

ABSTRACT

THE PIANO SONATAS OF CHARLES WUORINEN: AN EVOLUTION OF STYLE

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Over a period of three decades, Wuorinen composed three sonatas for piano. While all are similarly based on serial methods, they nevertheless reflect processes of stylistic changes in the course of Wuorinen's compositional career and illustrate the evolution of Wuorinen's musical style from a conspicuously novel, seemingly complex idiom to one that displays a more traditional rhetoric. Analyses of Wuorinen's compositional procedures draw extensively on information in the composer's sketches and in his published editions. Many of the materials that Wuorinen utilizes in the sonatas are described in his text *Simple composition*, which serves as a technical foundation and analytical guide. Issues of formal structure, pitch-class set structure, texture, and range, among others, are all considered. The analyses of the sonatas uncover a multitude of similarities and differences among the three works, and they highlight Wuorinen's effort to maintain some connection to formal traditions associated with the medium.