



GHEORGHE COSTINESCU
AN EVOLVING
CYCLE
STEPHEN GOSLING PIANO

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Gheorghe Costinescu, born in Bucharest in 1934 and residing in New York since 1969, has been active as a composer, conductor, pianist, musicologist, and educator.

After studying privately with Pascal Bentoiu and earning an M.A. in Composition from the Bucharest Conservatory under Mihail Jora, he continued his studies with Karlheinz Stockhausen in Cologne and Luciano Berio at The Juilliard School in New York. In 1976 he received a Ph.D. with Distinction from Columbia University, where he studied with Chou Wen-chung.

His chamber, choral, orchestral, and stage works have been performed in major cities in Europe and the United States, and at the Royan, Shiraz–Persepolis, and Tanglewood festivals.

His stage work *The Musical Seminar*, a winner in the League-ISCM National Composers Competition, was premiered at Lincoln Center in New York City; the German version of the work was produced by the State Opera of Stuttgart, and the British premiere took place at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow.

Costinescu has received grants and awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York Foundation for the Arts, the American Music Center, Meet the Composer, and the Ford Foundation. He was a Fulbright Scholar and also received the Romanian Academy's George Enescu prize;

The Juilliard School's Alexandre Gretchaninoff Memorial Prize; and fellowships from MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts.

His theoretical writings include articles on contemporary music, essays on comparative aesthetics, and *A Treatise on Musical Phonology*.

Gheorghe Costinescu has held teaching positions at The Juilliard School, Columbia University, and the New School for Social Research. In 1982 he joined the faculty and subsequently directed the electronic music program at Lehman College of the City University of New York, where he became Professor Emeritus of Music in 2003.

AN EVOLVING CYCLE

Looking back to the Baroque and forward into the 21st century

INTRODUCTION

The four works on this album illustrate a transition from an idiom close to that of the Baroque period, through increasingly challenging technical and interpretative levels, to one that can belong to the 21st century.

This evolving tendency is rather straightforward and systematic in the first work and especially in the third (which lends part of its title to the entire CD); it is more integrated and less obvious in the second and reaches a tentative synthesis in the concluding *Essay in Sound*.

THEME AND VARIATIONS for the piano (1956)

This was the first large work I completed in the composition class at the Bucharest Conservatory in 1956. Based on a chorale-like theme, the fourteen variations that follow are gradually more challenging to the pianist, through technical demands and through changes of mood that range from quiet introspection to dance-like extraversion. The coda, which restates most of the initial theme in the lower register of the piano, maintains the displaced accents of the last variation, bringing the work to an energetic, virtuoso conclusion.

SONATA FOR THE PIANO (1957, revised 2007-08)

The first version of this piano sonata was composed in 1957 in Romania. Fifty years later, I revised it – or better, re-composed it – in the United States. By “re-composed” I mean updated, restructured, and expanded.

Of the three movements of the work – “Moderato energico,” “Andante poco rubato,” and “Presto con fuoco” – the first and third are structured more-or-less according to the classic sonata form; the second uses a combination of ternary and variational forms.

Since recording the last movement for the Romanian Broadcast in 1957, I have had none of the movements performed in public, feeling that their full potential was not yet realized; the Sonata’s main

themes, some rather pungent and chromatic, others more lyrical or with modal inflections, kept following me until 2007, when I felt urged to complete the work as I first imagined it.

It came, however, as a surprise that the last movement, especially the coda, turned out to integrate, in addition to echoes from the preceding movements, elements of ragtime and jazz. These emerged as if pointing to the end of the long journey of composing this work.

EVOLVING CYCLE OF TWO-PART MODAL INVENTIONS FOR PIANO (1964)

The cycle consists of an introductory one-part invention followed by six two-part inventions grouped into three pairs. The first invention of each pair is rather slow and in a more-or-less minor mode, while the second is faster and in a more-or-less major mode.

Through the evolving character of its intervallic structure (modal first, serial-modal at the end) and of its form, use of ranges, and difficulty of performance, this cycle, while intended as a recital piece, also has a theoretical and educational purpose.

The aim of the cycle is to use some aspects of the Baroque two-part invention to explore the expressive potential of Romanian folk music, while tending to achieve a gradual transition to a contemporary type of keyboard composition.

About the last pair of inventions:

Invention 5 is based on the Phrygian mode (*E F G A B C D*) and explores the use of wide intervals and prolonged rests, the latter already anticipated in the *Introductory One-Part Invention*.

Invention 6, the strictest and freest of all, is based on an elliptical tone-semitone mode with the minor third missing: *E F G# A# B C# D*. The piece is structured by using all forms and transpositions of a "modal twelve-tone row," which, being placed within a seven-tone scale, uses one of the tones (*G#*) four times and another (*A#*) three times: *G# A# B G# A# G# D G# A# C# F E*. While this structuring secures the formal cohesion and the modal character of the piece, the frequent use of disjointed intervals, contrasting dynamics, repetitive or fragmented patterns, and all ranges of the keyboard tends toward apparent improvisational expression and freedom from traditional "invention."

ESSAY IN SOUND for the piano (2011)

Essay in Sound for the piano reflects the way I play, think of, and feel about the instrument.

The grammar of the work differs from the principle of building a musical edifice starting from a single cell or idea. Here, several short, apparently disparate statements are introduced, each expanding on its own terms, while merging into a more-or-less continuous discourse of all entities.

The work is dedicated to the pianist Stephen Gosling, who premiered it at the ACA Summer Festival, Symphony Space Thalia Hall in New York City on June 13, 2011.

G. C.

About Gheorghe Costinescu and His Music

"I found Mr. Costinescu and his music full of vitality, with a special theatrical flair."

– Leonard Bernstein

"Gheorghe Costinescu is an exceptionally interesting composer, a brilliant musician and has a wonderfully cultivated mind."

– Luciano Berio

"Mr. Costinescu has built an imaginative sound surface...with considerable dramatic impact."

– Peter G. Davis, *The New York Times*

"...remarkable passion and invention. ...sophisticated magic. ...'Evolving Cycle of Two Part Modal Inventions' alternates spare percussive gestures with onslaughts of brittle fury. Pianist Walter Pate effectively brought out the emotion contained within the hard edges."

– Ed Roberts, *The Washington Post*

"His compositions... are imaginative, dramatic, fascinating."

– Walter F. Grueninger, *Recorded Music in Review*

"...enormous vitality and originality."

– Robert Croan, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

"...lively and deeply felt music."

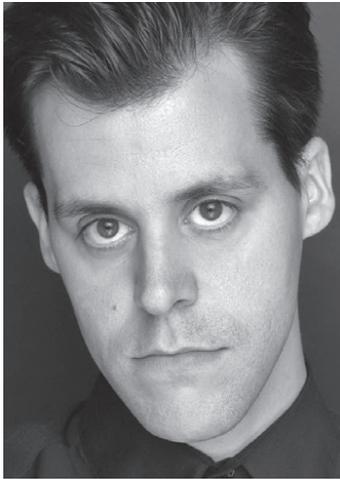
– Jacques Lonchamp, *Le Monde*

"...stupefying imagination and richness of invention."

– Antoine Golea, *Carrefour*

"Gheorghe Costinescu...a name to be noted."

– Olga Obry, *Die Presse, Vienna*



Stephen Gosling, piano, is a ubiquitous presence on the New York new music scene, and has also performed throughout the United States, Europe, Latin America, and Asia. His playing has been hailed as “brilliant,” “electric,” and “luminous and poised” (*The New York Times*), possessing “utter clarity and conviction” (*Washington Post*), and “extraordinary virtuosity” (*Houston Chronicle*). A three-fold graduate of The Juilliard School of Music (D.M.A., M.M., B.M.), he was for three years pianist of the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, and appeared in several seasons of the Sum-

mergarden series at MOMA. He has also performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, the Grant Park Festival in Chicago, the Bang on a Can Marathon, Bargemusic, the 2001 Great Day in New York festival, and the PAN festival in Seoul, Korea. Mr. Gosling has collaborated with numerous American and European composers, including John Adams, Milton Babbitt, Pierre Boulez, Elliott Carter, Brian Ferneyhough, Oliver Knussen, Steve Reich, Poul Ruders, Charles Wuorinen, and John Zorn. He is a member of both Ensemble Sospeso and the New York New Music Ensemble, and has performed with Orpheus, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Speculum Musicae, DaCapo Chamber Players, the Orchestra of St Luke’s, Continuum, the League of Composers/ISCM Chamber Players, and Da Camera of Houston. He has additionally been a frequent guest artist of many other groups, including the New York Philharmonic, Dutch Radio Philharmonic, and the American Composers Orchestra. He has been heard on the NPR, WNYC, and WQXR radio networks, and has recorded for New World Records, CRI, Mode, Innova, Rattle Records, and Ravello Records.

Introductory One-Part Invention



The image displays a page of musical notation for the first movement of a piano sonata. It is divided into three systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff.

- System 1 (Measures 126-132):** Starts with a *cresc.* marking. Above the staff, there are tempo markings: *poco ritard.*, *meno mosso* (with a tempo of 100), and *a tempo* (with a tempo of 112). Dynamics include *sf*, *pp*, *mp*, and *ff*. There are also *rubato* markings. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. A *gliss.* marking is present above measure 127.
- System 2 (Measures 133-138):** Features *a tempo* markings. Dynamics range from *mp* to *f*. There are *rubato* markings and a *cresc.* marking. A *gliss.* marking is present above measure 135.
- System 3 (Measures 139-144):** Starts with *meno mosso* (tempo 84) and *Tempo I* (tempo 116). Dynamics include *ff*, *fff*, *sf*, and *ff*. There are *accel.* markings and *poco* markings. A *gliss.* marking is present above measure 140.

Throughout the score, there are asterisks and the symbol Ped (pedal) indicating where the sustain pedal should be used.

A page from the First Movement of Sonata for the Piano

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- Theme and Variations*** for the piano (1956)
- 1 Theme; Fourteen Variations; Coda 9:32
- Sonata for the Piano*** (1957, revised 2007-08)
- 2 Moderato energico 5:00
 - 3 Andante poco rubato 5:54
 - 4 Presto con fuoco 3:59
- Evolving Cycle of Two-Part Modal Inventions for Piano*** (1964)
- 5 Introductory One-Part Invention; Six Two-Part Inventions 14:04
- 6 ***Essay in Sound*** for the piano (2011) 7:04

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Tracks 1, 2, 3, 4, & 6: studio recordings made at the American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York City, 2010 & 2011
Mastering Engineer: Judith Sherman

Track 5: live recording made at the Miller Theatre, New York City, 2002
Mastering Engineer: Joe Lambert

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