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THE PIANO SONATAS OF LOWELL LIEBERMANN:

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THE PIANO SONATAS OF LOWELL LIEBERMANN:
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A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR THE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

This overview of Liebermann's three piano sonatas is intended as a resource for teachers and performers. After a brief background of the composer, the author examines the compositional environment in the mid-twentieth century, features of the twentieth-century American piano sonata, trends in the twentieth-century nocturne, and Liebermann's compositional style. The analyses of three works provide information on form, thematic and motivic development, textural contrast, harmonic content, rhythmic variety, and his integration of modern idioms into pre-existing forms.

Liebermann wrote his first major work, Piano Sonata No. 1, Op. 1, in 1977 while in high school studying under Ruth Schonthal. He follows classical traditions in the first of four movements, combining sonata and fugual forms. The second and third movements are simple ternary, and the fourth merges rondo and ABA forms. The performer must blend several characters, with sensitivity and tranquility in the slow movement and rhythmic vitality and clear articulation in the fast movements.

The Sonata No. 2, Op. 10, "Sonata Notturna," was composed in 1983 while Liebermann was studying with David Diamond at Juilliard. Here, Liebermann merges the lyricism of the nocturne with the structure of the sonata into one movement containing a lengthy double exposition with a brief development and recapitulation.

After a nearly twenty-year hiatus, Liebermann wrote his longest piano solo work to date, the Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 82. It is likely that Liebermann was influenced by the events of September 11, 2001. Published one year later, the third sonata includes a *Dona Nobis Pacem* and Lullabye in the middle of three sections/movements, giving the listener a sense of eternal peace amidst the agitation of the outer movements.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Lowell Liebermann (b. 1961) is one of America's most frequently performed and recorded living composers. The *New York Times* calls him "as much of a traditionalist as an innovator[1]." He is a forerunner of a new generation of composers who have returned to the traditional ideas from past generations. Although Sonata No. 1, Op. 1 (1977) was his first major composition, his initial significant professional recognition came ten years later with his Sonata for Flute and Piano, Op. 23 (1987). Composed between 1977 and 2002, his three piano sonatas combine classical forms, romantic style, and modern idioms with technical command and audience appeal. Pianists have found a renewed interest in this genre and Liebermann exemplifies one of the highest examples of assimilation between traditional forms and modern ideals.

Growing up in New York City, Liebermann's life was filled with the arts. He studied composition with many respected teachers, including Ruth Schonthal, David Diamond, and Vincent Persichetti. Diamond and Persichetti are both known for a chromatic style with a strong connection to Classical and Romantic aesthetic values. Liebermann used their ideas during his formative years as his personal style developed.

[1]Lowell Liebermann website, "Biography" http://www.lowellliebermann.com/biography/index.html (accessed March 5, 2014)

Liebermann is a composer of diverse works, having written operas, works for orchestras, wind ensemble works, works for chamber and solo instruments, and additional works for a variety of vocal combinations. His most performed works include two operas (The Picture of Dorian Gray, Op. 45 and Miss Lonelyhearts, Op. 93), many concerti (including three for piano), four string quartets, three flute sonatas, a host of vocal and choral works, and a variety of works for piano solo, including the three sonatas, eleven nocturnes, Gargoyles, Op. 29, and Album for the Young, Op. 43.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This investigation provides an overview of Liebermann's three piano sonatas, including stylistic analyses that offer a study resource for teachers and performers. Pianists will be able to use this research as a catalyst for their own interpretive performance.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The analysis of Liebermann's three piano sonatas will enrich the body of literature on Liebermann's piano works and the American piano sonata genre. The sonatas are gaining in popularity along with several of his already frequently performed solo works including Gargoyles, Op. 29. Contemporary pianists are drawn to many of his solo works, and numerous performances and recordings have emerged throughout America and the rest of the world. Nine

scholarly documents on Liebermann's piano compositions exist to date, but only a few of these briefly discuss his style in the solo piano works, including the sonatas. No known investigation exists on his sonatas as one large body of work. Most of the research instead includes information on his instrumental works for flute, orchestra, or chamber groups. This study allows the pianist to gain information regarding Liebermann's integration of modern idioms into the pre-existing sonata form.

PROCEDURES AND ORGANIZATION

Several aspects are studied in the score analysis of this study, including form, thematic and motivic development, textural contrast, harmonic content, rhythmic variety, and his integration of modern idioms into pre-existing forms. Information from other studies supplements the researcher's performance and analysis experience in preparing these works. Several authors have previously interviewed the composer and included questions related to his sonatas. Information on elements of his style and biographical information from these interviews will inform the study.

Following this introductory chapter, the second chapter provides information on Liebermann's biography, the compositional environment in the mid-twentieth century, Liebermann's compositional style, features of the twentieth-century American piano sonata, and the trends in the twentieth-

century nocturne. Chapters three, four, and five will examine the first, second, and third sonatas respectively, including appropriate background information, stylistic features, texture usage, harmonic and melodic content, and pianistic challenges. Chapter six will summarize the study.

LIMITATIONS

This study focuses on the contributions of Liebermann to the canon of piano solo repertory. The biography and other background information will focus only on the events of his life that impacted his development as a composer and pianist. A brief history of the American piano sonata and the twentieth-century piano solo nocturne are included as a general guide for the reader, examining major compositional elements Liebermann incorporated into his sonatas, including sonata form and the nocturne style. The analyses are meant to introduce and guide the performance of each work. The background of the nocturne is included for a more detailed study of Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 10 "Sonata Notturna" (1983). Since this study considers all three of Liebermann's sonatas, each individual discussion will be concise and directed to the performer.

Since the sonatas require an advanced pianist, the quantity of professional recordings is limited. David Korevaar and Margaret Mills have

both recorded the first two sonatas while James Giles has performed the only recording to date of the third sonata.

RELATED LITERATURE

Liebermann's output has been the topic of numerous comprehensive studies, however none has dealt exclusively with the piano sonatas. The most significant sources include Dean Alan Nichols' document "A Survey of the Solo Piano Works of Lowell Liebermann"[2] and the professional website of the composer.[3] Helpful sources concerning the bridging of traditional and twentieth-century music include David Burge's book *Twentieth-Century Piano Music* and Kyle Gann's book *American Music in the Twentieth Century*. Doctoral documents have been written on the following works by Liebermann: the Album for the Young, Op. 43 (1993)[4]; the Three Impromptus, Op. 68 (2000)[5]; Piano Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 12 (1983)[6]; Piano Concerto No. 2 for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 36 (1992)[7]; and the eleven nocturnes.[8]

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[2] Dean Alan Nichols, "A Survey of the Solo Piano Works of Lowell Liebermann" (Doctoral project, University of Kentucky, 2000).

[3] Lowell Liebermann website, http://lowellliebermann.com (accessed October 28, 2013).

[4]Adam Clark, "Modern Marvels: A Pedagogical Guide to Lowell Liebermann's Album for the Young, Op. 43" (Doctoral document, University of Cincinnati, 2008).

[5]Tomoko Uchino, "An Analysis of Three Impromptus for Piano, Op. 68 by Lowell Liebermann" (Doctoral document, The University of Arizona, 2007).

[6]Hsiao-Ling Chang, "Lowell Liebermann's Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 12: An Historical and Analytical Study" (Doctoral diss., University of North Texas, 2010).

In terms of literature on Liebermann's piano sonatas, Dean Alan Nichols briefly explores the first two sonatas (but not the third) as a part of a general survey of Lowell Liebermann's solo piano works published through 1996. Nichols uses stylistic elements from the romantic era to explain Liebermann's compositional style, specifically relating to three composers, Alexander Scriabin, Sergei Rachmaninoff, and Maurice Ravel. He shows that Liebermann's piano works are musically sophisticated but remain accessible to the listener.

With respect to doctoral documents written on Liebermann's nocturnes, the sources are rich with information. Chan Kiat Lim includes Nocturne No. 4, Op. 38 (1992) in his analysis of the twentieth century nocturne[9] while Jessica L. Murdock includes Nocturne No. 1, Op. 20 (1986); Nocturne No. 2, Op. 31 (1990); and Nocturne No. 5, Op. 55 (1996) in her discussion of the twentieth century pedagogical nocturne in piano teaching.[10] Both researchers include

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[7]Wen-Hui Yu, "A Stylistic Analysis of *Piano Concerto* No. 2, Op. 36 by Lowell Liebermann" (Doctoral diss., University of Northern Colorado, 2003).

[8]Harvey, Martin, "*The Eleven Nocturnes for Solo Piano of Lowell Liebermann: A Field-Chopin-Fauré Lineage*" (Doctoral document, West Virginia University, 2013).

[9]Chan Kiat Lim, "Twentieth-Century Piano Nocturnes by American Composers: Echoes of Romanticism" (Doctoral thesis, University of Cincinnati, 2004).

[10]Jessica L. Murdock, "Night Music: The Twentieth Century Nocturne in Piano Teaching" (Doctoral diss., University of Northern Colorado, 2012).

limited information on Liebermann's style, placing more emphasis on the genre as a whole.

Liebermann's Album for the Young, Op. 43 is receiving significant attention from both teachers and students. Adam Clark gives technical and interpretive suggestions to the piano teacher in his doctoral document "'Modern Marvels': A Pedagogical Guide to Lowell Liebermann's Album for the Young, Op. 43."[11] This work provides solutions and practice techniques for the individual pieces as well as an overview of notable compositional features within each. A leveling chart is included.

In her doctoral dissertation "Lowell Liebermann's Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra, Opus 12: An Historical and Analytical Study," Hsiao-Ling Chang analyzes how every element is related within the structure of the concerto.[12] Three parameters are set for both the inter-movement and intra-movement levels: organic unity, formal structure, and tonality.

In his doctoral dissertation "A Stylistic Analysis of Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 36 by Lowell Liebermann," Wen-Hui Yu gives a brief overview of Liebermann's career as a composer.[13] The analysis of the concerto includes five parameters: formal analysis, thematic relationships, harmonic vocabulary,

[11]Clark, n.p.

[12]Chang, n.p.

[13] Yu, n.p.

pianistic writing, and orchestration. Each element is explored in depth as it relates to each of the movements.

Tomoko Uchino, in her doctoral document, "An Analysis of Three Impromptus for Piano Op. 68 by Lowell Liebermann," uses past composers as examples to explore Liebermann's style.[14] The most relevant composers discussed are Jan Vaclav Voříšek and Franz Schubert, but others are briefly addressed, including Gabriel Fauré. The author discusses many different parameters, including form, motive structure, and textures.

Twelve American composers' nocturnes are explored in the doctoral thesis "Twentieth-Century Piano Nocturnes by American Composers: Echoes of Romanticism."[15] Chan Kiat Lim explores how the nineteenth-century influenced modern nocturne composition using parameters that include style, melody, texture, mood, ornamentation, form, and harmony. Included in the research are Liebermann's first seven nocturnes, although only Nocturne No. 4, Op. 38 (1992) is analyzed.

Two sources were consulted as a part of the twentieth century American piano sonata research. Valerie Cisler's research on the piano sonatas of Robert Muczynski includes extensive information on the influences of Alexander Tcherepnin and Sergei Prokofiev and how they played a part of the style of

[14]Uchino, n.p.

[15]Lim, n.p.

Muczynski.[16] She also includes characteristics of the twentieth century piano sonata style. Michelle Schumann discusses Roger Sessions, Vincent Persichetti, and Ross Lee Finney in her research of the American Piano Sonata.[17] She considers how neoclassicism and the twelve-tone technique can be combined in the modern sonata.

[16]Valerie Clare Cisler, "The Piano Sonatas of Robert Muczynski" (doctoral document, University of Oklahoma, 1993), n.p.

[17] Michelle Vera Schumann, "Eclecticism and the American Piano Sonata: The Assimilation of Neoclassicism and the Twelve-Tone Technique in the Piano Sonatas of Roger Sessions, Vincent Persichetti, and Ross Lee Finney" (doctoral treatise, University of Texas, Austin, 2003).

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND

Liebermann's parents, Nicole and Edward Liebermann, were not professional musicians, but their appreciation for the arts encouraged Lowell to develop his musical talent at an early age.[18] His mother showed her native German culture to Lowell while his father took him on many trips to the Metropolitan Opera. At the age of eight, Liebermann began piano lessons. He remembers trying to compose piano pieces before he could even read music.[19] At thirteen, he began studying with Ada Segal, a former concert pianist who knew Joseph Hofmann, Ignacy Paderewski, and George Gershwin.[20] "She was one of those teachers who simply made you fall in love with music; and I'd stay with her for hours, long past my allotted time, greedy for everything she could tell me."[21]

When he was fourteen, he began compositional studies with Ruth Schonthal, who was a pupil of Hindemith at Yale. It was during his time with

[18] Lisa M. Garner, "Lowell Liebermann: A Stylistic Analysis and Discussion of the Sonata for Flute and Piano, Op. 23, Sonata for Flute and Guitar, Op. 25, and *Soliloquy* for Flute Solo, Op. 44" (doctoral thesis, Rice University, 1997), 5-6.

[19] Karen S. Kenaston, "An Approach to the Critical Evaluation of Settings of the Poetry of Walt Whitman: Lowell Liebermann's *Symphony No. 2*" (doctoral diss, University of North Texas, 2003), 66.

[20] Clark, 5.

[21] Jeannine Dennis, "The Life and Music of Lowell Liebermann with an Emphasis on his Music for the Flute and the Piccolo" (doctoral thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1999), 5.

Schonthal that Liebermann composed his first opus, Piano Sonata No. 1 (1977). As a fifteen-year-old pianist, he made his Carnegie Recital Hall debut where he premiered the work.[22] With the success of the first sonata, he was awarded first prize in the Music Teachers National Association composition contest in 1978 and the Outstanding Composition Award from the Yamaha Music Foundation in 1982.[23]

In 1978, Liebermann graduated a year early from high school and began study at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Stony Brook where he studied composition with David Diamond. The next year, he followed Diamond to The Julliard School, where he earned his Bachelors, Masters, and Doctoral degrees, graduating in 1987. Liebermann composed his Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 10 "Sonata Notturna" (1983) during his study with Diamond. Also during his time at Julliard, he studied piano with Jacob Lateiner and conducting with László Halász. At Julliard, Liebermann furthered his education with Vincent Persichetti, to whom he dedicated his Final Songs, Op. 21 (1987).[24]

Liebermann's first major success came with the Sonata for Flute and Piano, Op. 23 (1987). Written on commission for the Spoleto Festival, it was premiered by flutist Paula Robison and pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet on May 20,

[22] Clark, 5.

[23] Lowell Liebermann website, "Works" http://www.lowellliebermann.com/works/opus01.html (accessed October 28, 2013).

[24] Keneston, 66-67.

1988. Because of the overwhelmingly positive response to this work, he received several commissions from James Galway, which resulted in the Concerto for Flute and Orchestra (1992); the Concerto for Flute, Harp, and Orchestra (1995); and the Trio No. 1 for Flute, Cello and Piano (2002).[25]

Liebermann's solo piano works have also received acclaim. His Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 10 "Sonata Notturna" (1983) was premiered by dedicatee Stephen Hough on July 7, 1983 at the Wavendon Music Festival in the UK. With this composition, Liebermann earned an honorable mention from the Music Teachers National Association's National Composition Contest in 1985.

Gargoyles, Op. 29 (1989) is one of Liebermann's most frequently performed and recorded solo works. Commissioned by the Tcherepnin Society, it was premiered by dedicatee Eric Himy on October 14, 1989 at Alice Tully Hall. Three Impromptus, Op. 68, another popular work, was premiered on May 4, 2000 by Stephen Hough at Alice Tully Hall to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the founding of Yaddo, an artists' community located in Saratoga Springs, New York. In addition, Liebermann received first prize for the work at the Van Cliburn First International Composers' Invitational Competition. The only studio recording of the Impromptus to date is by David Korevaar.

In 1993, Liebermann wrote the Album for the Young, a collection of short pieces for the intermediate pianist. Commissioned by Northern Arts of the

[25] Clark, 6.

UK, the premiere was performed by Andrew Wilde in Manchester, England on January 1995 and dedicated to Jennifer and Matthew Wilde.

His Sonata No. 3, Op. 82 (2002) was composed on commission by the American Pianists Association for James Giles. First performed by Giles on April 11, 2003 at the Indiana Historical Society, it was written twenty years after the second sonata. Critics agree that the work will have a permanent place in the repertoire.[26]

His most extensive genre for solo piano is the eleven Nocturnes. Composed during a span of twenty-five years, the nocturnes are gaining in popularity among audiences. Written under individual commissions, they combine a modern sound with the traditional nocturne style.

Liebermann's lesser-known solo works include the Four Apparitions, Op. 17, which was premiered by David Korevaar on October 15, 1986 at the Merkin Concert Hall in New York City. Variations on a Theme by Anton Bruckner was premiered by dedicatee Erika Nickrenz at the Spoleto Festival on June 3, 1987 (one year before the first Flute Sonata). Liebermann wrote two collections of etudes for solo piano, Four Etudes on Songs of Johannes Brahms, Op. 88 (2004) and Four Etudes on Songs of Robert Franz, Op. 91 (2005), the latter being premiered by Hai-Kyung Suh. Variations on a Theme of Schubert, Op. 100 (2007) was commissioned by Louis K. Meisel for pianist Nadajda

[26] Lowell Liebermann website, "Works" http://www.lowellliebermann.com/works/opus01.html (accessed October 28, 2013).

Vlaeva. At the time of this publication, the piece had not yet received a premiere nor was currently available for purchase.

Among the many artists who have performed Liebermann's works are flutists Sir James Galway and Paula Robison; conductors Kurt Masur, Andrew Litton, Charles Dutoit, Wolfgang Sawallisch, Jesus Lopez-Cobos, Andreas Delfs, David Zinman, Edo de Waart, Raymond Leppard, and Steuart Bedford; pianists Jean-Yves Thibaudet, Hans Vonk, Garrick Ohlsson, and Stephen Hough; violinist Joshua Bell; cellist Steven Isserlis; vocalist Susan Graham; the Beaux Arts Trio, the Orion Quartet, and the Ying Quartet.

As a pianist, composer, and conductor, Liebermann has collaborated with such distinguished artists as flautists Sir James Galway and Jeffrey Khaner; violinists Chantal Juillet and Mark Peskanov; singers Robert White and Carole Farley; and cellist Andres Diaz. He performed the world premiere of Ned Rorem's Pas de Trois for oboe, violin and piano at the Saratoga Chamber Music Festival. He made his Berlin debut performing his Piano Quintet for Piano and Strings, Op. 34 (1990) with members of the Berlin Philharmonic. In 2006, the Van Cliburn Foundation presented a highly successful all-Liebermann concert as part of their "Modern at the Modern" series, with Liebermann and cellist Andres Diaz performing the premiere of his Sonata No. 3 for Cello and Piano Op. 90 (2005). He has been composer-in-residence for the Dallas Symphony

Orchestra, Sapporo's Pacific Music Festival, Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and many other organizations.

COMPOSITIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY

Liebermann's teachers, David Diamond and Ruth Schonthal, actively composed in the unstable political, social, and economic conditions following World War I. During this insecure time, European composers were encouraged to question the dominant expressionistic and romantic styles amid the newly forming musical trends of Richard Strauss' chromatic emotionalism and Arnold Schoenberg's free atonality and expressionism. In America, anti-German sentiment between WWI and WWII influenced composers to search out a new identity apart from the German romantic tradition. The economic depression of the 1930s further inspired many American composers to reconsider their relationship to the public and to compose more accessible music. It was during this time that many American composers, including Liebermann's primary graduate instructor, David Diamond, traveled to Paris to study with Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979). Boulanger's teaching promoted the neoclassical style, prevalent in French music at the time. As Carol Oja explains, "American involvement in neoclassicism held firm as the long lines and clean textures

promoted within the aesthetic became the basis for a new, more nationalistic idiom."[27]

During the middle of the twentieth century, other composers focused on music that separated themselves from the audience. In a *Commentary* article in 1997, Terry Teachout argues that such techniques are proving to be a small interruption in the continuum of the classical tradition in music.[28] The "scholastic music" put a divide between less educated audiences and the insistently intellectual composer, resulting in a momentary prominence of serial, atonal, and avante garde classical music.[29] In 1979, Samuel Lipman addressed the problems at its source where "scholastic music" remained for only a small audience. He argued that, hidden under the protection of foundations, universities, and government arts funding agencies, composers were allowed to experiment with compositional styles with less regard to public opinion. Modern classical music needed reform in composition to begin slowly reaching popular audiences and bringing back more accessible classical music.[30]

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[27] Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 231.

[28] Terry Teachout, "The New Tonalists," *Commentary* 104 (December 1997): 56.

[29] Kyle Gann, *American Music in the Twentieth Century* (London: Schirmer Books, 1997), 184.

[30] Samuel Lipman, *Music After Modernism* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), vii.

Kyle Gann argues that further development of "scholastic music" is not possible since a backlash will cause music to become oversimplified.[31] In the twentieth century, the apex of serialism with Milton Babbitt (1916-2011) gave way to the minimalism of Steve Reich (1936-) and Philip Glass (1937-). By the 1990s, an abundance of minimalist, electronic, and chance music led composers to write with a sense of renewed tonality. Although trained in all of these academic styles, Liebermann modified his approach, combining new and old.

FEATURES OF THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN PIANO SONATA

The piano sonata, a quintessential genre of the classical era, became a composition of choice for American neoclassical composers. The tradition is relatively common in America because the piano sonata is not particularly prevalent in European neoclassical writing.[32] Notable twentieth-century composers who incorporated neoclassical elements into their compositions include Paul Hindemith, Samuel Barber, Aaron Copland, and Charles Ives.

The twentieth-century American piano sonata demonstrates the ties between the classical genre and the American modernist tradition. Neoclassicism was first a predominant international aesthetic during the early and middle part of the century. As a reaction to the conflicting trends of

[31] Gann, 185.

[32] Schumann, 14-15.

impressionism, expressionism, nationalism, ultra-chromaticism, and atonality, many influential American composers, including David Diamond, adopted the elements of neoclassicism. Scott Messing writes that features of neoclassicism include the "impulse to borrow from, be modeled on, or allude to a work or composer from an earlier era, often in the eighteenth century."[33] According to Michelle Vera Schumann:

> While general characteristics of neoclassicism emphasize clarity and simplicity, American composers who evoke the neoclassical style also employ more specific techniques. For instance, neoclassical composers tend to use traditional structures and forms such as the sonata, ternary, rondo and variation forms. Clear and direct harmonic motion is characteristic within these forms, although harmonic progressions are rarely traditional. Neoclassical composers also generally use thinner, linear textures and simple counterpoint. Finally, American neoclassicists, in particular, favored the use of traditional classical genres—most notably, the piano sonata.[34]

Form was one way modern composers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries created cohesion. Sonata was a favored form, appearing in multiple movements of a single work, promoting structural clarity. Twentieth-century American composers frequently utilized traditional forms, but also deviated by contrasting within a movement, including tonal areas, moods, tempos and time signatures. Some modern composers, including Charles Ives,

[33] Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of Concept Through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1988), xiv.

[34] Schumann, 14.

abandoned traditional key relationships for layers of polytonality to provide an extra dimension of musical space.[35]

Recognizable themes and motives are one way American composers were influenced by classical composers like Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn. In the twentieth-century, composers used motivic development to shift from an expressive, mournful, almost tentative quality to a powerful, harsh, and angry character, either in the same movement or as a way to unify the entire work. In Copland's Piano Sonata, the motivic material plays an important role in holding the structure together. The more recognizable motive of the first movement is found first in the opening, followed by modified, but intact, repetitions.[36]

Ives' Piano Sonata No. 1 demonstrates how American composers utilize familiar melodies to reinvent form. Through arch form, the motivic structure of each movement is loosely based on recognizable hymn tunes. In the first movement, the vocal quality of the hymn tunes allows for a fantasia structure, beginning with the smallest fragment of the tune and gradually building to more complete phrases from the hymn. David Burge comments:

> He is primarily concerned not with distorting it but rather *imbedding* it in the texture of the music…he could simultaneously refer to three, four, or five different layers of experience or trains of thought…through a kind

[35] David Michael Hertz, "Ives's (sic) Concord Sonata and the Texture of Music," in *Charles Ives and His World,* ed. J. Peter Burkholder (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 112.

[36] David Burge, *Twentieth-Century Piano Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 119.

> of 'rhetoric of interruptions' for which one would be hard pressed to find a precedent. Ideas are announced, broken off, interpolated into other ideas, combined in new ways, and repunctuated abruptly; the harmonic language is impenetrably dissonant, innocently consonant, richly allusive, or bluntly bare; and all—whether marked *fff* or *ppp*—is insistent, urgent, and constantly assertive.[37]

Thematic material is often interrupted with ideas from other sections or movements and transformed across areas such as tempo, tonal area, or accompaniment. During the first movement of Barber's Sonata for Piano, three motives facilitate harmonic movement and articulate larger sections of the form; but one motive is utilized throughout the entire sonata, creating unity between the sonata movements.[38] Although the motives are serial in nature, an individual motive is more important than a rigid, complete row. The development of the motives proves to be the most important aspect of structure in the first movement.[39]

In general, American composers value clarity of layers of counterpoint. Transparent surroundings and clean lines emphasize horizontal movement of all voices, contributing to the enduring quality of the American style. Voice leading tends to strengthen or weaken tonal pitch centers. As a direct contrast, layered

[37] Ibid, 37-41.

[38] Catharine D. Lysinger, "Sonata for Piano, Op. 26: A Reflection of Samuel Barber's Struggle Between Neo-classicism and Modernism" (doctoral document, University of Houston, 2004), 17.

[39] Sarah E. Masterson, "Approaches to Sonata Form in Mid-Twentieth-Century American Piano Sonatas" (doctoral dissertation, University of Connecticut, 2011), 83.

textures with inner melodic movement are reminiscent of the Romantic generation including late Beethoven, Brahms, and Schumann.[40]

Pedal points in both fast and slow tempi are employed as a signal for an approaching tonal center, stabilizing a primary tonal center and a bell-like effect. For example, the first movement of Barber's Piano Sonata includes an ostinato figure and pedal points within the contrapuntal texture. The right hand gravitates to the tonic of E-flat minor and the counterpoint of the left drives to C-flat. The feeling of instability continues until the coda, where the ostinato figures and an E-flat pedal point establish tonality. The relentless struggle to the end is articulated with a mixture of the E-flat and an ostinato figure that oscillates between a minor ninth and major seventh.[41]

Twentieth-century American composers have experimented in varying degrees with harmony, searching for styles that combine conventional elements with unfamiliar treatments of tertian chords. With the use of this dissonant, non-traditional harmony, composers incorporate a foundation of strong bass lines and defined cadences to guide the listener. Some chose contrasts between chromatic harmonies and atonalism while others developed a more complex system, utilizing major and minor thirds with the interplay of voices with synthetic scales. Some composers employed added-note chords, parallelism,

[40] Cisler, 103.

[41] Lysinger, 19.

polytonality, quartal chords, and concurrent major and minor thirds, tone clusters and widely-spaced bitonal chords. Others explored tertian harmonies, including the added seventh, ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth of the chord. Dissonances typically resulted from melodic movement of inner voices, or a static pedal point.

The first movement of Barber's Piano Sonata has an obscured tonal center mixed with full chromatic ideas, tone rows, and dissonant harmonies where the semitone and its inversion are prominent.[42] He favored such intervals as the augmented fifth in place of the traditional tonic/dominant relationships. According to Lysinger,

> Rather than employing a traditional modulation to the dominant (B-flat), it has a tonal center on the pitch B, an augmented fifth above E-flat (a reflection of the augmented triad that outlines the movement), which is established by repetition of this pitch on the downbeat of each measure.[43]

Composers explore rhythmic ideas including driving ostinati and conflicting rhythmic patterns without reference to melody. Despite complex metric shifts through a passage the basic pulse remains constant, creating a natural flow.[44] The motor quality is achieved with repeated rhythmic patterns at various pitch levels, combined for a polytonal and polymetric effect. Several

[42] Dean Luther Arlton, "American Piano Sonatas of the Twentieth Century: Selective Analyses and Annotated Index" (doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 1968), 281.

[43] Lysinger, 20.

[44] Cisler, 80.

composers, including Barber and Muczynski, use ostinati in the very lowest registers of the keyboard as a way to exude a hard-driving and perpetual motion.

In his Piano Sonata, Copland mixes accented jazz rhythms with frequent changes of meter to establish a feeling of improvisation. In the beginning of the second movement, the differentiation of rhythm between the first two themes creates a mixture of mood and character. Although the first is angular and the second is declamatory, as each figure is varied, the rhythms blend with syncopations, abrupt accents, and mixed meters.

The contrast of lyricism and percussiveness is established with impressionists, including Scriabin.[45] Driving rhythms and ostinati combine with soaring melodies to further enhance the energetic and melodic sound. Melodies come from a composer's intention to evoke a particular character, mood, or emotional state. Angular melodies are most often utilized to create sharp, biting or ironic characters, or simply to depict a boisterous, playful spirit. Muczynski says:

> I have never questioned the importance of melody. I love melody, and I regard it as the most important element in music. … To find a melody instantly understandable to the uninitiated listener, and at the same time an original one, is the most difficult task for a composer.[46]

[45] Ibid, 97.

[46] Nicholas Slonimksy, *Music Since 1900,* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1949), 705.

Twentieth-century composers like Prokofiev and Bartók create direct contrast to lyricism with the percussive use of the piano. American composers, including Liebermann and Muczynski, have followed this tradition. The intervals of a melody can be considered a primary motivic or melodic cells and are found in subsequent rhythm patterns or connecting passagework. Beyond rhythm, their use of sudden dynamics, articulation, texture, dissonance, register, and expressive indications complement the percussive quality. Sudden shifts contribute to a uniquely percussive quality of the piano. According to Valerie Cisler in her DMA document on the Muczynski sonatas:

> The percussive approach to the piano demands precision and clarity, crucial in projecting the mechanistic energy of repeated staccato chords, percussive attacks, articulate passagework, and wide leaps. Like Beethoven, all utilize accents and *sf,* frequently in close proximity, and many examples of *subito* can be found. Textures that impart percussiveness range from repeated intervals and chords and motoristic ostinati, to Alberti bass type accompaniments (extended and closed positions), to the rapid alternation of hands and even unison octave passagework.[47]

The contrast of lyricism and percussiveness is apparent in the three contrasting themes of the first movement of Muczynski's Second Piano Sonata. The first is lyrical, broad, dark and strong and it varies intervallically, repeating rhythmically while incorporating extensions of certain rhythms, sequence, changing accompaniments, and registers.[48] The second is related to the first, but

[47] Cisler, 105-106

[48] Ibid, 223-228.

contrasts with a rhythmically driving quality. It is the third that differs most noticeably, changing to a slower tempo and a higher register placement. An expressive and solemn mood is created through the emphasis of variations in rhythmic augmentation, register shifts, and sequences. Primary motivic patterns are found both in the melody and accompaniment through the preference of certain intervals.

The narrative quality of twentieth-century piano writing is enhanced through the contrasting use of speech-like patterns and driving rhythms, contributing to the overall expressive and communicative appeal. The English language, especially, has rhythmic strength and vitality built into it where, "It offers strongly articulated consonants…and vowels of varying length that ensure rhythmic crispness and a certain quickness in pace."[49] With vocal music, the rhythmic freedom consists of long and short durations, which mimics the stressed and unstressed syllables of text.

Modern composers, including Liebermann, add elements of recitative in their compositions. In the opening of his Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 82 (2002), he begins with an introduction in the style of a recitative. With no time signature and only a few bar lines, the rhythm simulates the short and long durations of speech. The stagnant right hand is mixed with driving octaves in the left, but at

[49] Jack Beeson, "Grand and not so Grand," *Opera News* 27, no. 5 (5 January 1963): 8-13.

the end of each phrase, either long notes or rests momentarily pause the momentum, giving time for the music to breathe.

Although Charles Ives, Samuel Barber, and Aaron Copland wrote the most well-known sonatas in the twentieth century, composers such as Liebermann and Muczynski further established the idea of combining classical and modern elements in the American piano sonata. Every composer writes with a different American tradition but the neoclassical composers all feature clear formal structures, attention to motivic clarity, linear simplicity, and a basically tonal harmonic framework.

TRENDS IN THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY NOCTURNE

Liebermann was commissioned to write Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 10 "Sonata Notturna" (1983) before any of his nocturnes were composed. He melds the traditional nocturne form with modern harmony. Composed in one movement, this sonata uses elements found later in his nocturnes, including the modern tonal approach, lyric elements, and expansive textures.

The political and economic environment in America was in chaos during the first two decades of the twentieth century.[50] As a reaction to this and the complexities of early twentieth-century music, composers returned to the recognizable ideals in form and harmonic content. The smaller genres, like the

[50] Lim, 48.

nocturne, allowed composers to develop their style using twentieth-century methods. In the nineteenth century, Chopin led the way in the development of the nocturne with his use of lyricism and serenity, but modern compositions boast an even more striking variety of moods, textures, and techniques within their nocturnes.

The twentieth-century nocturne idiom is diverse in style and expressive range. Liebermann exhibits diversity and wide emotional range in the second sonata when he synthesizes elegant lyrical sections and resolute choral passages to create a contrasting combination of tense and celestial moods. The harmonic language is exquisitely tonal, yet particularly in dissonant sections, the blend provides a haunting contrast. Within tertian harmonies, chord progressions create an effective color shift.

Liebermann returns to traditional harmonic ideas from earlier in the century while other composers in the last few decades exhibit a more defined harmonic approach.[51] Because they desired to attract audiences to an intellectual form of music, composers, including Liebermann, returned to traditional harmonies, forms, and styles and began combining them with the academic ideas. During the early twentieth century, composers employed bitonality or chords mixed with chromatic tones, but by the 1990s, composers were utilizing harmonies in a more pure state, without chromatic tones, yet

[51] Gann, 226-227.

treated in non-functional ways. Gann uses the term *totalism* to define this new approach:

> …a characterizable style did arise in the 1990s, however, one which came to be called *totalism.* …in this case, writing music that appeals to audiences on a sensuous and visceral level, and yet which still contains enough complexity and intricate musical devices to attract the more sophisticated aficionado. It also implies using all of the musical resources available, so that Indian raga-like melodies may fit together with jazz harmonies within classical structuring devices.[52]

Romantic and modern characteristics are combined in the twentieth-century nocturne genre. "Not every nocturne, specifically many of those written during the twentieth century, feature the characteristic lyricism associated with Romanticism (sic)."[53] The common elements between the romantic and twentieth-century nocturnes include the use of melody, relaxed form, texture, ornamentation, and harmonic motion. Each is assimilated with twentieth-century ideas such as modality, dissonances, and twelve-tone techniques. Although the harmonic content may be more complex in the twentieth century, modern composers exhibit lyricism, expression, and graceful style in their nocturnes, at least in parts.

The combination of romantic and modern tendencies permeated many twentieth-century nocturnes. According to Lim,

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[52] Ibid, 355.

[53] Murdock, 11.

> traits [used from the nineteenth century include] treble-dominated texture, varied left-hand accompaniment, florid ornamentation, and rich idiomatic writing. The melody, expressive and ethereal, explores the extreme treble register of the piano.[54]

Although the romantic nocturne melody is generally featured in the right hand with an arpeggiated accompaniment in the left, composers in the twentieth century were not afraid to experiment with keyboard range and pedal effects to add lyricism and emotionalism.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, composers begin to use the nocturne to symbolize fearful images of the night. Murdock states the following:

> The night is associated with ambiguity, monsters, and loss of reality; furthermore, night is capable of producing surreal images of the unconscious…The idea of night, the blurring of contours, lends to the idea of abstraction, which is ideally suited to music, a highly abstract, subjective medium.[55]

During the twentieth century, the harmonic content became more complex to symbolize the shift in mood to the dark and murky ambiance of the night. In Ghost Nocturne for the Druids of Stonehenge from Makrokosmos II, George Crumb used extended techniques to create peculiar sounds, reminding the listener of the eerie sounds of night.

Musical nationalism began to infiltrate the solo nocturne during the twentieth century. Composers combined characteristics from the romantic and

[54] Lim, 61.

[55] Murdock, 11-12.

modern traditions with their own country's style. Fauré wrote thirteen nocturnes displaying the lyrical and passionate French style. Meanwhile, in America, Barber disguises the 12-tone technique in his elegant Nocturne, Op. 33.[56] Liebermann has contributed to the genre with eleven nocturnes, combining the modern nocturne style and several American traditions, including use of rhythm and tonality.

LIEBERMANN'S COMPOSITIONAL STYLE

Liebermann's music may be best described as "music that is a stream of familiar sounds arranged in an unfamiliar way."[57] Aaron Copland says of the new American composers in 1968,

> The simple truth is that no composer worthy of the name has ever written anything merely to be "as great as" or "better than" some other composer. He writes in order to say something of his own—to put down some expression of his own private personality. If he succeeds, the results should be listened to by his countrymen even though they may not be "as great as" or "better than" the music of the immortals. At any rate, it is the only way we shall ever have a music of our own.[58]

[56] Nathan C. Wambolt, "Tonal Atonality: An Analysis of Samuel Barber's 'Nocturne Op. 33'" Undergraduate Research Journal at the University of Northern Colorado, http://journals.sfu.ca/urjnc/index.php/urjnc/article/view/80--barber (accessed March 6, 2014).

[57] Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 512.

[58] Aaron Copland, *The New Music 1900-1960* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968), 100.

Liebermann did not establish a new way of thinking; rather, he brought academic music to the mainstream public. He modifies old ideas into something new and gratifying.

Throughout his piano compositions, Liebermann keeps a sense of individuality while embracing traditional forms, which include sonata, concerto, fugue, and nocturne. Besides three concerti and three sonatas, Liebermann's output for piano is comprised of four variation sets, an album for the young, eleven nocturnes, and a host of other smaller works. In an interview with Mayumi Kikuchi, he discusses his preference of form, "I certainly prefer [the term] neo-classic to neo-romantic because classicism has something to do with form, which my music is very much about."[59] The choice of form in the sonatas is less clear to the audience than forms traditionally found in both the classical and romantic eras. Loosely based on melodic, harmonic, and textural content, the definitive sections are often blurred.

Liebermann creates a paradigm shift from other composers by striving for intimacy with his listeners and, therefore, creating a more audience-friendly composition.[60] Generally, a contrast to the rest of the composition is found in the

[59] Mayumi Kikuchi, "The Piano Works of Lowell Liebermann: Compositional Aspects in Selected Works." (doctoral project, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1999), 19.

[60] Ibid.

lyrical sections, where he emphasizes the melodic development of the phrase. Long lines create a peaceful and freeing atmosphere in his compositions.[61]

Liebermann utilizes percussive writing to add complexity and create rhythmic variety where the emotion can range from aggression to excitement.[62] He implements off-beat accents, frequent meter changes (at times without any time signature), asymmetrical divisions, and irregular subdivisions of a symmetrical meter. He combines this with a melodic or accompanimental line, sometimes unevenly divided throughout the measure. Several percussive elements are found in the final *Allegro* of the Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 82 (2002). Within the first few measures, he includes a syncopated left hand and meter changes followed later by off-beat strong accents and an ostinati accompaniment.

Texture becomes an integral part of the sonatas. Liebermann uses register and repeated rhythmic patterns to affect the changing colors and moods throughout the work. He blends textures by merging several different styles consisting of contrapuntal and homophonic elements, occasionally utilizing fugal writing to build to the climax.[63] The contrast within the movement includes an interaction between these elements and non-functional diatonic

[61] Ibid, 16.

[62] Ibid, 20.

[63] Ibid, 33.

harmonies.[64] One pattern may first be explored with a simple opening melody and later developed using a second component to intensify the entire composition. During the opening of the first movement of the Piano Sonata No. 1 (1977), he develops two accompaniment figures. As the music continues to intensify, he explores other tessituras, octave passages, and chromatic harmonies. He makes a contrast from the contrapuntal nature of the first movement with the homophonic texture of the third.

Liebermann's harmonic language is distinctive among modern composers. His writing has "strange juxtapositions of dissonance and consonance, the constant reference to common practice tonality that actually never are common practice tonality, [and the] de-contextualized use of triads…"[65] Rather than traditional harmonic progressions, Liebermann employs common elements such as motivic development or rhythmic ostinati to tie a work together. He manipulates material by exploiting modal mixture as a form of harmonic variation. A prominent interval is not only in the harmonic content of one chord, but also in the way the harmonies relate to one another. Gardner states:

> Liebermann's style is obviously more influenced by composers who lived before the twentieth century and can be described as a combination of many different sounds: the contrapuntal devices of Bach, the

[64] Ibid, 25.

[65] Uchino, 94.

> extensive melodies of Wagner, the combined tonalities of Bartok, the elusiveness of Debussy, and the rhythmic intensity of Stravinsky.[66]

Liebermann makes the music pianistic and accessible.[67] He demands virtuosity of the performer where he "develops the same kind of style romantic composers were using in the nineteenth century—robust octaves, sparkling treble melodies, use of the full dynamic range, and long, singing melodies over Chopinesque accompaniments."[68]

[66] Garner, 2-3.

[67] Kikuchi, 22.

[68] Nichols, 5.

CHAPTER THREE

LIEBERMANN'S SONATA NO. 1, OP. 1

Liebermann wrote his first major work, Piano Sonata No. 1, Op. 1 (1977) when he was fifteen years old. [It was later published and dedicated to Stephen Hough.] The premiere took place on May 15, 1977 at Carnegie Recital Hall in New York City. The composition won several awards including the Outstanding Composition Award through the Yamaha Music Foundation (1982) and first prize at the National Composition Contest of the Music Teachers National Association (1978). The score is available through Theodore Presser Company.

COMPOSITIONAL INFLUENCE

Ruth Schonthal (1924-2006) was an influential composition teacher in Liebermann's early life. Born in Hamburg, Germany, she moved with her family to Berlin in 1925. Shortly after, at the age of five, she was admitted into the Stern Conservatory in Berlin where she began studying piano, her primary instrument. In 1935, four years before the start of World War II, she was expelled because of her Jewish heritage. In 1938 as the political tensions mounted in Germany, her family immigrated to Sweden where she studied at the Royal Academy of Music. In 1941, only three months shy of her graduation, the family sought refuge in Mexico. While in Mexico, she became a well-known

composer through her connections with Manuel Ponce, and was able to perform both standard and her original compositions.

During her residency in Mexico, Schonthal met Paul Hindemith who offered her an opportunity to study with him at Yale, presenting her another move to a new country. At Yale, she was one of only twelve students allowed to graduate under Hindemith's tutelage. Although grateful for the chance to study in America, Schonthal made a list of compositional techniques she did not wish to continue after graduation. According to Lauren Cox:

> Hindemith taught a very methodical compositional style which did not always coincide with Schonthal's preferences. Instead of writing linearly, Schonthal preferred to completely work out short passages, feeling that it stimulated other ideas. She typically worked with all lines simultaneously, not the melody, bass line, then inner voices, the method advocated by Hindemith. Hindemith taught that harmonic tension and relaxation should come from outer voices, but Schonthal wanted the freedom to use inner voices as well. Additionally, Schonthal did not agree that phrases needed to be repeated for intensification.[69]

Many of these ideas and concepts are found in Schonthal's mature works as well and inevitably affected her teaching of composition.

Schonthal spoke out against the trends of complex and academic twentieth-century music, saying, "It lost the public for music."[70] Although her

[69] Lauren J. Cox, "The Clarinet Compositions of Ruth Schonthal: A Performer's Guide" (doctoral treatise, Florida State University, 2011), 4-5.

[70] Roberta Hershenson, "At 70, A Female Composer Sharpens Work and Words," *The New York Times*, 11 December 1994, http://www.nytimes.com/1994/12/11/nyregion/at-70-a-female-composer-sharpens-work-and-words.html?src=pm (accessed May 18, 2014).

style is modern and dissonant, with neo-romantic characteristics, she tried to make her works accessible to the audience.[71] According to Esther Lamneck, her style has "dramatic romantic gestures in a neo-Romantic style—the 'sturm und drang' if you will, with intense emotional context."[72]

Throughout her time in America, Schonthal taught composition privately part-time as extra income for her family. At the age of fourteen, Liebermann was accepted as her student and studied with her until his entrance into college. It is during this time that he wrote his first opus, Piano Sonata No. 1 (1977), and only a year later premiered it in Carnegie Recital Hall. According to Adam Clark, "with the success of (that) sonata it became clear to Liebermann that he would pursue a life as a composer."[73] With early compositional training, Liebermann discovered the importance of established traditions mixed with new ideas.

Although Schonthal is a confessed Neo-Romantic and Lieberman a Neo-Classicist, the student learned a great deal from his teacher. Both Liebermann's and Schonthal's music are accessible to the educated and general audiences. The intense emotional content found in Liebermann's compositions is due in part to Schonthal's teaching. While their music includes a challenging technical

[71] Cox, 7.

[72] Ibid, 7.

[73] Clark, 6.

language, the general listener will enjoy the performance and study of both composers.

ANALYSIS OF SONATA NO. 1, OP. 1

The first sonata, comprised of four movements, is diverse in expression and style. "It's melodic, chromatic-but-tonally-anchored, traditional in texture and sonority, and presents no untoward difficulties to the listener."[74] Within its tertian harmonies, non-functional pitches are juxtaposed with soaring melodies and contrasting textures.

> What the first sonata suggests is the combined influence of American modernism and the composer's own proclivity for virtuosic piano writing that has its roots in Romanticism, however far removed from the nineteenth century the harmonic and melodic content may be. Add to these tendencies Liebermann's innate lyricism and his penchant for exploring coloristic effects, and a summary of his early style as seen in the first sonata is complete."[75]

Liebermann has written expressively and articulately for the piano while maintaining a thorough understanding of the capabilities of the instrument. His first sonata requires a mixture of agility, pianism, lyricism, and maturity in performance. Each movement demands its own flexible piano technique due to the juxtaposition of lyrical and energetic passages. His percussive approach to

[74] Mark Lehman, "Guide to Records," *American Record Guide* 58(4) (July/August 1995): 186.

[75] Nichols, 15.

the piano commands precision and clarity while his lyrical ideas must evoke character and beauty.

Liebermann relates the tonal centers within and between the movements as seen in Chart 1. With the exception of the second movement, the changing tonalities are directly related to the *F♯* found at the opening and closing of the sonata. The second movement centers around *C♯*, the dominant of *F♯*.

Chart 1. *Sonata No. 1, Op. 1,* Analysis of tonal centers

First Movement	m. 5	*F♯*
	m. 13	*C♯*
Second Movement	m. 1	*C♯*
	m. 14	*A♯*
	m. 32	*C♯*
Third Movement	m. 1	*C♯*
	m. 15	*F♯*
	m. 32	*F♯*
Fourth Movement	m. 1	*F♯*

First Movement
Adagio (♩= c. 40)
51 measures
c. 4:11 duration

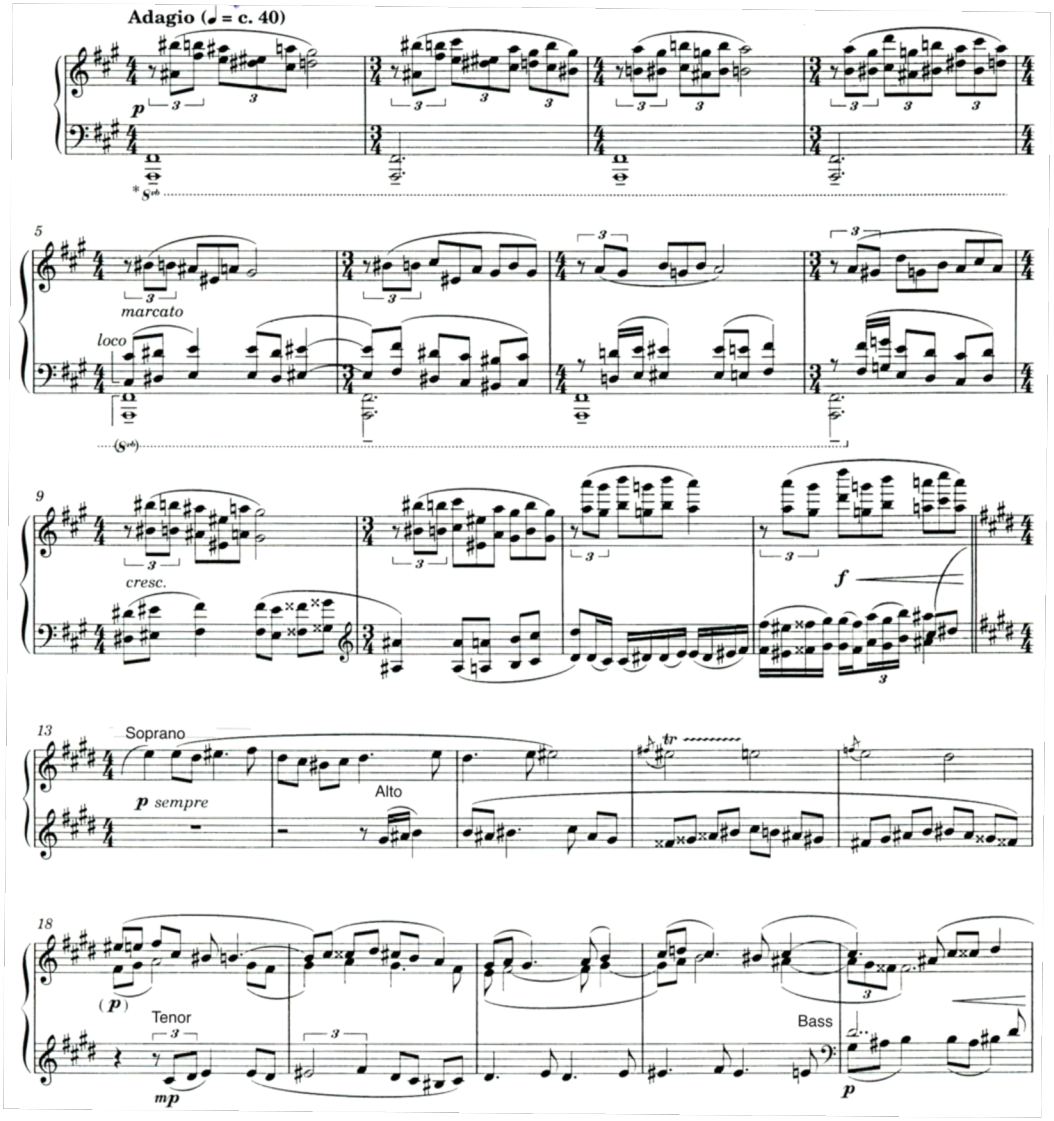
Liebermann's first sonata already shows his affinity for merging forms, including traces of sonata, rounded binary, ternery, variation, fugue, and rondo. The first movement can be thought of in terms of two different forms, a mono-thematic sonata with the recapitulation of the first theme postponed until the coda, or a prelude and fugue with two expositions of the fugue subject (Chart 2).

Chart 2. *Sonata No. 1, Op. 1,* First movement. Comparison of sonata and fugue forms

Measure	Sonata Form	Fugue Form
1-4	*Exposition* Introduction (*F♯*)	Prelude (*F♯*)
5-12	Theme 1 (*F♯*)	
13-23	Theme 2 (*C♯*)	Fugal Exposition 1 (*C♯*)
24-30	*Development*	Free Material
31-36	*Recapitulation* Introduction material	
37-48	Theme 2 (*F♯*)	Fugal Exposition 2 (*F♯*)
49-51	*Coda*	Coda

Features of Baroque imitative techniques are combined with chordal passages to generate horizontal lines interweaving through the texture in the first movement. The opening contains three congruent layers, including a haunting sixth at the bottom of the keyboard, a chromatic winding figure at the top, and an octave melody in the middle register (Example 1, m. 5), which build to a climax (m. 12). Out of this climax emerges the first of four fugal voices, each entering with a slight rhythmic variation of the octave melody from measure five (m. 13). The subsequent voices, entering on the dominant and tonic pitch levels, evolve into material from the opening using a textural crescendo to create an expanse of sound.

Example 1 *Sonata No. 1, Op. 1*, First movement, Exposition/Prelude and Fugal Exposition 1, mm. 1-22[76]



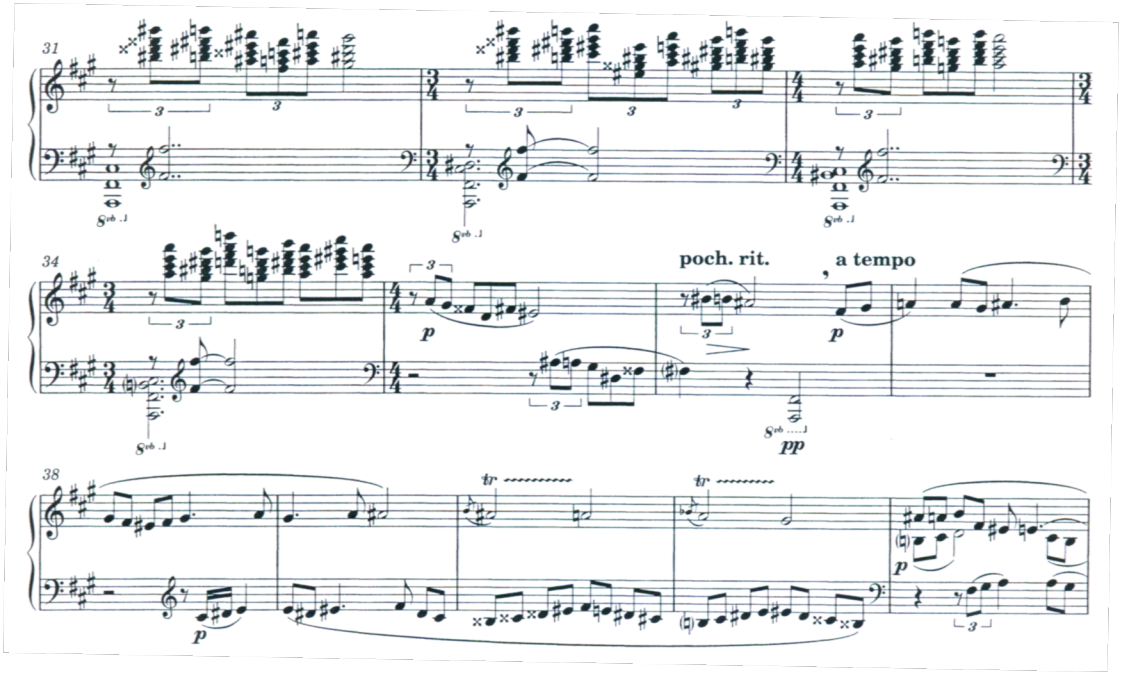
Textural contrast adds interplay to the layers between the hands, helping generate dynamic fluctuations through the use of extreme octaves of the keyboard. The original dyad pedal point returns, expanded to three and then four

[76] Used with permission. See Appendix A. © 1999 by Lowell Liebermann. Published by Theodore Presser Company.

notes between the two fugues (Example 2, m. 31). Also, the right hand expands from its original two-note dyads to four-note chords (m. 32). Liebermann reduces the extreme-register *forte* chords to a single *piano* melodic line, again halting the forward motion before the second fugal section (mm. 34-35).

The full fugue occurs twice, at the dominant (Example 1, m. 13) and the tonic levels (Example 2, m. 37). The second fugue (m. 37) is varied slightly to provide a transition into the coda. The coda summarizes the movement with an extra statement of the fugue subject, which is also a single-line recapitulation of Theme 1, ending with the same eerie sixth in the bass from the opening.

Example 2 *Sonata No. 1, Op. 1*, First movement, Recapitulation/Fugal Exposition 2, mm. 31-42



The challenge for the performer is to keep the listener engaged throughout the contrapuntal lines and the abrupt changes that begin new sections. The constant development and layering is intriguing to the ear, and the use of contrasting dynamics, harmonic colors, articulations, and varied phrase structures will aide the performer in finding each line's unique timbre.

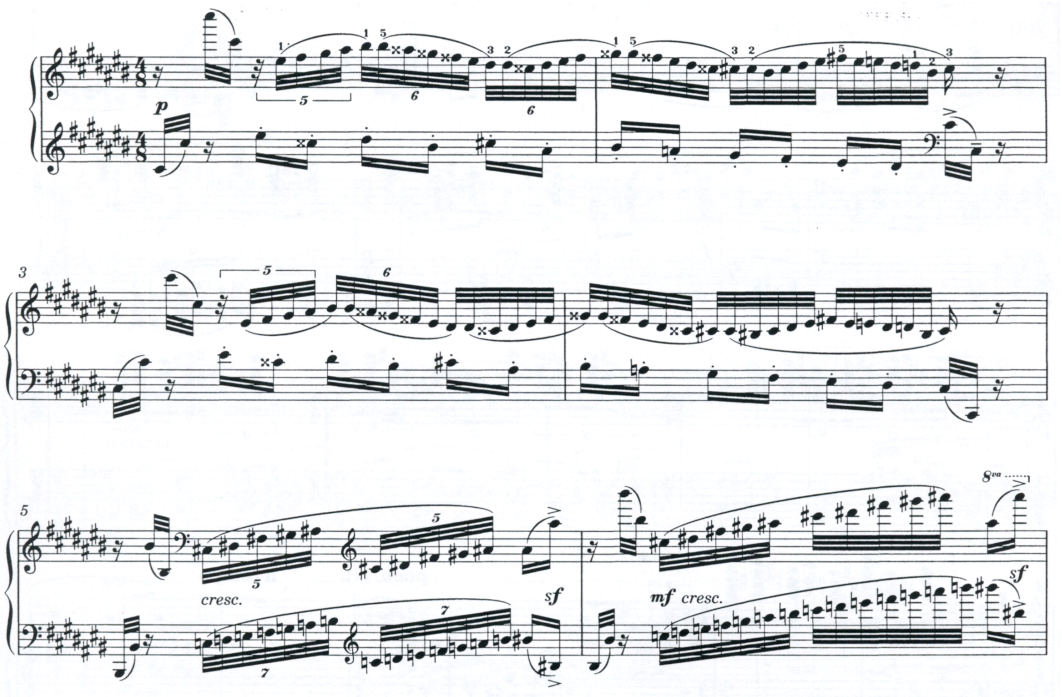
Second Movement
Presto (♪= c. 160)
38 measures
c. 1:09 duration

The *Presto* second movement is an example of Liebermann's virtuosic writing and motivic development, displayed in a ternary form (Chart 3). The quick finger work combines with brilliant glissando-like figures as repeating phrases span many registers of the keyboard. The opening *piano* statement occurs three times in the A section (Example 3, mm. 1, 3, 7), changing only in octave placement.

Chart 3. *Sonata No. 1, Op. 1,* Second movement. Ternary analysis

Measure	Ternary Form
1-13	A
14-31	B
32-38	A'

Example 3 *Sonata No. 1, Op. 1*, Second movement, A section, mm. 1-6



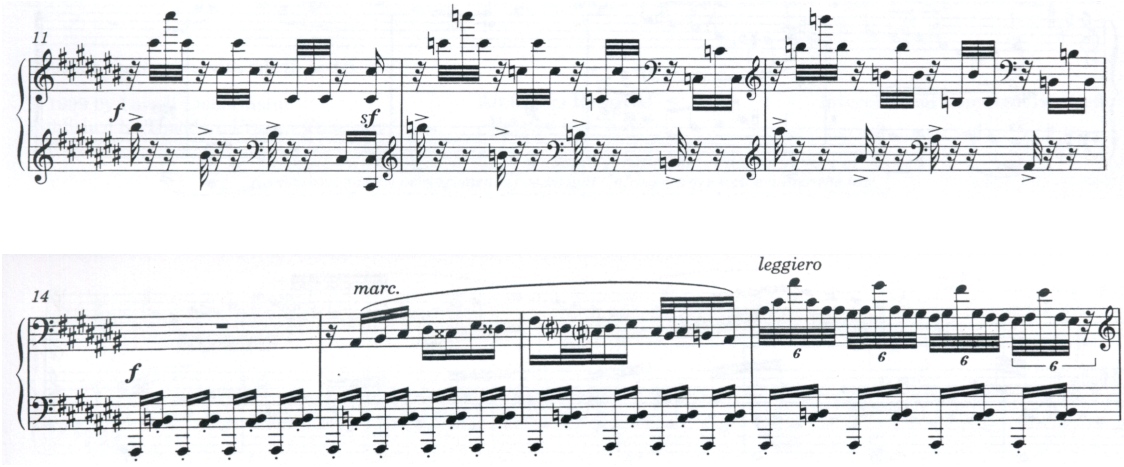
Two diatonic patterns clash contrapuntally during the opening. The *C♯* tonal center is confirmed with both the opening right-hand scalar sequence and the left-hand pattern. The left hand finishes the phrase with a descending harmonic major scale (Example 3, m. 2).[77] The scalar idea continues with a chromatic scale cleverly set with the right hand playing a pentatonic scale on the black keys and the left playing a *C* major scale (m. 5).

During the transition to the middle section (Example 4, m. 11), the broken octave motive from the opening morphs into a monophonic modulation[78]

[77] "Harmonic major scale" is a common term used in jazz theory for an Ionian scale with a flattened sixth.

that works as an efficient transition between sections and as a close to the movement. The minor second found between the hands (m. 11) then transforms into the dyad of the accompaniment pattern in the B section (m. 14).

Example 4 *Sonata No. 1, Op. 1*, Second movement, Transition and B section mm. 11-17



During the B section, the *marcato* melody (Example 4, m. 15) manipulates chromatic tones over a pedal-point ostinato (m. 14). The first phrase finishes with a downward *leggiero* sextuplet sequence (m. 17), momentarily clashing with the ostinato of the accompaniment. This figure, reminiscent of the scalar sequence in the opening, is another example of Liebermann's manipulation of motivic cells. The A section returns with two concise phrases

[78] "Monophonic modulation" is a common term for a modulation in which the key changes by introducing accidentals to an unaccompanied melody.

followed by the previous monophonic modulation material in the coda, ending with a dramatic glissando.

Quick passagework throughout the movement requires agility. A variety of piano techniques include broken octaves, rapid arpeggio-based patterns, glissandi, and quick position changes. The scalar passages consist of rapid broken octaves and cross-rhythms. Small repetitive cells in different groupings move quickly around the keyboard.

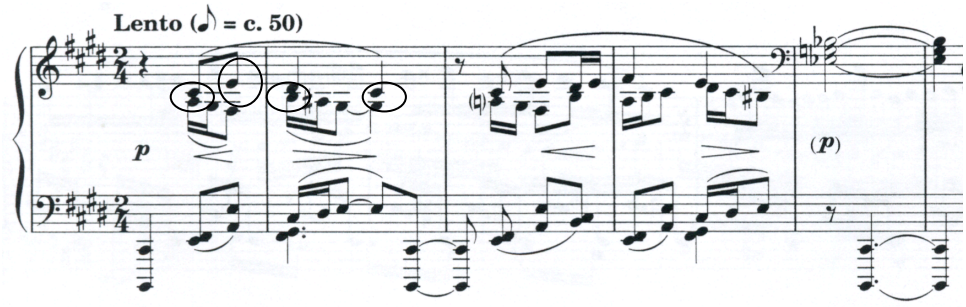
Third Movement
Lento (♪= c. 50)
45 measures
c. 3:31 duration

The monothematic third movement contrasts with previous movements in both texture and character. Liebermann fuses ternary and variation form (Chart 4) where the B section is a resetting of the melody from the A section. The initial four-note motive (C#-E-D#-C#) is expanded and repeated both in a homophonic texture in the A section (Example 5, m. 1) and over a stationary accompaniment pattern in the B section (Example 6, m. 17).

Chart 4. *Sonata No. 1, Op. 1,* Third movement. Ternary analysis

Measure	Ternary Analysis
1-14	A
15-31	B
32-45	A’

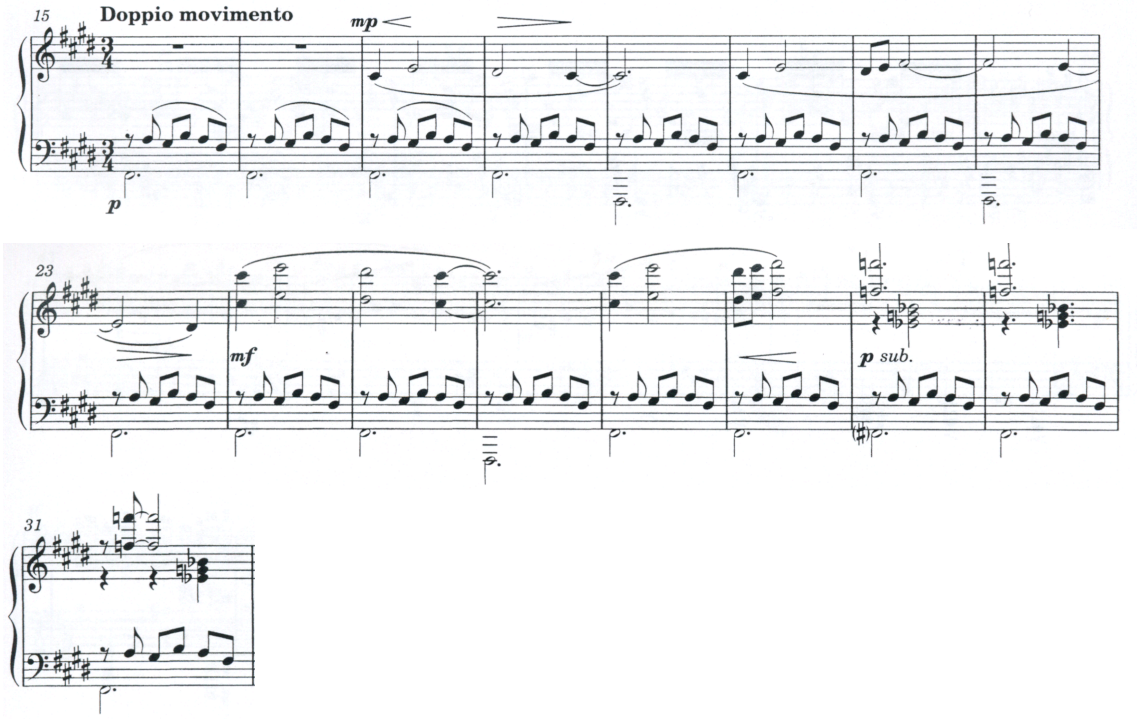
Example 5 *Sonata No. 1, Op. 1*, Third movement, A section four-note motive, mm. 1-5



In the A section, an unexpected *E♭* major chord creates suspense at phrase cadence points. This dramatic harmony (Example 5, m. 5) appears out of place within the strong *C♯* tonal center, but the alto voice leads to the top voice in the triad and the same bass ninth of the opening confirms a stable pedal tone. The stagnant layers cause the momentum to slow each time.

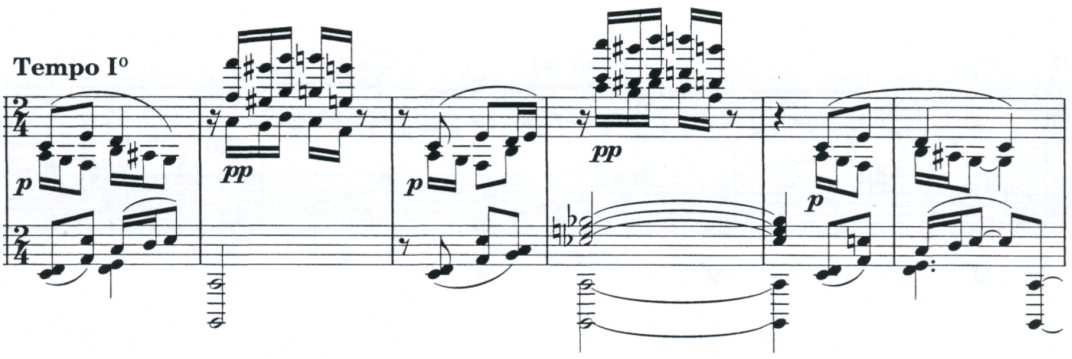
The B section (m. 15) is slightly louder, perhaps to counteract its sparse texture. Its second phrase intensifies (Example 6, m. 24) with an added octave and increased dynamic, but the serene melody quickly abates with a *subito piano* (m. 29). During the transition back to the A section, the *E♭* triad returns, still with the stable accompaniment and a clash of the *F* bass pedal and *F♯* bell tone (mm. 29-31).

Example 6 *Sonata No. 1, Op. 1*, Third movement, B Section, mm. 15-31



During the repeat of the A section (Example 7, m. 32), the tenor voice from the accompaniment of the B section (Example 6, m. 15) transforms into the octaves that are inserted between phrases in the upper voice (Example 7, m. 33). The same figure closes the movement, resulting in a Picardy third.

Example 7 *Sonata No. 1, Op. 1*, Third movement, repeated A section, mm. 32-37



Pianistically, the third movement offers a variety of musical and technical challenges for the performer. He must project tranquil character with the fusion of silence, sensitive voicing, and phrasing. The simplicity of the texture masks the difficulty of the counterpoint, which includes important tied notes and delayed pitches. With each new layer and octave placement shift the performer must produce different colors based on dynamics, register, and harmony. During the rest leading into the B section (m. 15), the sostenuto pedal can be used, allowing the pedal point *F♯* to be sustained.

Fourth Movement

Presto strepitoso (♩= c. 160)
95 measures
c. 1:45 duration

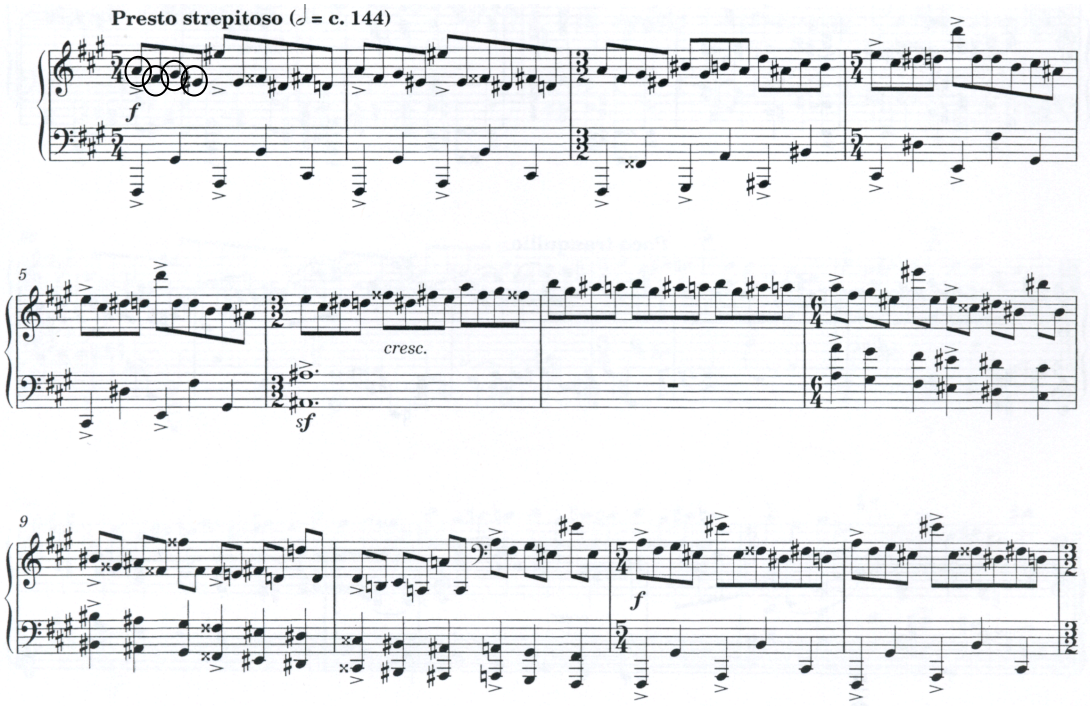
The finger work of the fourth movement weaves through many phrases, fusing together the rapid right hand with the leaping left hand. This movement can be loosely defined as ABA combined with elements of rondo (Chart 5), because the A motive is found as both running eighths (m. 1) and dyads (m. 29).

Chart 5. *Sonata No. 1, Op. 1,* Fourth movement. Comparison of ABA and Rondo forms

Measure	ABA Form	Rondo Form
1-7	A	a
8-10		b
11-15		a
16-28		c
29-36		d
37-43	B	e
44-50		e
51-58		e
59-65	A	a
66-68		b
69-73		a
74-82		c
83-88		d
89-95	Coda	Coda

An illustration of Liebermann's complex motivic development is the broken-thirds cell found in the first four notes of the right hand (Example 8, m. 1). The motive passes through harmonic changes before ascending to a restatement of the first phrase (m. 8). During the second main section (Example 9, m. 29), the right hand is the same as the opening, but the perpetual motion is briefly halted with dyads in lieu of eighth notes.

Example 8 *Sonata No. 1, Op. 1*, Fourth movement, A section, mm. 1-12

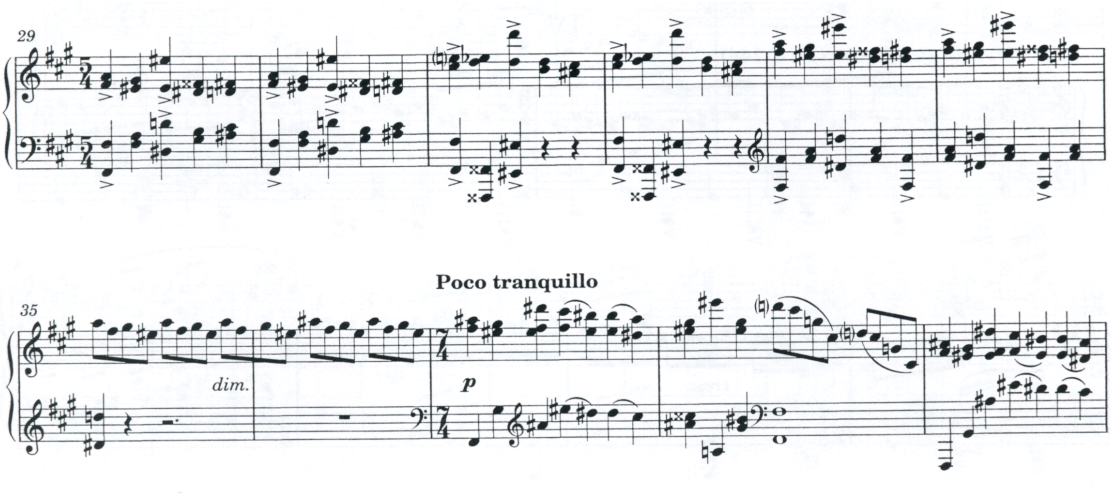


Through a mixture of percussive and lyric elements, representing different characters, Liebermann explores metric complexities (Example 8, m. 1). Although the opening is notated as a 2+3 subdivision, one may think of it as a 2+1+2 because of the two four-note cells. The *presto strepitoso* forces the ear away from the latter division, however.

The monophonic texture is continued in the B section (Example 9, m. 37), but the previous driving energy is calmed through the *piano* dynamic, the *poco tranquillo* mood, and the change of articulation. For the first time in this movement, the articulation shifts to slurs while eighth-note figures decorate the

end of each phrase (m. 38). The changing irregular meters bring a feeling of both calm and instability. After the return of the A section, the coda ends with a chromatic canon between the hands (m. 91).

Example 9 *Sonata No. 1, Op. 1*, Fourth movement, transition into B section, mm. 29-39



The technical requirements are in accordance with the lively tempo and energetic rhythm. The performer must combine an innate sense of rhythmic vitality with attention to clear articulation, abrupt register leaps, fast passagework and figurations, and a discriminating use of pedal. Overall energy, confidence, and a powerful tone will give an expressive nuance to this virtuosic movement.

CHAPTER FOUR

SONATA NO. 2, OP. 10

Liebermann's Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*,* "Sonata Notturna," (1983) was composed before all of the eleven Nocturnes. The dedicatee Stephen Hough premiered the work on July 7, 1983 at the Wavendon Music Festival in the U.K. The sonata won honorable mention in 1985 at the National Composition Contest of the Music Teachers National Association. The score is available through Theodore Presser Company.

COMPOSITIONAL INFLUENCE

Liebermann wrote this sonata while studying composition with David Diamond (1915-2005). He began his studies with Diamond at SUNY-Stony Brook for one year after graduating high school early.[79] After Diamond was appointed to the faculty of Juilliard, Liebermann transferred there the next year, where he was the only composition student of the 1979 freshman class.[80] He continued his studies with Diamond for his Bachelors (1983) and Masters (1985) degrees, and it was during this time he wrote his second piano sonata.

[79] Diamond is the dedicatee of Liebermann's *Symphony No. 1, Op. 9 (1982).*

[80] Brian James Winegardner, "A Performer's Guide to Concertos for Trumpet and Orchestra by Lowell Liebermann and John Williams" (Doctoral essay, University of Miami, 2011), 33.

Although Diamond does not come from a musical family, his mother had a great love for the arts, especially opera and theater. The family could not afford instruments or lessons for young David, so at the age of seven he borrowed a violin and taught himself. By ten, he was composing melodies. At fifteen, he entered the Eastman School of Music, where he spent time composing and studying scores rather than doing his schoolwork. At the age of sixteen, his ambitious attitude towards composition led him to write his *Symphony in One Movement* for a student composition concert. After only a year at Eastman, he attended the New Music School and studied with Roger Sessions and then the Dalcroze Institute, where he studied with Paul Boepple.

In 1936 Diamond traveled to Paris to complete an important commission from poet E. E. Cummings. He began composition lessons with Nadia Boulanger, during which he composed Psalm for Orchestra and Concerto for String Quartet, among other works. During this time, he was influenced by Igor Stravinsky's perspective on form. Stravinsky is quoted as saying, "In an ill-proportioned work you can often find out what's wrong by timing with a stop-watch. Your weak spots are in the shorter sections."[81] Diamond met with him, and played a piano version of his recently composed Psalm with Boulanger joining him at the keyboard. One passage was questioned by Stravinsky, which impressed Diamond, who had questioned it as well.

[81] Louise Goss, *Modern Music Makers,* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1970), 451.

When World War II started, Diamond was forced to return to America. In the USA he was almost unknown, which was a reversal from his Paris days where he was considered one of the most gifted of the younger American composers. He also lost most of his means of support and worked as a clerk at a soda counter in a drugstore. Slowly he was able to earn awards, including the Prix de Rome (1942) and the Paderewski Prize (1943), gaining patrons' support while he worked on commissions.

After traveling between the U.S. and Europe several times, Diamond returned to America at the age of fifty on a more permanent basis. Following a temporary position at the Manhattan School of Music (1966-67) he held several composer-in-residence positions (at the University of Colorado-Boulder and SUNY-Potsdam) before being appointed Professor of Composition at Juilliard (1973-1986).

Although Diamond's orchestral music is more known, he wrote several large works for piano, including two sonatas, two sonatinas, and a concerto for two pianos. His published piano works include 8 Pieces for Children, Concerto for Two Pianos, The Tomb of Melville, Album for the Young, A Private World, Then and Now, three volumes of Alone at the Piano, Gambit, and Prelude, Fantasy, and Fugue.

Mary Wallace Davidson summarizes Diamond's compositional style thus:

> Many of his works employ tonal or modal languages that admit enharmonic relationships. His early compositions are typically founded on wide dispositions of triads, an attribute that has led some to characterize his music as distinctly American. From 1951, his output is marked by increasing chromaticism, but not necessarily increasing dissonance, as chromatic elements are used to embellish long melodic lines and to intensify expressive gestures. Classical form and procedures (i.e. sonata structures, concerto textures, variation forms, canonical and fugal entrances, stretto, etc.) are common, as is disciplined contrapuntal writing. He provided varied repetition, or at least a semblance of order, where necessary to aid comprehension. His music is always marked by a strong rhythmic drive and a frequent use of displaced rhythmic patterns. Rich sonic palettes are often created using spare means. His meticulous craftsmanship and his musical sensibility have assured his position as a twentieth century Romantic classicist.[82]

Moving from Schonthal's influences that shaped the first sonata into Diamond's influence, Liebermann more fully developed his use of classical forms and contrapuntal textures. Although Schonthal stressed contrapuntal lines in her compositional style, it was with Diamond that Liebermann learned disciplined contrapuntal writing. His contrapuntal writing matures in his later works, which are augmented with complex harmonies and intricate rhythms.

ANALYSIS OF SONATA NO. 2, OP. 10

In contrast with the first and third sonatas, the Sonata No. 2, Op. 10, has ethereal and meditative qualities. Liebermann's subtitle "Sonata Notturna" is a clue to its reflective, not virtuosic, nature. Mark Lehman considers the second

[82] Mary Wallace Davidson, "David Diamond", *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* accessed May 18, 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/07718?q=david+diamond&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit

sonata "one long, slow, somber movement that interweaves singing melodic strands obsessively derived from a poignant dropping semitone."[83]

> Along with the lean, modern-sounding sections, there are passages which have a more expansive texture…it marks a departure from the strict Modernism of many contemporary works. These sections are clearly tonal, in spite of occasional sharp dissonances, and they have a certain Impressionistic quality, a characteristic which becomes more pronounced in later works. Thus, this work is part of the "transitional" stage of Liebermann's development, and, not surprisingly, it contains a mixture of style elements.[84]

Each line interacts jointly within the melodic cells and harmonic content as the sonata progresses. For example, the opening phrase contains one long melodic line that Liebermann manipulates throughout each section of the sonata (Example 10, m. 1-9).

Liebermann merges lyricism from the nocturne with the structure of the sonata. The large-scale structural divisions are easily discerned by the listener, but the overall relationship of one section to another is not immediately clear (Chart 6). Liebermann clarifies the modified sonata form thus:

> The "Sonata Notturna" is in one movement in what could be seen as a modified sonata-allegro form—having, however, two expositions, the second an ornamented, elaborated version of the first, a sort of "developmental exposition." As a result of this the actual development and recapitulation are rather short.[85]

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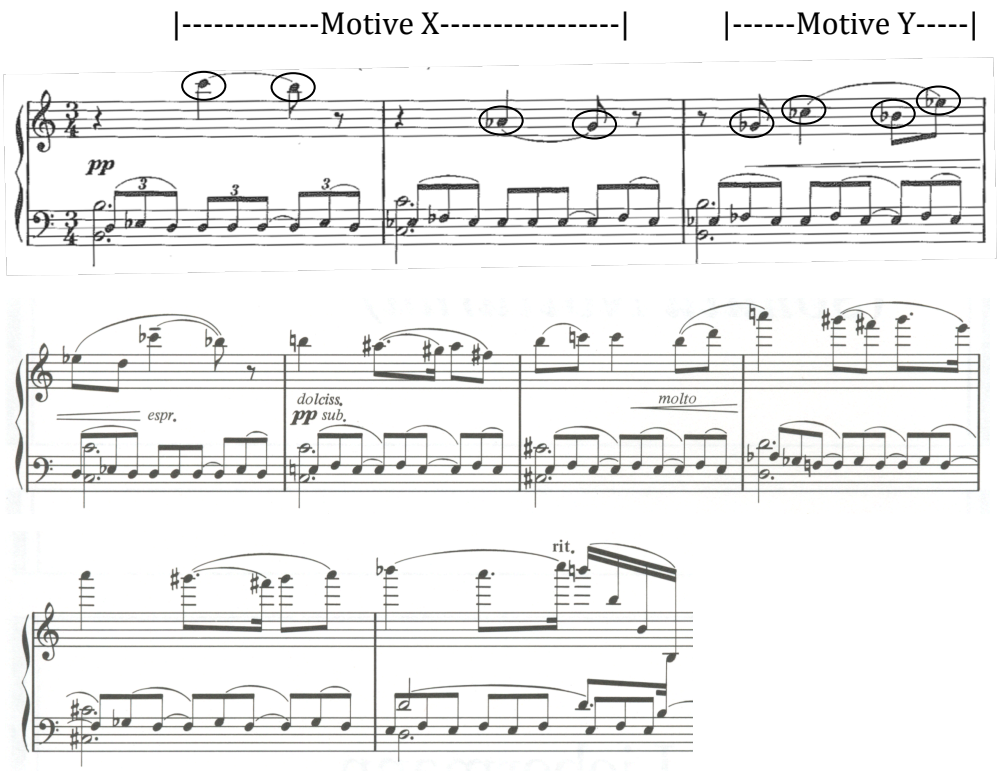
[83] Mark Lehman, "Guide to Records," *American Record Guide* 58(4) (July/August 1995): 186.

[84] Nichols, 28-29.

[85] Ibid.

Example 10 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*, A Theme with Motives X and Y, mm. 1-9[86]



Liebermann articulates the details of the tonality within the sonata. As he says, "the work is concerned with the conflict between the tonal centers of *B* and *C,* an obsessive half-step relationship which arise from this conflict."[87] This minor second motive can be found in both harmonic and melodic contexts. Harmonically, the opening phrase begins in *C* and ends in *B* (Example 10, m. 1-

[86] Used with permission. See Appendix A. © 1983 by Theodore Presser Co., Bryn Mawr, Pa.

[87] Lowell Liebermann, *Piano Music by Lowell Liebermann,* David Korevaar, Piano (Musical Heritage Society, MHS 512647Y, 1990).

9). Melodically, the half-step is found both in the first two notes of the right hand and the first two octaves of the left (m. 1-2).

Chart 6. *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10,* Modified sonata form analysis

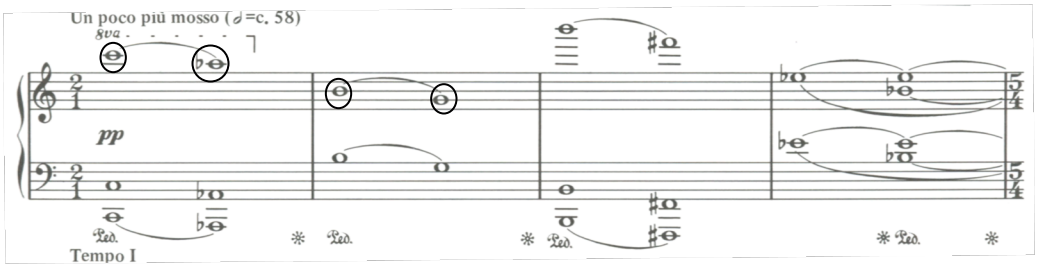
Measure	Sonata Form
	Exposition I
1-9	A
10-19	A'
20-23	Transition
24-31	B
32-39	A'
40-66	C (Invention)
67-91	D
	Exposition II
92-100	A
101-108	A'
109-116	B'
117-124	A'
125-151	C' (Invention)
152-167	D'
168-210	*Development*
	Recapitulation
211-219	A
220-229	A'
230-243	Transition
244-254	*Coda*

Exposition I
Lento e tranquillo con molto rubato (♩= c. 44)
91 measures
c. 4:53 duration

Liebermann uses motives to generate development and varied textures.[88] During the opening, the nine-measure melody (Example 10) in the right hand breaks down into several extensively developed motives. The melody is split into two phrases (m. 1-4; 5-9), but it is the first that is more significantly expanded. It contains both Motive X (m. 1-2, two half steps separated by a minor third) and Motive Y (m. 3, two fourths separated by a half step). Motive Z is a reordering of Motive X, and is stated in simple whole notes during the Transition (Example 11, m. 20-21).[89]

Example 11 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10,* Transition with Motive Z, mm. 20-23

|----------Motive Z----------|



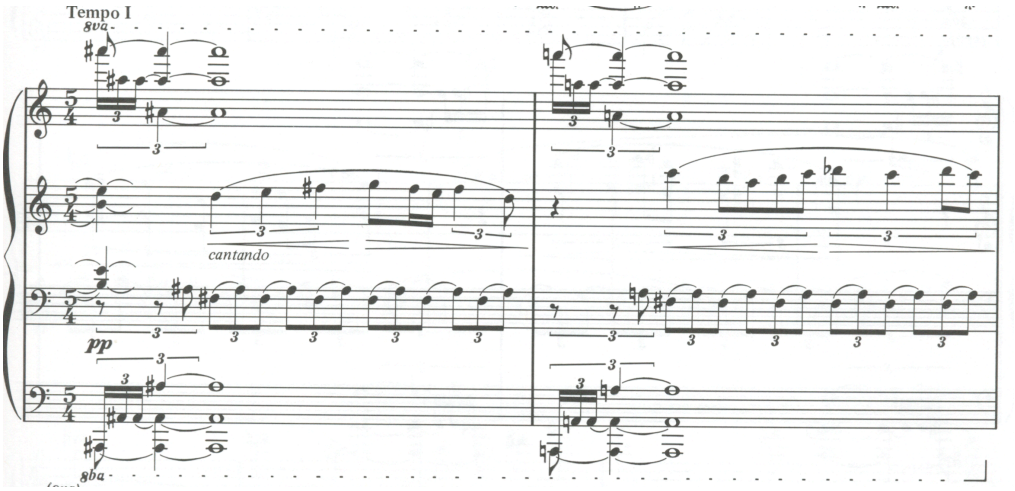
Underneath the right hand melody of the opening are two ostinati: a languid triplet accompaniment and sustained bass octaves. The three-voice

[88] Nichols, 37.

[89] Ibid, 29.

texture gives way to a four-voice texture in the *pianissimo* B section (Example 12, m. 24). Found in the soprano and bass voices, Motive X is transposed and spread vertically over the entire keyboard. A new alto melody, loosely based on the second phrase of the A section (m. 5) is superimposed over a tenor ostinato (complicated with duplet slurs negating the written triplet).

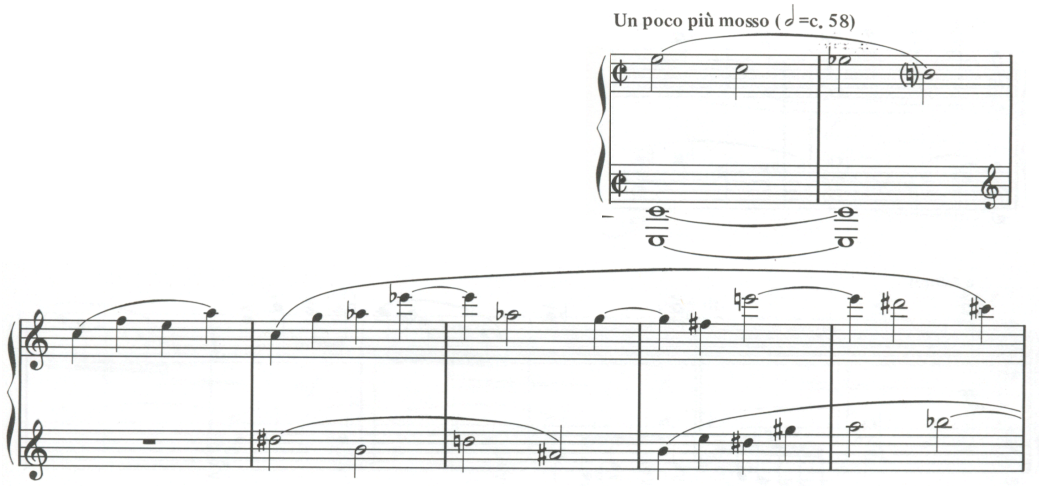
Example 12 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*, B section, mm. 24-25



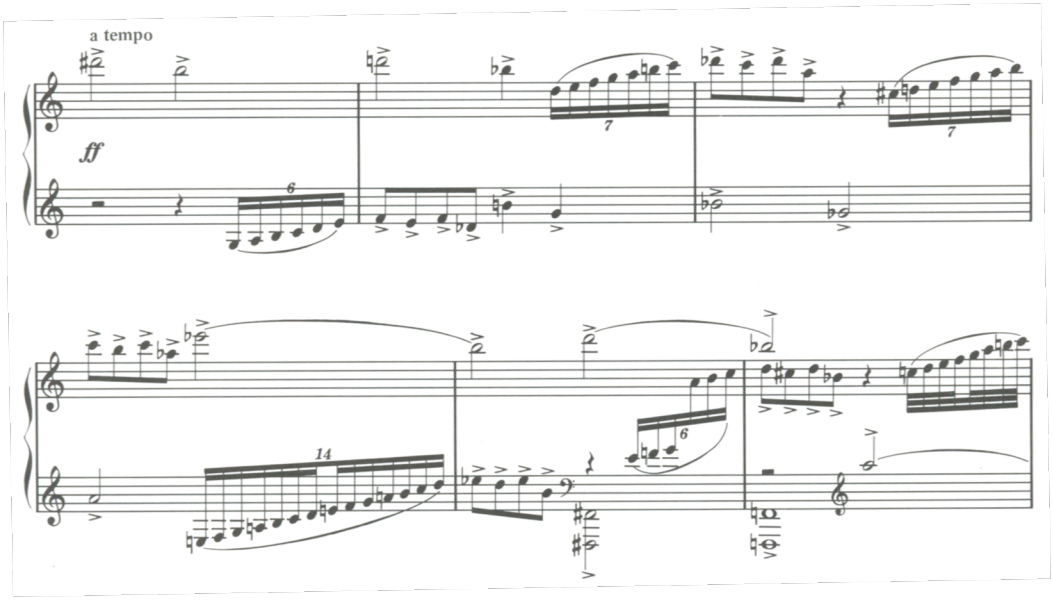
The two-voice invention (Example 13, m. 40) is a welcome reprieve from the complex layering. Although not an organized fugue (as in the first sonata), it is split into two sections, the second (Example 14, m. 67) in dramatic contrast with the subdued style of the first. Both sections include two statements of the subject, which is based on Motive Z. Each voice interacts in canon with the other, occasionally breaking into free material. During the second section, in both voices, Liebermann ornaments the accented fragments of Motive Z with

rapid ascending scales. A third voice (m. 71) further augments the texture before a gradual descent into the second exposition.

Example 13 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*, Exposition I Invention Part 1, mm. 40-46



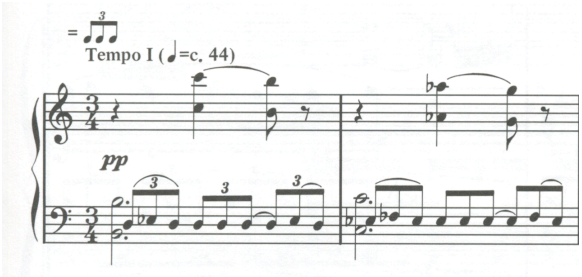
Example 14 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*, Exposition I Invention Part 2, mm. 67-72



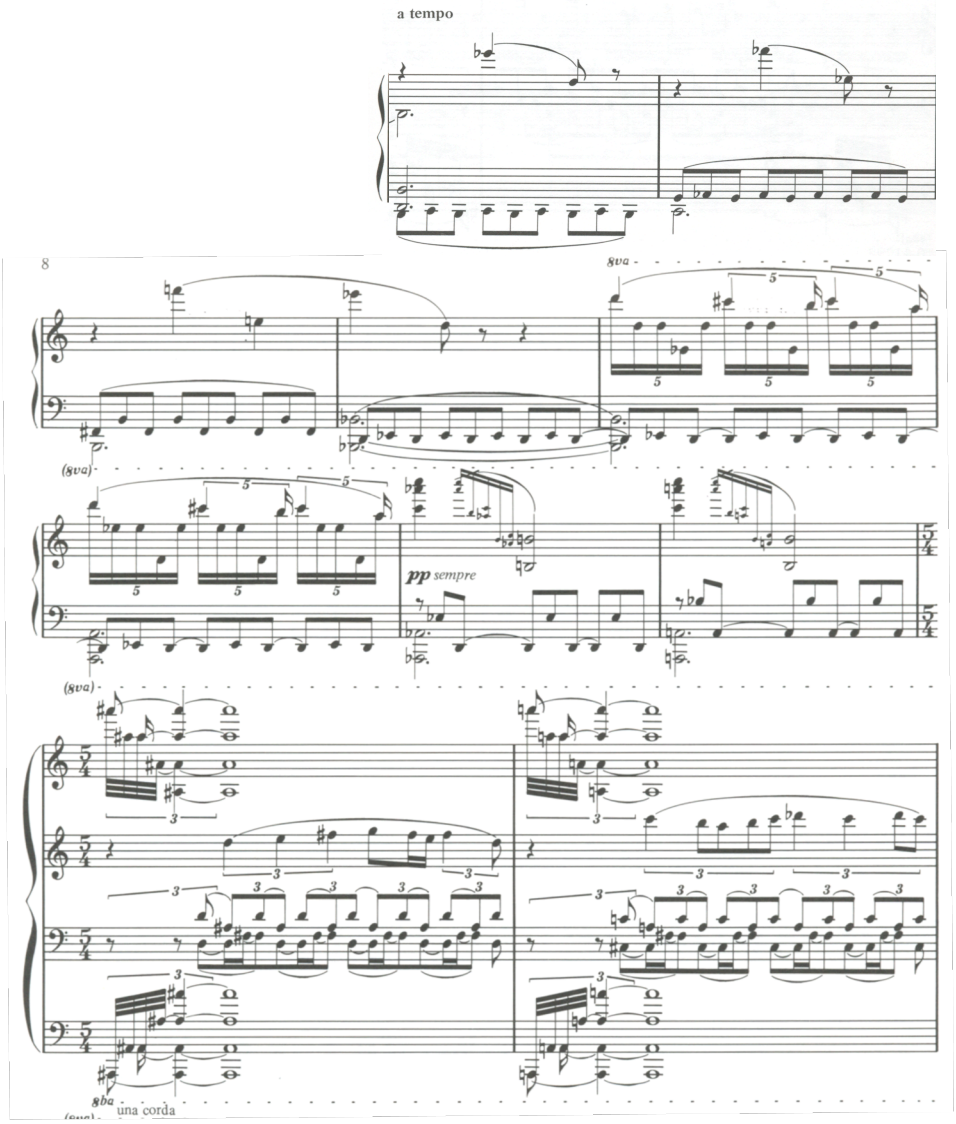
Exposition II
Tempo I (♩= c. 44)
76 measures
c. 4:06 duration

Although the two expositions are similar, striking differences in texture occur during each instance of the A Theme. At the outset of Exposition II, the first A Theme (Example 15, m. 92) includes an added octave while the second A Theme (Example 16, m. 101) finds the right hand Motive X a third higher, shifting to a more active septuplet in the next phrase (m. 105). During the final A Theme before the invention (Example 17, m. 117), the previous triplet ostinato (m. 1) is replaced by the *murmurando* quintuplets in the bass voice (m. 117).

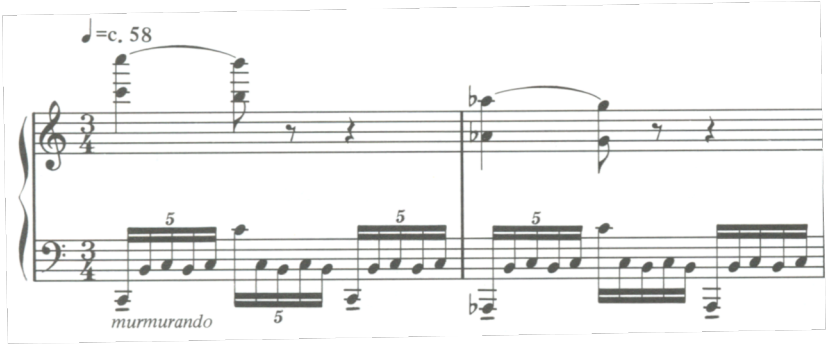
Example 15 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*, Exposition II A Theme, mm. 92-93



Example 16 Sonata No. 2, Op. 10, Exposition II A' theme, mm. 101-110

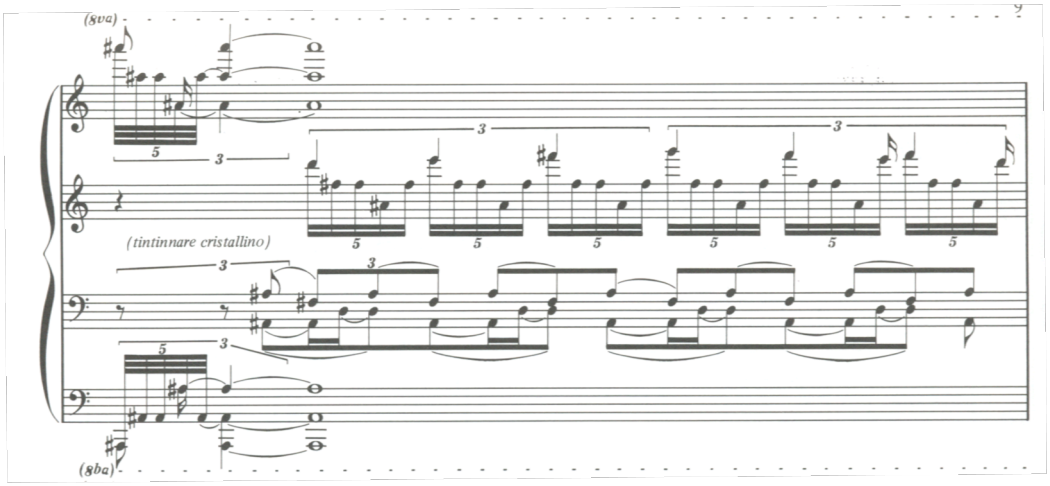


Example 17 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*, Exposition II A' theme, mm. 117-118



The original intricate texture of the *pianissimo* B section (Example 16, m. 109) is here compounded with an added fifth voice, which aligns rhythmically with the tenor voice. The broken octave figures from the previous section (m. 107) transition seamlessly into the ornamentation of the soprano and bass voices (m. 109) while the original alto voice remains initially unchanged, later fusing with quintuplet broken chords (Example 18, m. 113).

Example 18 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*, Exposition II B Theme, mm. 113



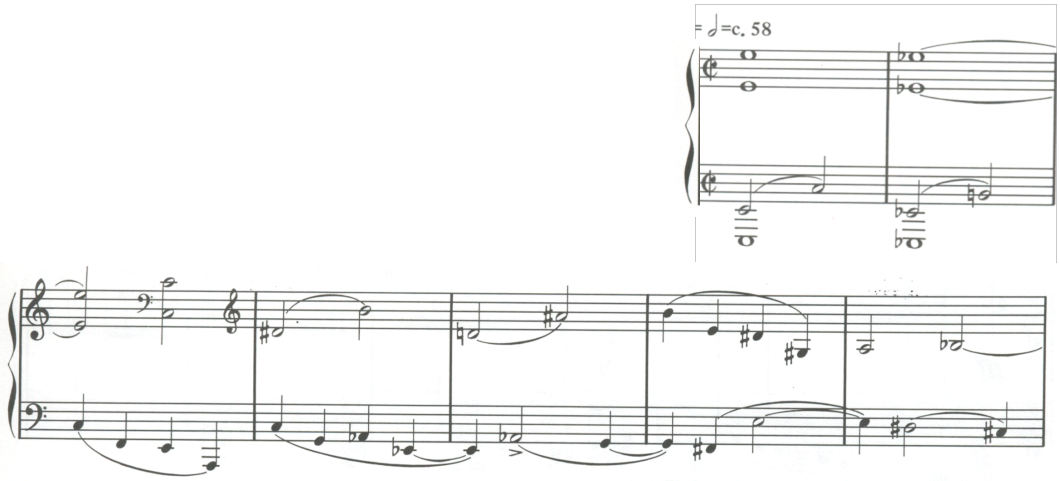
Of the invention of the second exposition (Example 19, m. 125) Korevaar writes,

> an interesting "aural illusion" occurs: what sounds like an inversion of the fugue is merely a repetition with octave displacement, the subject and counter-subject being so constructed that proper displacement of one becomes the inversion of the other.[90]

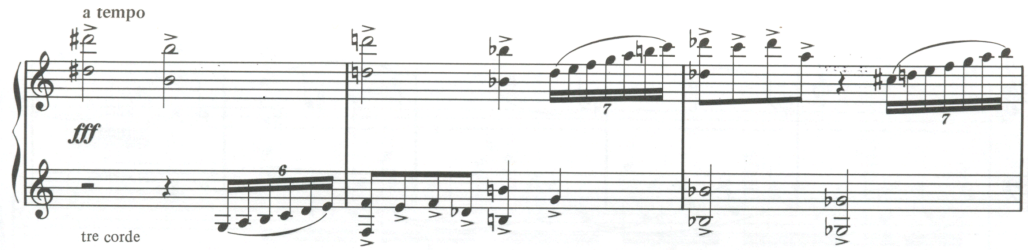
[90] Piano Music by Lowell Liebermann David Korevaar, Piano.

Except for added octaves, Theme D (Example 20, m. 152) begins the same as before, only now a *subito pianissimo* (Example 21, m. 159) stops the forward drive to prepare for the development.

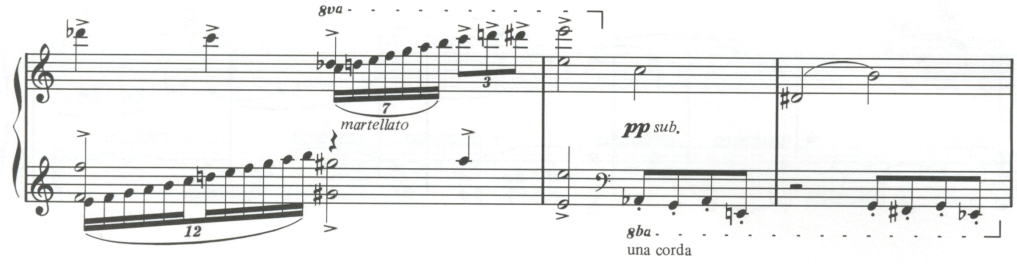
Example 19 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*, Exposition II Invention Part 1, mm. 125-131



Example 20 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*, Exposition II Invention Part 2, mm. 152-154



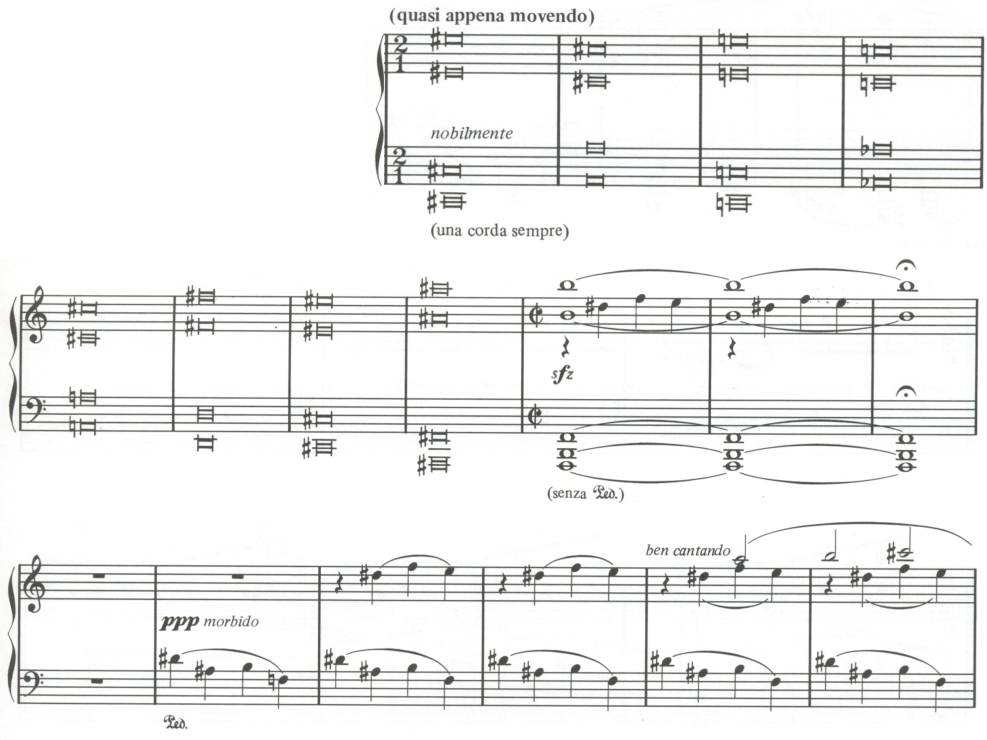
Example 21 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*, Exposition II D' section, mm. 158-160



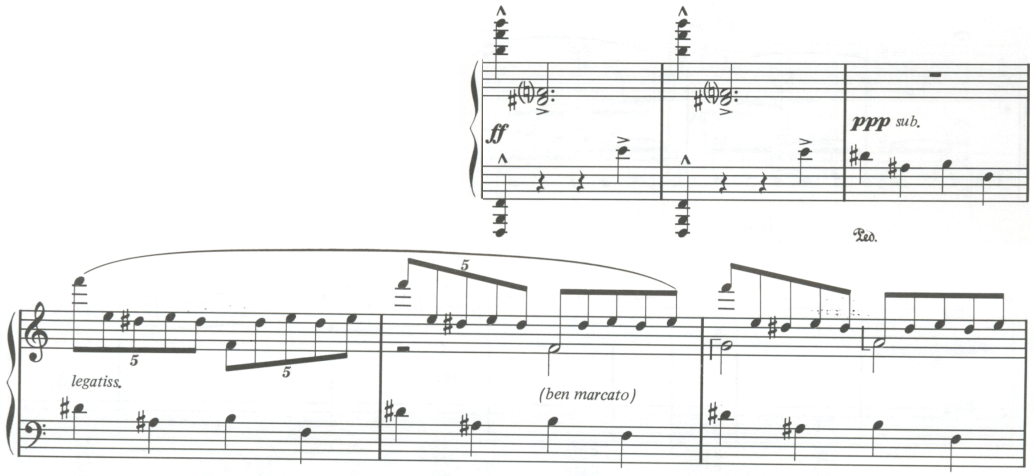
Development
(quasi appena movendo)
43 measures
c. 1:40 duration

Split into three small sections (m. 168, 180, 199), the development alternates between three-voiced and homophonic textures using motives from Exposition I. The first section is a homophonic prelude in double whole notes that creates a refined sound within the sparse texture (Example 22, m. 168). After a notated pause (m. 179), two ostinato voices murmur underneath a soaring A-Theme melody. Martellato tritone chords break the *morbido* mood (Example 23, m. 197), signaling the final section of the development.

Example 22 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*, Development, mm. 168-184



Example 23 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*, Development, mm. 197-202

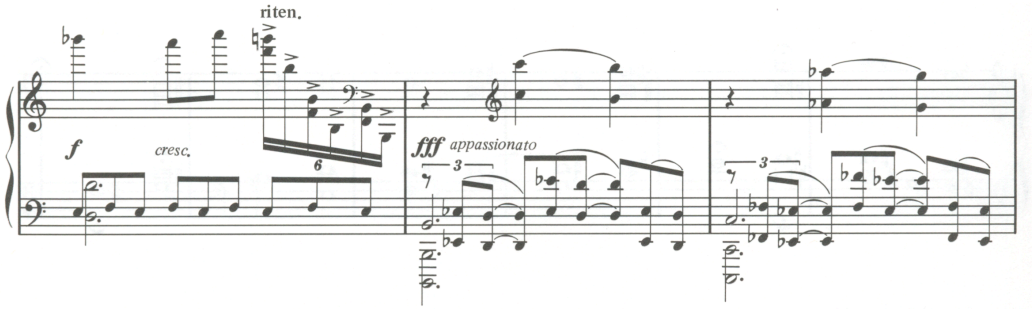


The earlier left-hand ostinato intermingles with a measured quintuplet trill figure in the right hand (Example 23, m. 199). Suddenly, the tritone chords return almost exactly (m. 208), now melded with Motive X, from the opening measures of the sonata, leading into the recapitulation.

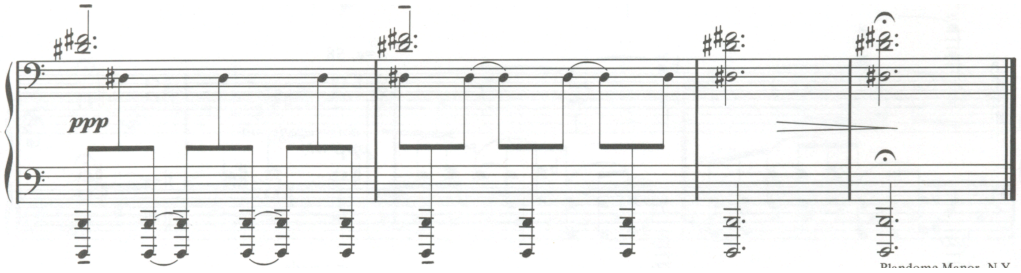
Recapitulation
Tempo I (♩= c. 44)
44 measures
c. 3:20 duration

The lengthy double exposition and development are settled both with a concise recapitulation and a re-established tonality. The harmonic clash between *B* and *C* is still present during the two complete A Themes (Example 24, m. 220 and m. 211) and an extended transition (m. 230); but *B* major is stabilized during the final four measures of the coda (Example 25, m. 251).

Example 24 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*, Recapitulation A Theme, mm. 219-221

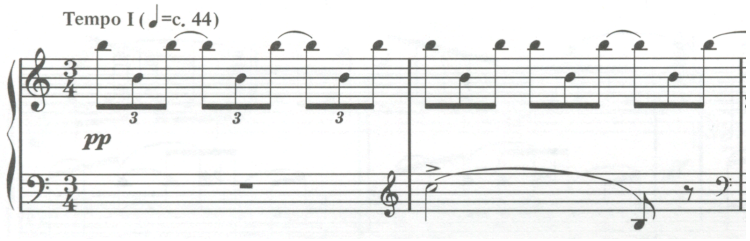


Example 25 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*, Coda, mm. 251-254



Varied textures enrich this brief recapitulation. The second A Theme (Example 24, m. 220) is reinforced with an *appassionato* mood shift and *fortissimo* octaves in both hands. An added transition to the coda, rhythmically similar to the first (Example 11, m. 20), employs fermati and whole notes in four dissonant phrases. At the beginning of the coda (Example 26, m. 244) constant *pianissimo* triplets settle on the final *B* Major tonality.

Example 26 *Sonata No. 2, Op. 10*, Coda, mm. 244-245



Pianistic Considerations

Throughout the sonata, the introspective nocturne style intermingles with haunting motives and returning ostinati. Liebermann's brilliant keyboard writing is exemplified at the climax of the piece (Example 14, m. 67, 152) where two simple lines turn rapidly into ascending scales fused with octaves in both hands. Sometimes played with a single hand, the continuous oscillating accompaniment pattern bends with the melody, spanning the interval of a ninth.

With the natural decay of the piano tone, the slow tempo sometimes is a challenge, but the ostinatos create an illusion of sustained lines. The damper and una corda pedals are often employed to meld the individual lines, creating an impressionistic effect. Because Liebermann explores the whole keyboard, the performer must maintain control throughout the sophisticated textures of the *sempre pianissimo* sections.

CHAPTER FIVE

LIEBERMANN'S SONATA NO. 3, OP. 82

After a nearly twenty-year hiatus, Liebermann wrote his longest piano solo work to date, the Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 82 (2002). It was commissioned by the American Pianists Association for James Giles, who premiered the work on April 11, 2003 at the Indiana Historical Society in Indianapolis, IN. "Its scale is breathtaking, its drama evocative and its lasting place in the repertoire imperishable."[91] The score is available through Theodore Presser Company.

BACKGROUND OF THE THIRD PIANO SONATA

It is likely that Liebermann was influenced by the events of September 11, 2001, when suicide bombers hijacked four planes, two crashing into the World Trade Center in New York City, one into the Pentagon, and one in a field in Pennsylvania, killing a total of 2,996 people. Published one year later, the sonata includes a *Dona Nobis Pacem* and Lullabye in the middle movement, giving the listener a sense of eternal peace amidst the angst of the outer movements.

> Most striking is the sublime middle section, more improvisatory than the fiery outer sections, with music that is alternately lyrical and barbarous…It reminded me in no small way of twin towers rising

[91] Music Web UK, "Lowell Liebermann Premiere" http://www.musicweb-international.com/SandH/2003/Feb03/Lieberman164.htm (accessed November 10, 2014).

inexorably only for them to collapse under the weight of the victorious bass line chords.[92]

ANALYSIS OF SONATA NO. 3, OP. 82

Although the sonata is sectional and often interrupted with pauses, the formal outlines are clear. The form, while not always derived from traditional structures, nevertheless reveals a sense of clarity and directness inherent to Liebermann's style. Although the composer conceived the sonata as one connective whole, for ease of analysis the author will follow the lead of James Giles, who identifies the sonata's three sections as movements in the notes to his recording.[93] However, the location of one movement break will be defined slightly differently (Chart 7). The break between the last two movements is more clearly defined before the Interlude than after it. This will be discussed in depth further in the analysis.

[92] Ibid.

[93] James Giles, *American Virtuoso*. Albany Records TROY860. 2006.

Chart 7. *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82.* Three-movement form

Movement	Tempo	Measures
First	Inquieto, esitante	1-9
	Con tutta forza	10-133
Second	Adagio con molto rubato	134-142
	Dona Nobis Pacem	143-163
	Lullabye	164-213
Third	Interlude	214-261
	Allegro	262-356

The third sonata combines lyrical brilliance and formidable virtuosity. "Fundamental to the work is an ambiguity of texture and a cerebral pointedness, which is uniquely Liebermann's."[94] Liebermann combines a dense harmonic structure with recurring intervallic, rhythmic, and textural ideas to achieve both motivic continuity and structural clarity. His mature compositional style further develops with more complex transformations of motivic material. A combination of energetic rhythmic patterns and widely varied textures add complexity while remaining straightforward for the listener.

Liebermann composes his works as completely planned-out progressions, developing and transforming motives and themes from one

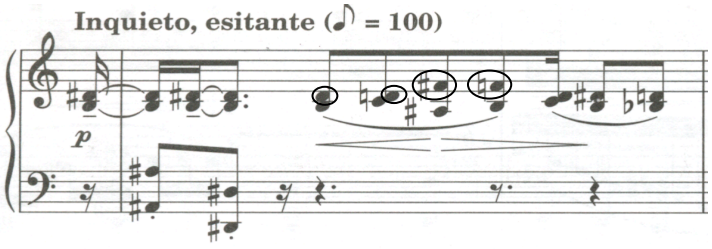
[94] Music Web UK, "Lowell Liebermann Premiere" http://www.musicweb-international.com/SandH/2003/Feb03/Lieberman164.htm (accessed November 10, 2014).

movement to another.[95] In this way, his compositional style in this sonata is strikingly similar to that of his second piano concerto, written 10 years earlier.

> A semitone cell provide[s] the springboard for every melodic idea in the piece; and the ambiguity of major/minor thirds which contributes to the melodic fabric provides the harmonic substance for the work[96]

The most telling example of Liebermann's motivic development in this sonata is the transformation of a chromatic four-note Motive X (Chart 8), which contains two half steps separated by a major third (Example 27, m. 1). Its energetic transformation in the *con tutta forza* section sets the stage for the rest of the first movement and indeed, the whole sonata (Example 28, m. 10).

Example 27 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, Motive X, m. 1[97]



[95] Brian James Winegardner, "A Performers' Guide to Concertos for Trumpet and Orchestra by Lowell Liebermann and John Williams." (DMA diss., University of Miami), 39.

[96] Stephen Hough, *Lowell Liebermann Piano Concertos.* Linear Notes. Hyperion. 1997.

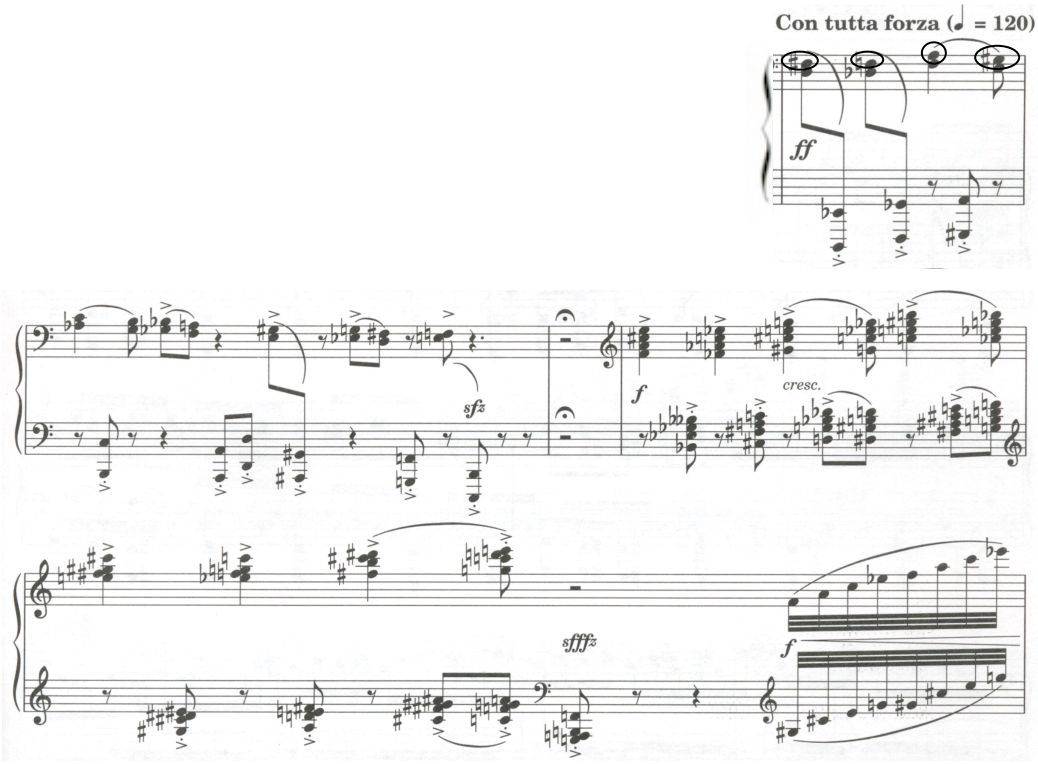
[97] Used with permission. See Appendix A. © 2007 by Lowell Liebermann. Published by Theodore Presser Co., King of Prussia, PA.

Chart 8. *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82,* First-movement themes

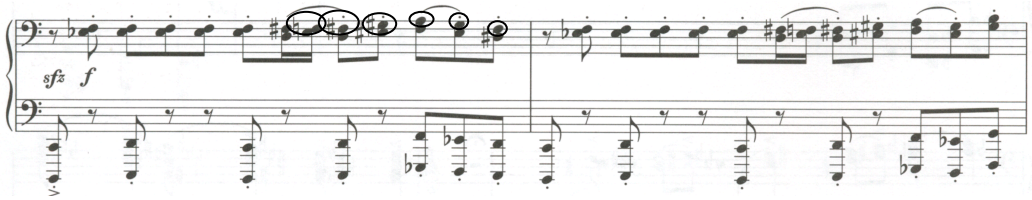
Introduction (*Inquieto, esitante*)	Motive X	m. 1-8
Exposition (*Con tutta forza*)	Theme A Theme A2 Theme B	m. 10-14 m. 21-39 m. 40-64
Development (*Poco piu mosso)*	Theme A2 Theme A Theme A2 Theme A Theme A2 Theme A	m. 65-68 m. 69-74 m. 75-78 m. 79-88 m. 89-111 m. 112-118
Recapitulation	Theme A2	m. 119-128
Codetta	Closing Theme	m. 129-133

The main body of the movement begins with the *con tutta forza* where Motive X appears three times during complex (unmarked) meters with mixed articulations. Theme A is first found in the right hand combined with ninths in the left hand (circled in Example 28, m. 10-14). After a fermata measure (m. 12), Theme A in the soprano voice is mixed with chromatic and tertian blocked chords. A new theme, Theme A2 (Example 29, m. 21-22) begins with repeated notes taken from measure 1. Theme A2 is reconfigured with passing notes in the middle of the measure and finished with a three-note scale.

Example 28 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, First movement, Theme A, mm. 10-14



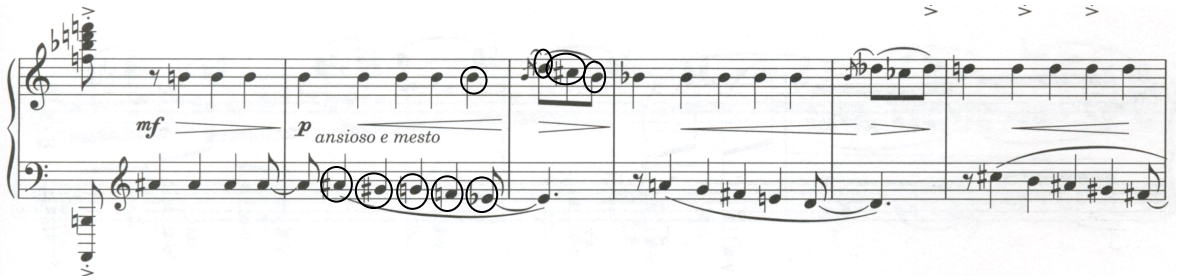
Example 29 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, First movement, Theme A2, mm. 21-22



Theme B (Example 30, m. 40-45), *ansioso e mesto* ("anxious and sad"), provides a strong contrast to the energetic A material. Derived from A2, extended repeated notes are in a duet with falling diatonic scales. The soprano remains mostly stationary, ending with a derivative of the ending four-note scale

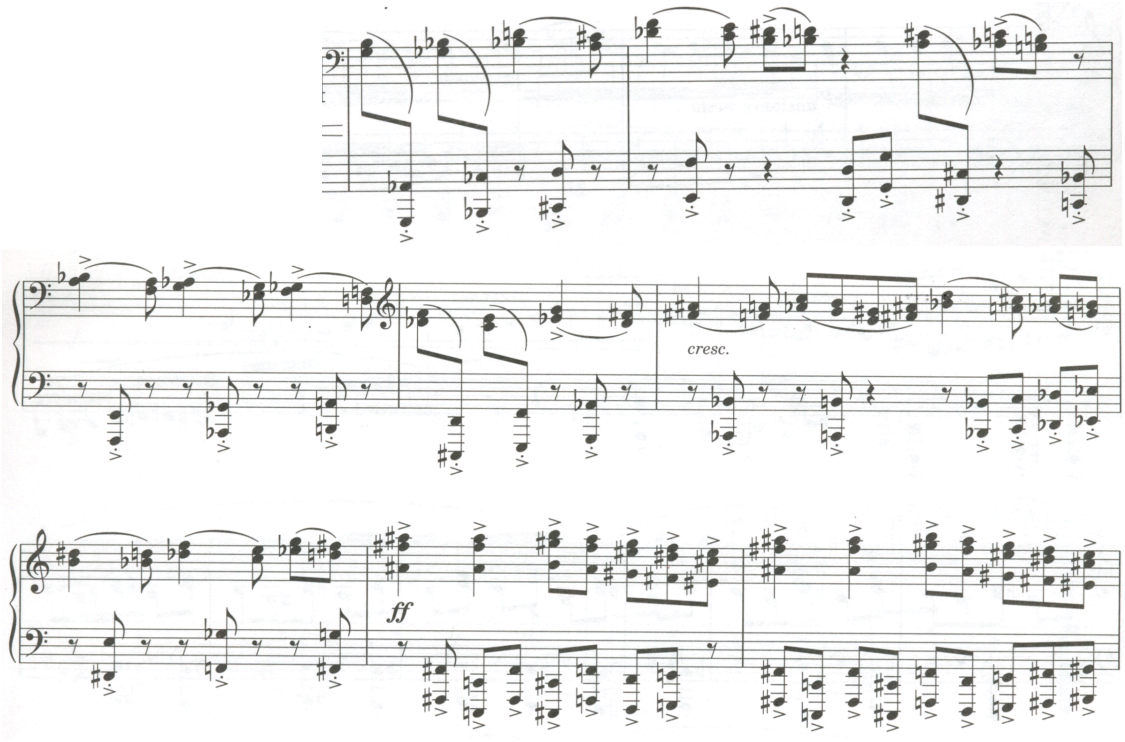
from Theme A2. With scalar patterns, the alto voice rhythmically alternates with the soprano, varying slightly each time. Throughout the remaining exposition, Liebermann varies elements of Theme A, Theme A2, and Theme B.

Example 30 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, First movement, Theme B, mm. 40-45

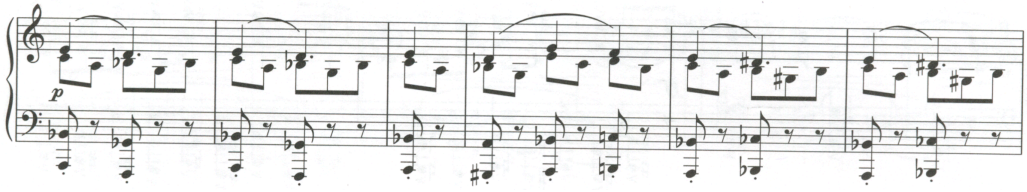


In the development (m. 65), Liebermann alternates Themes A and A2 with cadenzas and two new thematic ideas. Theme A returns at a different pitch level (Example 31, m. 69-76), leading into a new variation of Theme A2 (m. 75). In the left hand, Motive X is hidden by *fortissimo* octaves while the right-hand derivative of Theme A2 is almost unrecognizable, stated in accented chords. Comprised of three voices, the third thematic idea is taken from Theme A (Example 32, m. 89-94). The soprano combines the contour of two-note slurs with the interval of a whole step beginning the pattern, rather than the original half step. The left-hand ninths return to give stability to the constantly shifting meter.

Example 31 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, First movement, Theme A, mm. 69-76



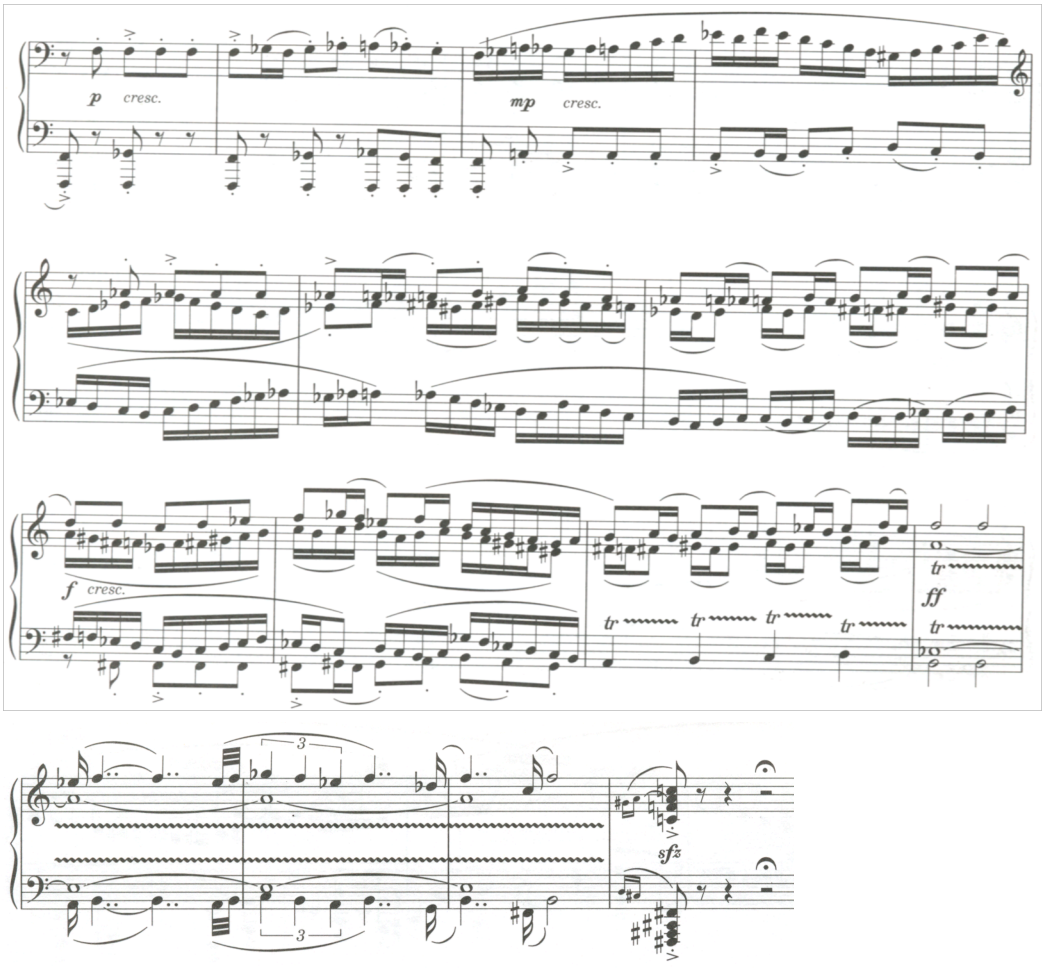
Example 32 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, First movement, Theme A2, mm. 89-94



Liebermann closes the movement with a brief recapitulation beginning with Theme A2 stated softly (Example 33, m. 119-133). It is immediately taken as the subject of a four-voice fugue exposition with statements beginning on *F*, *A*, *Ab,* and *F#* (m. 123). A codetta closes all three movements with a closing

theme derived from Theme A2 together with trills. Both the outside melody and the trill are doubled at the tritone (Example 33, m. 129).

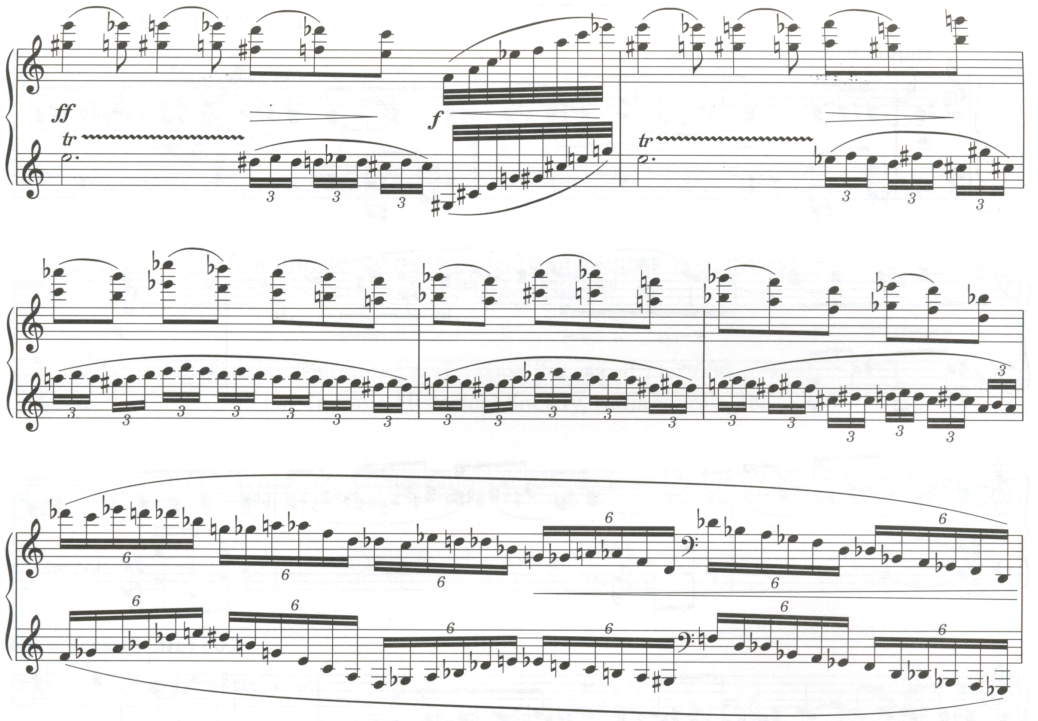
Example 33 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82,* First movement, Recapitulation and Codetta, mm. 119-133



First Movement
Inquieto, esitante (♪= 100)
133 measures
c. 4:38 duration

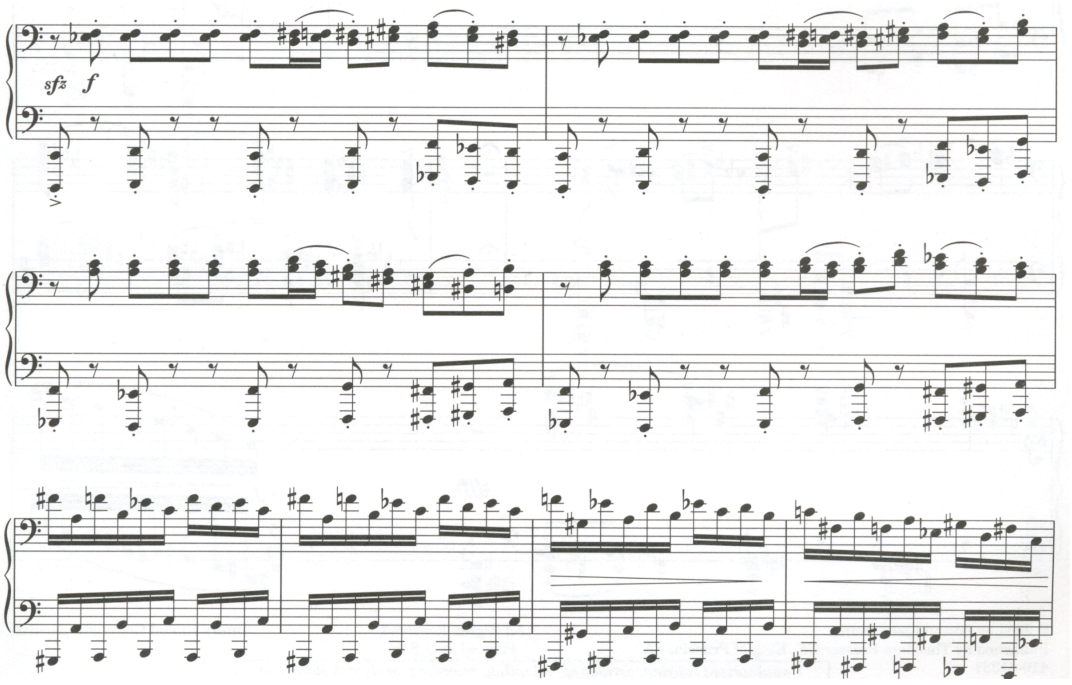
A distinct feature of the first movement is the quick succession of several different textures. After an introduction, the *con tutta forza* (Example 28, measure 10-14) alternates linear counterpoint and homophonic chordal textures. The right-hand dyads and the left-hand ninths (m. 10) lead to complex chords (m. 13) followed by a sweeping arpeggio (m. 14). The next phrase (Example 34, m. 15-20) gradually transitions from triplets in the left hand (m. 15) into sextuplets in both hands (m. 20).

Example 34 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82,* First movement, mm. 15-20



More than the earlier sonatas, the third is teeming with energetic rhythmic patterns. The insistent ostinato-like Theme A2 (Example 35, m. 21-28) in the right hand combines with the previously heard staccato ninths in the left. After four statements (m. 21-24), the dyads and octaves are broken (m. 25), creating a perpetual motion that leads into more unrelenting statements.

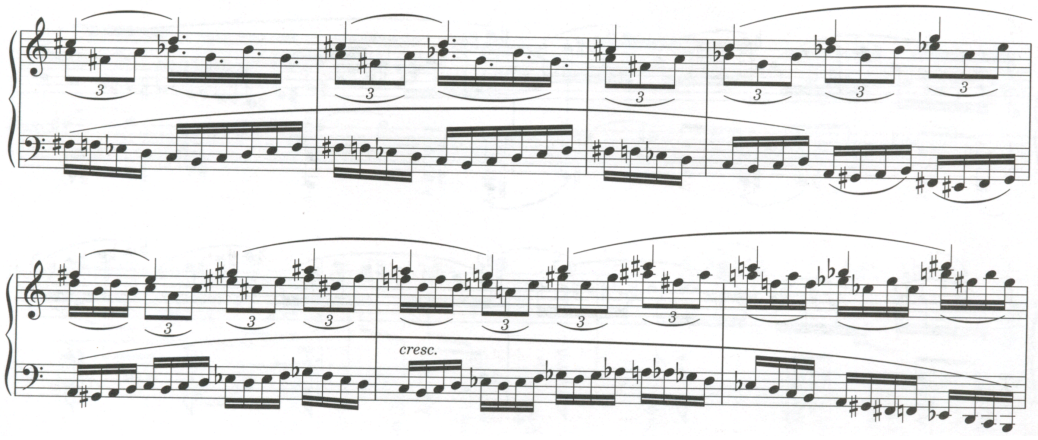
Example 35 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, First movement, Theme A2, mm. 21-28



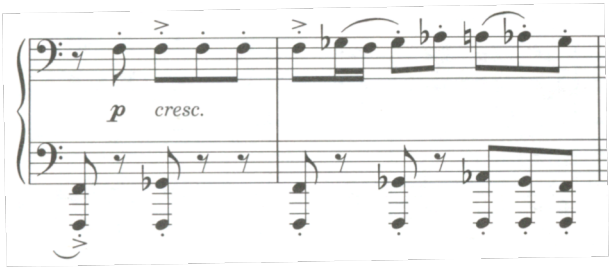
Without the stability of a marked meter in the first two movements, Liebermann relies on the recurrence of recognizable rhythmic configurations to maintain continuity. The already established staccato-ninth figure combines with a legato Theme A2 in the soprano voice (Example 32, m. 89-91) as a reprieve

from the energetic passagework. Continuing with a persistent rhythmic instability, the left-hand scalar passages later lead into polyrhythms (Example 36, m. 105-111) between the hands. The rhythmic complexity is momentarily stilled (Example 37, m. 119-120) with the recognizable ostinato of Theme A2.

Example 36 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, First movement, Theme A2, mm. 105-111



Example 37 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, First movement, Recapitulation, mm. 119-120

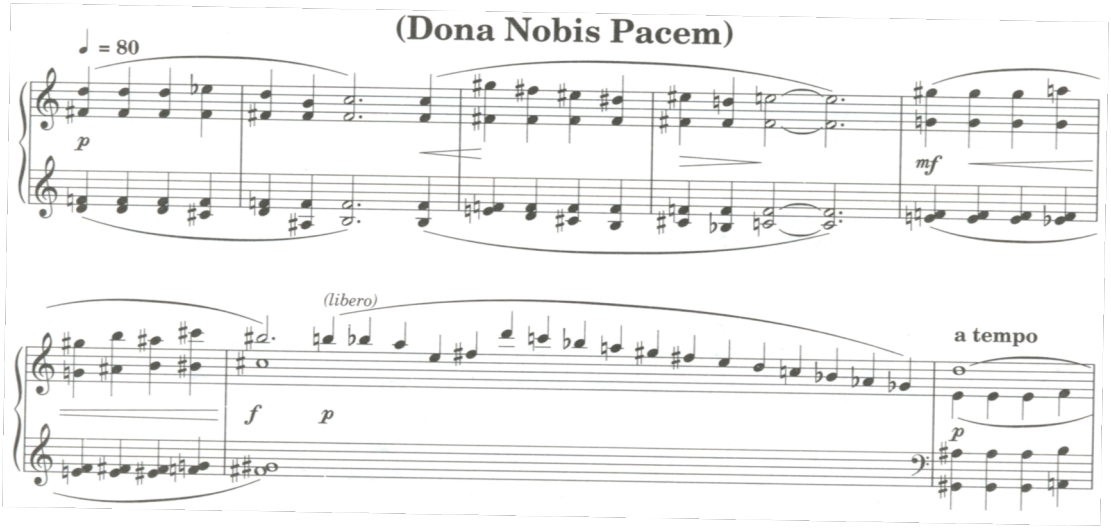


Second Movement
Adagio con molto rubato (♩= c. 40)
128 measures
c. 10:22 duration

Liebermann contrasts the virtuosic material of the first movement with several slow sections in the middle of the sonata: an introduction, *Dona Nobis Pacem*, Lullabye, a varied return of the *Dona Nobis Pacem*, and a codetta. With the *adagio con molto rubato* introduction, Liebermann establishes a new two-note slur motive that will be heard throughout the movement.

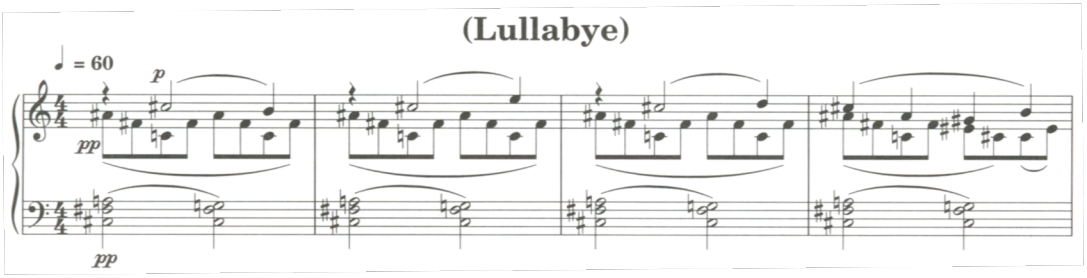
The *Dona Nobis Pacem* contains three phrases. Each phrase alternates two ideas: a hymn-like texture (Example 38, m. 143-148) and a single melismatic line (m. 149). The hymn-like passages produce a clear texture amidst the opaque colors of the chords and a metrically peaceful quality after the changing meter of the first movement.

Example 38 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, Second movement, *Dona Nobis Pacem*, mm. 143-150



The alternating texture of the *Dona Nobis Pacem* is resolved in the Lullabye with an almost Mozartian texture (Example 39, m. 164-167). The familiar Classical features of melody and accompaniment bring simplicity to the haunting lullabye. Three layers generate the mixture of conflict and cohesion. The stillness of the lullaby is captured through the steady rocking of an ostinato accompaniment of the alto combining with the left-hand chords while the soprano melody floats above with mostly two-note slurs.

Example 39 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, Second movement, Lullabye, mm. 164-167

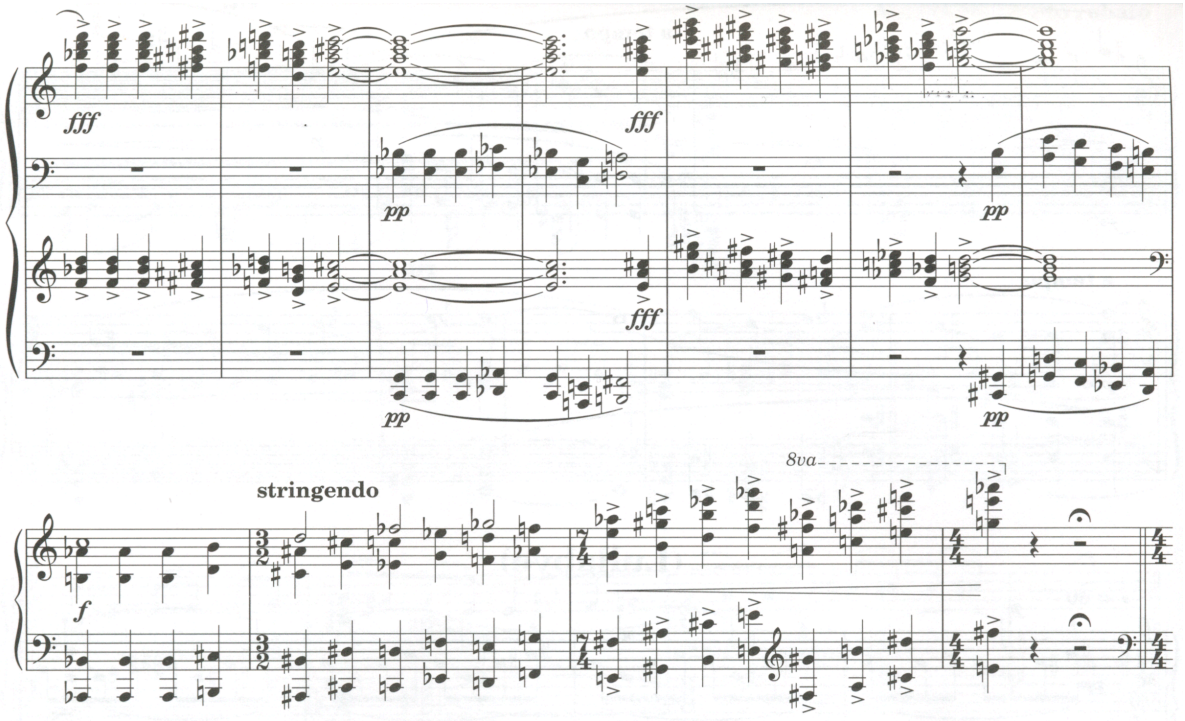


Material found in the *Dona Nobis Pacem* returns during a dramatic shift to homophonic chords at the end of the Lullabye (Example 40, m. 180-190). "Liebermann manages to draw from the piano powerful and evocative sonorities that reveal a fondness for great keyboard traditions of the past, while simultaneously creating a unique sound environment."[98] With the thick sonorities and the echoing melodic fragments, Liebermann recalls the piano

[98] Jessica Johnson, "Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 82, by Lowell Liebermann," *American Music Teacher* 57 (October/November 2007): 82.

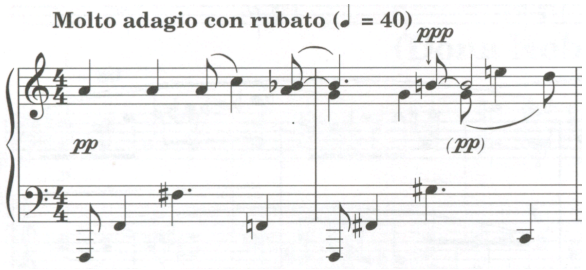
writing of Charles Ives and Claude Debussy.[99] This is the first time in the sonata the listener hears clear triadic harmonies. Although the tonal harmonies are quickly abated, the briefly satisfying chords lead into *stringendo* vertical ninths (m. 187), abruptly halted for the *molto adagio con rubato* (Example 41, m. 191) that follows, serving as another quasi-lullabye.

Example 40 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, Second movement, Lullabye, mm. 180-190



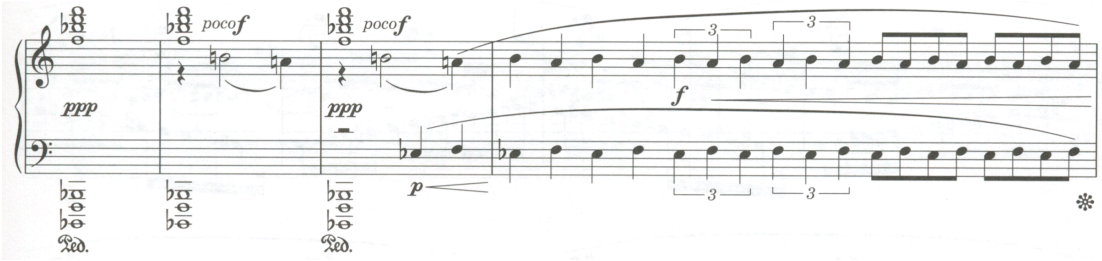
[99] Ibid, 83.

Example 41 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, Second movement, mm. 191-192



The coda to the second movement has two parts: a Baroque-style counterpoint during the *molto adagio con rubato* (Example 41, m. 191-192) and the closing theme from movement one. The *adagio* begins with two voices, although several more are quickly added. Homophonic chords combine with the two-note slurs originally found in the introduction to the second movement, which penetrate with a quiet force (m. 208). The two-note slur becomes a written-out accelerando transitioning into the trill for the close of the movement (Example 42, m. 207-210). Here, the trill motive is reminiscent of the final variation in movement three of Beethoven's Sonata No. 30 in E Major, Op. 109.

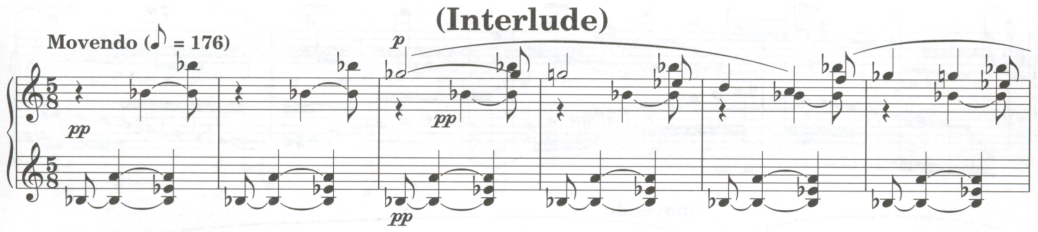
Example 42 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, Second movement, Closing Theme, mm. 207-210



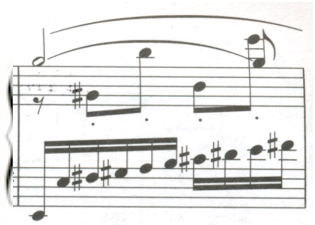
Third Movement
Movendo (♪= 176)
143 measures
c. 5:04 duration

Liebermann uses an Interlude as a transition into the third movement. With the instability of the uneven phrase lengths and mixed meter, the melody (Example 43, m. 214-219) lends constancy with a "Chopinesque lyricism reminiscent of Liebermann's Nocturnes."[100] While the first phrase is super-imposed on a steady broken chord accompaniment (m. 216), the second fuses a scalar accompaniment with the melodic line and a broken staccato voice (Example 44, m. 238).

Example 43 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, Third movement, Interlude, mm. 214-219



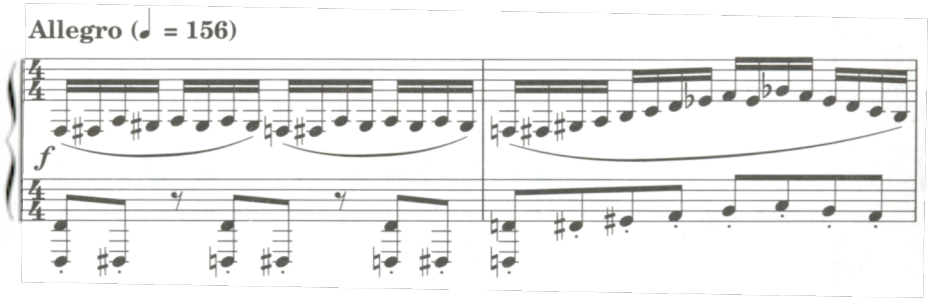
Example 44 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, Third movement, Interlude, mm. 238



[100] Music Web UK, "Lowell Liebermann Premiere" http://www.musicweb-international.com/SandH/2003/Feb03/Lieberman164.htm (accessed November 10, 2014).

The final *Allegro* (Example 45, m. 262-263) is "now more urgent, vital and driving with perpetual 16ths and rhythmic ostinati."[101] The scalar and chromatic accompaniment of the Interlude (Example 44, m. 238) transforms through an *accelerando* into the *Allegro.* The perpetual motion of this movement drives each new phrase seamlessly into the next. Liebermann relies considerably on material found in the first movement, with extensive use of driving rhythms, staccati, and sudden accents.

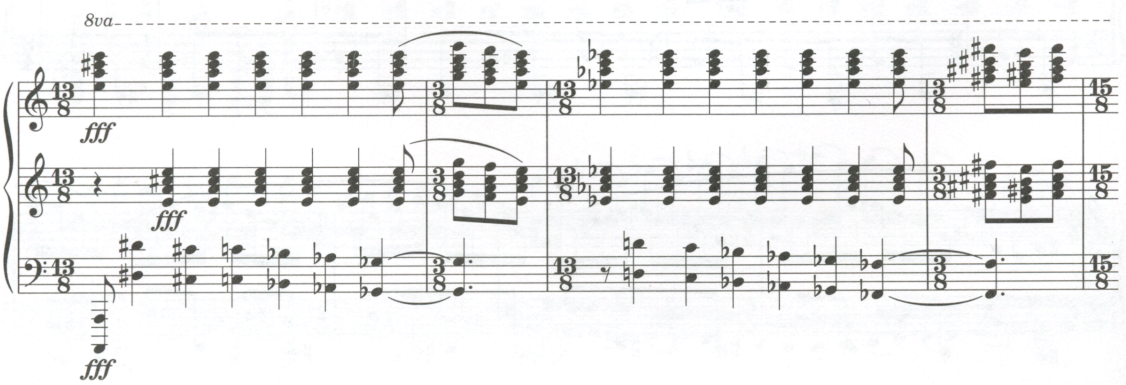
Example 45 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, Third movement, *Allegro,* mm. 262-263



Theme B from the recap of the first movement (Example 30, m. 40-45) returns here transformed into thick tonal chords with the left-hand scale in octaves (Example 46, m. 319-322). Both phrases have a brilliant character with a non-traditional scale in the left hand and planed, triadic harmonies in the right.

[101] Johnson, pg 82.

Example 46 *Sonata No. 3, Op. 82*, Third movement, Theme B, mm. 319-322



The movement draws to a close with the return of the Closing Theme with trills from the first two movements followed by an epilogue. The closing theme is now at a higher pitch level and closes with three short, accented, bitonal chords. The epilogue includes five truncated phrases recalling the first two movements: the *Adagio* condenses the introduction and *Dona Nobis Pacem* from the second movement and the rousing *Presto* recalls Theme A and two phrases from the development in the first movement. The sonata closes with three robust chords on B with open fifths.

Pianistic Considerations

An accomplished performance will require a remarkable ability to convey the combination of true lyricism with driving rhythms and clear articulation. Throughout the sonata, Liebermann calls for leaping melodies, jumping bass octaves, sudden changes of dynamics and texture, quick jumping

chords, trilling while playing a melody, quick placement, and wide spans of chords and figurations.

Several passages require repeated spans of a ninth and in several cases a tenth. Near the end of the second movement (Example 42, m. 187-190), a passage of chords is built on stacked ninths and tenths. Both clarity and agility are necessary to perform this and similar passages accurately.

Liebermann uses extensive perpetual motion in the outside movements (m. 1, m. 262) of this sonata, similar to what is found in the second and fourth movements of Piano Sonata No. 1, Op. 1. "Although both fast sections employ brilliant, virtuosic writing, the idiomatic passagework lays well under the hands."[102] He has created a "newer" virtuosic quality found when polyrhythms (caused by several distinct musical lines) are used in a coloristic manner.[103]

> [He] has [also] employed some of his favorite "romantic" pianistic gestures, virtuoso passages and multi-layered textures, while also revealing experiments with new features, such as more generous use of bitonality and an exploitation of a faster tempo to generate drama.[104]

In the third sonata Liebermann's style has become more complex than his earlier sonatas. He merges intricate harmonic and melodic ideas with complex rhythmical combinations, composing a sonata enjoyable to both the listener and performer. No matter the tempo, texture, harmonic or melodic

[102] Ibid.

[103] Martin, 138.

[104] Ibid, 160-161.

content, it is the musical intelligence and expressive power that becomes dynamic and effective to the end.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY

Composed between 1977 and 2002, Liebermann's three piano sonatas combine classical forms, romantic style, and modern idioms with technical command and audience appeal. His compositions feature clear formal structures, attention to motivic clarity, linear simplicity, and a harmonic framework that is basically tonal.

During the last century, some composers left behind the average listener who longs for a discernable melody and tonality.[105] Liebermann created a paradigm shift from many other composers by striving for intimacy with his listeners and, therefore, creating more audience-friendly compositions.[106] He appeals to the conservative listener, while pleasing the scholarly critic.

Liebermann's three piano sonatas display many of the most fundamental characteristics of his style. This analysis reveals a high level of craftsmanship and consistency in his use of classical and modern compositional techniques: traditional forms, motivic unity, and his own constructed tonal language. He combines traditional forms to create intricate works that utilize recurring patterns and citations between movements to outline complex structures. His

[105] Dennis, 11-13.

[106] Kikuchi, 19.

first two sonatas especially show his affinity for merging forms. The first combines fugue form with sonata form while the second merges the lyricism of the nocturne with the structure of the sonata. He uses motivic development to expand the traditional forms into extensive compositions. In the third sonata, he combines intervallic, rhythmic, and textural ideas to maintain both motivic continuity and structural clarity in the midst of a wide variety of textures.

Liebermann's harmonic language is distinctive among modern composers. His writing has "strange juxtapositions of dissonance and consonance, the constant reference to common practice tonality that actually never are common practice tonality, [and the] de-contextualized use of triads…"[107] In his first sonata, he seems to take a conservative approach in his harmonic language, as he mixes mostly major and minor harmonies. By the third sonata he ventures into more dissonant harmonies.

Liebermann's mature compositional style includes imitative textures and a variety of rhythmic patterns. In the first movement of the first sonata, imitative textures are combined with chordal passages to generate horizontal lines interweaving through the texture. In contrast, the second sonata at times exhibits a "stratified" texture, a polyphonic layering of musical lines, resulting in a complex interplay of parts.[108] He quickly alternates textures in the third sonata

[107] Uchino, 94.

[108] Ibid, 29.

while the different variants of each motive remain straightforward. He explores driving ostinati and conflicting rhythmic patterns. But, despite frequent metric shifts, the natural flow of the pulse remains clear.[109] He also layers numerous simple rhythms on top of each other, creating multiple, sometimes conflicting, subdivisions of the beat.

As Liebermann is a pianist himself, he makes the music pianistic and accessible to the performer as well as the listener.[110] He demands virtuosity of the performer where he "develops the same kind of style romantic composers were using in the nineteenth century—robust octaves, sparkling treble melodies, a wide dynamic range, and long, singing melodies over Chopinesque accompaniments."[111]

Liebermann wrote his first major piano work, the Sonata No. 1, Op. 1, in 1977 while in high school studying under Ruth Schonthal. He follows classical traditions with the first of four movements, combining sonata and fugue forms. The second and third movements are simply ternary, and the fourth merges rondo and ABA forms. Although he combines several forms within a movement, each is recognizable and therefore a pianist can extract movements for performance, unlike either the second or third sonatas.

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[109] Cisler, 80.

[110] Kikuchi, 19.

[111] Ibid, 22.

In this sonata, the performer must portray several characters with sensitivity and tranquility in the slow movement and rhythmic vitality and clear articulation in the fast movements. The technical requirements include abrupt register leaps, fast passagework and figurations, a discriminating use of pedal, sensitive voicing, and phrasing.

The Sonata No. 2, Op. 10, "Sonata Notturna," was composed in 1983 while Liebermann was studying with David Diamond at Juilliard. Liebermann merges the lyricism from the nocturne with the structure of the sonata into one long movement containing a lengthy double exposition with a brief development and recapitulation. In this introspective sonata, he blends the nocturne style with haunting motives and a sense of despair. The individual lines intermingle with colorful harmonies for an impressionistic effect.

In contrast with the first and third sonatas, the second aligns ethereal and meditative qualities with the nocturne style. He links the subdued tempo with brief dynamic outbursts and use of the entire keyboard. Although the least challenging sonata technically, it calls for intricate voicing and control of complex rhythms between the hands.

After a nearly twenty-year hiatus, Liebermann wrote his longest piano solo work to date, the Piano Sonata No. 3, Op. 82. It is likely that he was influenced by the events of September 11, 2001. Published one year later, the third sonata includes a *Dona Nobis Pacem* and Lullabye in the middle of three

movements, giving the listener a sense of eternal peace amidst the angst of the outer movements.

The third sonata will require a remarkable ability to bring together a convincing contrast of driving rhythms, energy, and vitality in the outer movements with the quiet lyricism of the *Dona Nobis Pacem*. Avoiding a written meter for most of the sonata, Liebermann relies on extensive motivic development and varied rhythms to add excitement and energy. The difficulty in the outer movements comes from the constant perpetual motion mixed with large reaches for both hands.

Pianists and audiences alike have developed an undisputed affinity for Liebermann's music. Since the early success of the Flute Sonata, he continues to compose fresh and progressive compositions. In his piano sonatas, he juxtaposes traditional sounds with a unique blend of consonance and dissonance. The piano sonatas certainly deserve a permanent place in the pianist's repertory.

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APPENDIX B

IRB LETTER

The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Human Research Determination Review Outcome

Date: January 27, 2015

Principal Investigator: Andrea Isaacson, BS

Study Title: THE PIANO SONATAS OF LOWELL LIEBERMANN: A PERFORMER'S ANALYSIS

Review Date: 01/27/2015

I have reviewed your submission of the new study application materials for the above-referenced study. I have determined this research does not meet the criteria for human subject's research. The proposed activity involves no interaction with human subjects. Therefore, IRB approval is not necessary so you may proceed with your project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the HRPP office at (405) 325-8110 or irb@ou.edu. Thank you.

Cordially,

E. Laurette Taylor, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board