



Competing Demands

for solo piano

Ryan Carter

(2011)

Commissioned by Alexandria Le for her debut recital at Carnegie Hall
(Weill Recital Hall) as a winner of the Pro Musicis International Music Award

www.ryancarter.org

A note on meter:

Traditional meter is organized hierarchically, typically with three levels of rhythmic emphasis within a measure:

The traditional time signature $3/4$ implies that the downbeat is accented, beats 2 and 3 carry weaker accents, and the remaining subdivisions are unaccented.

Meter in this piece operates in the same manner, but with irregularities at all three levels, for example:

The downbeat of every measure carries an implicit strong accent. Each beam group implies a weaker accent. For this reason, triplets are beamed variably in groups of two or three. Additionally, tuplets are often truncated, as indicated by an arrow pointing to the right.

A number of notational solutions exist for the so-called "irrational meters" that result. The measures above could be notated as $3/4 + 1/12$ and $3/4 + 3/10$ (reflecting the total duration of each measure), but this ignores the internal organization of each meter. More accurate time signatures may be expressed as $1/4 + 1/4 + 1/6 + 1/6$ and $1/4 + 1/2 + 3/10$ (reflecting the beat structure of the measure), or $4/16 + 3/12 + 2/12 + 2/12$ and $4/16 + 5/10 + 3/10$ (representing every subdivision), but such notation is cumbersome, visually disruptive, and entirely redundant.

This piece does not contain any time signatures because all pertinent metrical information can be gleaned from the music itself.

Program notes:

My piano music relies heavily on the sostenuto pedal (the middle pedal which is supposed to allow some notes to resonate while others are dampened). Unfortunately, the sostenuto pedal on many pianos does not function properly, allowing notes to resonate when they should not. Tonight, October 1, 2011, is one of those nights. I give up, and have resolved to take this mechanical failure as a springboard for inspiration rather than fighting against it.

Performance notes:

Division of the hands:

The division of the hands is indicated by stem direction and partial beams. Stems pointing downward indicate that notes should be played with the left hand. To show composite rhythms, almost all notes include upward stems, but notes with stems in both directions are still intended to be played with the left hand (e.g., the first C in m. 2). Accent markings always appear above a right-hand note and below a left-hand note.

To reduce visual clutter, rests are omitted in favor of partial beams (e.g., m. 1)

Octava markings apply to both hand and staves (e.g., every note in m. 124).

Occasionally, one staff is omitted to reduce clutter (e.g., m. 10).

The pianist is free to change the division of the hands as desired.

Pedaling:

No damper pedal is used, but the sostenuto pedal is used throughout. Open noteheads tied to rests indicate notes to be held by the sostenuto pedal, which is depressed immediately after the notes are played (e.g., m. 1). Open noteheads without ties indicate notes that will continue to ring because of the sostenuto pedal (e.g., the first C in m. 2).

Dynamics:

Material in this piece is either loud or soft (with no intermediate dynamics). All dynamic indications are *subito*. Notes that are accented should be much louder than surrounding material. Important connections between accented resonant pitches are indicated by dashed slurs (e.g., m. 4).

Competing Demands

for Alex

Ryan Carter

Presto (quasi Largo)

pp (RH only)

The musical score is written for piano and consists of six systems of music. The tempo is marked 'Presto (quasi Largo)'. The right hand part is marked 'pp (RH only)'. The score includes measure numbers 4, 7, 10, 13, and 16. Dynamics include *ff*, *pp*, *sfz*, and *sim.*. Performance instructions include *sost.* and *(sost.)*. The score features complex rhythmic patterns with many triplets and a 5/8 measure.

18

ff pp
(*sost.*)

21

ff pp
(*sost.*)

24

ff pp
(*sost.*)

27

ff pp
(*sost.*)

30

ff pp
(*sost.*)

33

ff pp
(*sost.*)