

Program Note

A clearcut descendant of Chopin's twenty nocturnes in style as well as form, Nocturne is heard as a five-part rondo with introduction and coda. Compositionally, it is built on a symmetrical 12-tone chord with a four-octave span: C# G# D# E B F# G D A Bb F C. This palindromic structure (palindromic by hexachord as well as overall) is never heard in its entirety but only in segments. For instance, the opening motive E F# B G, E F# B G followed by D over D# uses (respectively) notes 4, 6, 5, 7, 8 and 3 of the original set.

The piece was compiled with the aid of a computer program called Dr. T's KCS or Keyboard-Controlled Sequencer. With this software, I was able to capture and store each of the thematic and motivic elements in a separate compartment, string these units together in a variety of combinations, screen each sequence individually via MIDI playback into a Kawai K-5 keyboard, and finally choose the most effective sequence for transcription into conventional piano notation.

Beyond all the technical aspects, Nocturne is also a fantasy of intense personal emotions: hope, worry, fear, exaltation. Through the course of the movement these feelings are introduced one by one, explored, rehearsed, analyzed and resolved.

While originally intended to be part of my HEXAGON for piano and computer-generated sounds (1990-92), Nocturne can be presented as a self-contained piece for solo piano. The first of the six movements to be completed, it is the only one to be independent of the computer-generated sounds that are so integral to the other five movements.

--DMW