Implausible Sketches for piano four hands

by

Kyle Gann

2006/11
I love the two-piano medium. Some of my favorite works are written for it: Busoni’s Fantasia Contrapuntistica, Satie’s Trois Morceau en form de poire, Ives’s quarter-tone pieces, Bartok’s and Jonathan Kramer’s two-piano Sonatas with percussion, Kevin Volans’s Cicada, Wallingford Reigger’s Variations. My first work for two pianists was an ambitious, difficult, irascible early work: I’itoi Variations (1985). I always wanted to write another, better, less virtuosic one that reflected my more mature aesthetic. In summer of 2006 I had the time, and wrote Implausible Sketches. I decided to make it playable for two pianists at one keyboard, to facilitate performance.

A critic had then recently remarked that my music was "a little too Zen" for his taste, and I wanted to write something Zen indeed. The pieces are truly all sketches, rhythmic ideas, a loose grouping of implausible rhythmic etudes. "The Desert's Too-Zen Song" is based on a 61-beat ostinato, interrupted every 103 beats - the kind of large-scale, prime-numbered cross-rhythm I delight in. "The Goodbye Fugue" is the only fugue, loosely speaking, I’ve ever written; it, too, pauses every 11th measure. "Frigid Azure" struck me as the kind of long, monotonous, despairing ambient piece that the record label Cold Blue specializes in. The title of "Don't Touch My Pint" is a cleaned-up version of an Irish mnemonic for the rhythm four-against-five ("don’t f-ing touch my pint again"), which runs throughout the movement. I had always wanted to write an additional slow movement on the rhythm eight-against-nine, but despite much sketching, the piece eluded me for years. Not until 2011 did I hit upon the happy idea, in "Mediating Daydream," of making the harmonic rhythm incommensurate with the eight and nine tempos, which at last made the piece fall together nicely.

I rather thought of the piece as an unorchestrated symphony, and then finally, in 2014, at the suggestion of my friend the composer Robert Carl, I orchestrated it, expanding each movement, and called the result the Implausible Symphony. (My other non-symphony symphony is the choral piece Transcendental Sonnets of 2001-2.) Nevertheless, the sketches may be played separately, or in smaller groups, though in that case I’d like them identified as excerpts from Implausible Sketches. Despite not being conventionally virtuosic, they are far from easy; difficulties of ensemble and concentration abound. "Don't Touch My Pint" was premiered May 23, 2010, in Belgrade; the entire suite was premiered February 13, 2016, at Illinois Wesleyan, by Nancy Pounds and William West, to whom I am grateful.

Duration: 30 minutes
The Desert's Too-Zen Song

Mellow

\( \frac{8}{4} \) (8ve higher until "loco")

Piano I

\( \frac{3}{4} \)

Piano II

\( \frac{5}{4} \) throughout

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March 27 - June 22, 2006
Germantown, NY

slight ritard....
Mediating Daydream

Piano I
\( \text{\textit{p}} = 80 \)

Piano II
\( \text{\textit{p}} = 80 \)

Chords always softer than the treble and bass melodies

Pedal with chord changes

Kyle Gann
2011
Mediating Daydream
Mediating Daydream
Mediating Daydream
Mediating Daydream
Mediating Daydream
July 22-27, 2011
Germantown, NY
The Goodbye Fugue

Kyle Gann
2006

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Crystalline, delicate, yet regular as clockwork, and, though warmly, almost without nuance

low octaves louder than the rest throughout
Implausible Sketches: Frigid Azure
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Implausible Sketches: Frigid Azure
Implausible Sketches: Frigid Azure
ever so slight ritard...

April 16 - August 18
Germantown, NY

Implausible Sketches: Frigid Azure
Don't Touch My Pint

Kyle Gann
2006

\( \text{mf - and crescendoing} \)

\( \text{with restrained excitement} \)

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