The Piano Sonatas of Robert Muczynski

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this study is to provide an analysis of Robert Muczynski’s First Piano Sonata, Op. 9 (1956), Second Piano Sonata, Op. 22 (1965-66) and Third Piano Sonata, Op. 35 (1974) that will promote interest, interpretive understanding and continued performance of these works. The sonatas are Muczynski’s most extensive works for the piano; they are of high artistic value and deserve a place in the standard repertory.

This document includes an introduction followed by six chapters and a summary. The introduction provides an overview of the awards, commissions and acclaim Muczynski has received for his works. It also includes sections on Purpose of the Study, Related Literature, Need for the Study, Limitations, and Design and Procedure.

Chapters One and Two provide background information valuable for understanding Muczynski’s compositional style. A brief biography, Chapter One explores information pertinent to his development as a musician: early influences, important teachers, pianistic background, places of study, professional appointments and commissions, performances, and other musical and non-musical influences. Chapter Two describes the compositional climate in American during Muczynski’s lifetime and how twentieth century trends and their followers created a difficult environment for those who favored more traditional modes of musical expression.

Chapter Three provides an extensive examination of Muczynski’s compositional influences and style. Emphasis is placed on Alexander Tcherepnin’s role in Muczynski’s development as a composer and the important connections between Prokofiev, Tcherepnin and Muczynski; this leads directly to an examination of Muczynski’s general style characteristics. The next section explores Muczynski’s compositional process, emphasizing the influence of Goetschius, and is followed by stylistic comments made by both reviewers and Muczynski himself. The final section presents an overview of Muczynski’s other works for the piano.
The fourth through sixth chapters of the study focus on the three piano sonatas. Each is discussed in terms of the circumstances under which it was composed, the critical acclaim it has received, premiere and subsequent performances. A theoretical analysis serves as the main portion of each chapter.

In the final section of the document, entitled “Summary and Recommendations,” a biographical sketch, influences, general style characteristics, compositional and pianistic techniques identified in each of the sonatas through theoretical and aural analysis are summarized to help establish general principles as a basis for accurate and communicative interpretation in performance. Recommendations are made for further study. Interpretive suggestions are given in Appendix A. Appendix B contains a complete catalogue of Muczynski’s music and Appendix C contains a letter from Muczynski.

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