
William Fried is Associate Professor of the Practice at Davidson College, where his work focuses on French music, the postwar Avant Garde, and spectral composition. Concert highlights include performances on the LA Philharmonic's Green Umbrella Series, at the Vancouver New Music Festival, and the Summer Institute for Contemporary Performance Practice. He has been described by critics as "poised and remarkably dexterous... hypnotic" (*The Boston Globe*) and "in possession of an incredible technique... effortlessly transport[ing] the listener into the receptive meditative state that spectral music demands" (*Vancouver Classical Music*); by colleagues as a "Ferneyhough pianist" who "plays IRCAM stuff." He has premiered and recorded countless new works, and his numerous essays appeared in *Perspectives of New Music*, *Piano Magazine*, *American Music Teacher*, and *College Music Symposium*.

Resonances

William Fried, piano



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| 1 Philippe Manoury: <i>La ville (... première sonate...)</i> | 29:40 |
| 2 Philippe Manoury: <i>Veränderungen (... deuxième sonate...)</i> | 18:51 |
| 3 Philippe Manoury: <i>Spins (étude pour piano)</i> | 4:38 |
| Claude Debussy: "Arthur Rackham" Preludes | |
| 4 <i>La danse de Puck</i> | 3:37 |
| 5 <i>Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses</i> | 3:33 |
| 6 <i>Ondine</i> | 3:28 |
| 7 Claude Debussy: <i>L'Isle joyeuse</i> | 5:39 |

Total Time: 69:41

Recorded: January 13-17, 2025 at Tyler-Tallman Hall, Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina. Produced by William Fried. Engineered by Josh Sacco.

Resonances

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French composer Philippe Manoury is best known for pioneering work in electroacoustic media in the 1980s and 90s, experimenting with then-new Max/MSP software to inject interactivity into an electroacoustic landscape previously limited to players synchronizing to a fixed electronic part (so-called tape pieces). Manoury's piano sonatas from the following decades are explorations of "analog" interactivity through the acoustic phenomenon of sympathetic resonance: vibrations in an un-muted string at rest caused not from a piano hammer's stroke but from ambient sound vibrations at frequencies related to the string's. On the piano, this is effected by silently depressing keys to release the dampers on those strings, "catching" those elevated dampers with sostenuto pedal, and allowing newly played notes to excite those freely vibrating strings. The result is a two-tiered structure: a foreground of played notes and a background of resonance. The resonance depends on interactivity between foreground notes played and prepared strings released of their dampers; change either, and the resonance changes.

There is irony to this simplicity. Electroacoustic interactivity initially involved

intensive setup: microphones to capture instrumental sound, computers to process in real time, elaborate speaker setup in the venue, often a designated driver during performance to change max patches and babysit the electronics. At a 2005 demonstration in San Diego of Manoury's *Jupiter* for flute and live electronics, I remember their having to stop every few minutes because the electronics had missed a cue or otherwise became confused. And all the while, it turns out that a version of this aspired-to interactivity existed within the acoustic instrument itself.

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Ginastera once composed a perfect palindrome—a piece that proceeds to a central point and then reverses itself exactly—and Manoury's *La ville* [The City] (2001-02) conspires to something like it. The titular city is likely Prague, where Manoury resided during its composition, and for its form he credits long walks in the city: the experience of passing through discrete neighborhoods towards some destination and then returning by similar (though not identical) route. Of interest to him was how a return to the familiar from a different angle both enriches our vision and inter-

feres with our previous memory of it.

The musical exploration unfolds across disparate sonic landscapes—slow meditations, harmonic resonances, sonorities assembled ladder-like, toccatas and fugues—arranged in a labyrinthine form distributed symmetrically around a median. At the center is stillness, a sanctuary from the hurly-burly. Symmetries abound: global ones in the arrangement of sections about the center; local ones in palindromic structures recalling Messiaen's "non-retrogradable rhythms"; even harmonic ones about a central pitch. As for the "sonata" subtitle, this is a nod to Liszt's mammoth piano sonata whose sprawling single-movement form provided a model.

Manoury's use of German for *Veränderungen* [Transformations] (2007) is no accident and references the titular inscription of Beethoven's Diabelli Variations—rather than the commonly-used *Variationen* Beethoven called his contribution *Veränderungen* to distinguish it from more incidental music of the genre. In a sense, Manoury's are transformations on Beethoven's transformations. But Manoury is no postmodernist; there are no quotations, literal or stylistic, while Beethoven

shines through mostly as character. It makes for a strange mix: Beethovenian motivic obstinacy with Debussian sonorousness in the language of IRCAM-inspired spectralism.

Though not conceived as a sonata, *Spins* (2009) is contemporaneous with Manoury's Sonatas (only later folded into a collection of Etudes Manoury completed in 2016) and shares their abundant sympathetic resonance effects. Beyond that, the piece draws on the technique of white key-black key separation of hands popularized in Stravinsky's *Petrouchka*, Debussy's second book of Preludes, and several Ligeti études. Textures are effected sometimes by rapid alternation of the hands, sometimes by one hand alone when the other is needed elsewhere; the pianist's challenge is to maintain textural consistency (or the illusion thereof) throughout. The title references the sounds and movements of wind and air.

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Manoury's sonatas are doubly referential—to the long tradition of the piano sonata, and to the individual pieces on which each is based: the Liszt Sonata for the first; Beethoven *Diabelli Variations* for the second. Time con-

straints prohibit including either warhorse; in their place are some Debussy Preludes—the "Arthur Rackham Collection," after the British book illustrator whose spidery drawings so inspired Debussy. Besides this common inspiration, they share with each other and Manoury's work a preoccupation with resonance: mayhap set in motion by played notes and striking hammers, but once set free, acquires a life of its own.

La danse de Puck [Puck's Dance] occupies the penultimate spot in Debussy's first book of Preludes (1909-10). Puck here is the mischief-maker from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* seen through Arthur Rackham's illustrations to a 1908 edition of the Shakespeare. Debussy's piece is a character portrait of the trickster archetype in fantastical setting.

"*Les fees sont d'exquises danseuses*" ["The fairies are exquisite dancers"] and *Ondine* are from the second book of Preludes (1912-13), a collection heavily influenced by Debussy's young friend Stravinsky, in particular the white/black key separation of hands that Stravinsky worked out in *Petrouchka*. Both make heavy use of that technique. The title *Les fees sont d'exquises danseuses* comes

from the caption to a Rackham illustration in *Peter Pan in Kensington Garden*, a children's book that Debussy's young daughter had received as a gift. *Ondine* is a water spirit who fell in love with a mortal in an early German romance, illustrated by Rackham for a 1911 edition.

And though neither Prelude nor Arthur Rackham inspiration, *L'Isle joyeuse* [The Isle of Joy] was frequently used as encore for this program in outings by the artist, and thus included here. Debussy's anglicized spelling is thought to be an allusion to the Isle of Jersey where Debussy eloped with Emma Bardac in 1904. A virtuoso tour-de-force, the piece's barely contained exuberance explodes into a wild bacchanale.

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This project was made possible by grants from Davidson College and the N.C. Arts Council, a division of the Department of Natural & Cultural Resources, the ASC Endowment and Mecklenburg County.