

Piano Sonata (1950)

1. Allegro scorrevole
2. Andante quasi allegretto
3. Con moto, giocoso

Weinzweig composed the Piano Sonata in the same year he co-founded the Canadian League of Composers with Harry Somers and Samuel Dolin. The work was premiered as part of an all-Weinzweig concert produced by the Royal Conservatory of Music and the CBC to celebrate the new organisation. Milton Wilson, in his review for the *Canadian Forum*, exclaimed that the Piano Sonata “seems to be the best composition by a Canadian that I have encountered.” Despite Weinzweig’s confession of a lack of “proper” piano technique, the Piano Sonata is filled with a rhythmic vitality and motivic inventiveness that is sure to challenge the player and enliven an audience.

The first movement focuses on two main styles: first, fast two-voice polyphony that alternates with brief, soft reprieves; second, two staccato right-hand chords alternating with one left-hand pitch. The two styles alternate and then merge, until a final unison statement abruptly ends the constant flowing motion. The second movement opens with forte octave Cs. This octave unison moves immediately to a two-voice polyphony, with the left and right hands mostly in contrary motion. Weinzweig varies their interaction: sometimes the voices share the same rhythm while other times, their voices alternate. Weinzweig anticipates the tonal ending of the work by including E-flat and G octaves (left hand and right hand respectively) and a closing chord of E-flat, F-sharp, and G. Weinzweig’s use of serialism and an overall dissonant sound is briefly forgotten in the third movement, as the right hand repeats a major third interval (G, B-flat) alongside mostly consonant pitches. An increasing dissonance buries the pervasive third intervals until near the end of work, when E-flat clearly emerges as a tonal centre. The final movement unifies the entire work by recalling the two-voice polyphony and *marcato* rhythmic exchange of previous movements.

While Weinzweig incorporates serial technique in the Piano Sonata, he is more flexible, allowing for concerns of melodic motives and intervallic relationships to override any strict application. The first two movements use only one 12-tone set each, while the final movement uses two, creating something reminiscent of sonata form’s first and second themes.

Written by Alexa Woloshyn