

Towards a Thematic Catalog of the Works of Newton D. Strandberg (1921-2001)

Poster Abstract

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Newton Strandberg's compositional versatility and creativity is particularly striking when his output is viewed in totality and in retrospect. He studied with Henry Cowell, John Becker, and Nadia Boulanger early in his career, and taught at several universities including, Denison, Samford, Sam Houston State, and Northwestern Universities. He was active for more than 50 years as a teacher, composer, and performer within the mainstream of American *avant garde* composition in the 20th century. Like George Crumb, who was also socio-politically vocal in his work, Strandberg is one of the composers who represent the aesthetic transition from the early 20th century into the pointedly focused new expectation of social expression found in the 1970s. Strandberg's political statements, and his work with Cowell, come to fruition in his solo piano piece, *Planh* (1972); its extended techniques reach far beyond the expectations of even the most vanguard piano works with its child-like melody cast within harsh strikings from inside the piano. His works are more than programmatic; they offer emotional and social commentary during a time in which classical art music sought to transcend technological prowess.

Strandberg's thematic catalog and critical discussion of his works will contribute to the understanding of mid-20th century music in America and the route composers took towards more pointed political commentary in their works. This poster presentation will expose the state of his manuscript collection, offer insights into his extended performance techniques used in his piano and orchestral works, and provide a detailed overview of the ongoing research.