *Nepenthe* (String Quartet)
- *Piano Trio No. 1 “Nicky’s Trio”* [I. “Cowboys,” II. “American Child,” III. “Mobile,” IV. “The Little Devil”]
- *Quintet for a Day* (Woodwind Quintet) [I. “Americano,” II. “Apology,” III. “Adjusting the Torque,” IV. “Sun Spot,” V. “Commute,” VI. “Embrace, Asleep”]
- *Second String Quartet* [I. “L’Extase,” II. “Precipitato,” III. “Passacaglias,” IV. “Commute,” V. “Adjusting the Torque,” VI. “Escher’s Rounds”]
- *Sonata for Alto Saxophone and Piano* [I. “This Black Cat,” II. “Three Songs without Words,” III. “Cuppa Joe,” IV. “Lacrimosa”]
- *String Quartet No. 3 “Pretty Little Black Tangos”* (4 movements)
- *Summer Songs* [I. “First Swim,” II. “Showing at the State Fair,” III. “I Know this is My Place,” IV. “When the Midnight Musicians Play,” V. “Dragonflies”]
- *Three Piazzolla Tangos* [I. “Michelangelo 70,” II. “The Butcher’s Death,” III. “Libertango”]
- *Tributaries* (Five String-Method Duos)
- *Two Romances* (Violin or Soprano Saxophone and Piano)
- *Vultures* (Two Saxophones and Piano)
- *Women* (Prelude and Five Songs – texts by contemporary female poets)

### Choral Music and Songs

- *Alleluia! For Mixed Choir*
- *Bird* (text by Holly Spaulding)
- *Homage à Faure* (text by the composer)
- *Love Song* (text by William Carlos Williams)
- *Poems for Jason* (cycle of 3 songs)
- *Scarborough Fair* by Paul Simon (arr.)
- *Springtime in France* (A Cabaret Song with lyrics by Andrew Sofer)
- *Sweet Echo* (text by John Milton)
- *Three Tongan Legends for Mixed Choir* (SATB)

### Orchestra

- *Anthems in Waves*
- *Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra*
- *Dance Partita* [I. “Baroque 1,” II. “Burlaque,” III. “Baroque 2,” IV. “Air,” V. “Baroque 3,” VI. “Folk Dance,” VII. “Pas d’Éclectique,” VIII. “Baroque 4”]
- *Deux Séjours* [I. “Fontvièlle, Provence,” II. “Portofino, Italy”]

- *The Dutch Stonewall* (6 movements for Two Pianos and String Orchestra)
- *The Extension of my Eye* (Piano and Chamber Orchestra)
- *Mercury Concerto* (Flute and Orchestra) [I. “Running Forward,” II. “Contemplative,” III. “Finale”]
- *Piano Concerto No. 1* [I. “Piña Colada,” II. “Nocturne,” III. “Your Touch,” IV. “Blues,” V. “The Concert”]
- *Rags to Richard* (Two Symphonic Dances for Clarinet and Orchestra)
- *A Scottish Carol*
- *Second Symphony* (String Orchestra)
- *SLALOM*
- *Three Secrets in Main* (String Orchestra) [I. “The Running Alewives at Damariscotta Mills,” II. “Cycling South Bristol,” III. “In Silence, Adrift under Venus, Alone”]
- *Tiny Boléro*
- *Triple Trombone Concerto* [I. “Rutherford’s Rag,” II. “Angela’s Waltz,” III. “Gallop”]
- *Two Portraits of Barcelona* [I. “Antoni Gaudi’s Cathedral,” II. “The Bullfight”]

#### **Wind Symphony** (chronological)

- *SLALOM for Wind Symphony*, 2002
- *American Child*, 2003
- *Four Factories*, 2006
- *The Wrangler*, 2006
- *Concerto Logic* (Piano Concerto No. 2), 2007/8
- *Hold this Boy and Listen*, 2008
- *Serenade for Winds*, 2008
- *Richard and Renée*, 2009
- *A Spanish Silhouette*, 2010
- *Symphony for Winds “My Brother’s Brain”* 2011/12
- *The Three Embraces*, 2013
- *The High Songs* (Cello and Chamber Winds), 2015
- *At Her Ladyship’s Request*, 2016
- *Double Concerto*, 2018
- *Labyrinth*, 2018/19

## Appendix C

Notes from Carter Pann, December 4, 2018

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# The Bills

## for Piano

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### CARTER PANN

for Louis - You play these  
like you own them, and I couldn't  
be happier! Bravo - Carter Pann  
11/4/18

To Louis -  
I'm a lucky composer  
to know you - I hope  
you never grow  
tired of these :-)  
Carter Pann  
11/4/18

CARTER  
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# The Piano's 12 Sides