

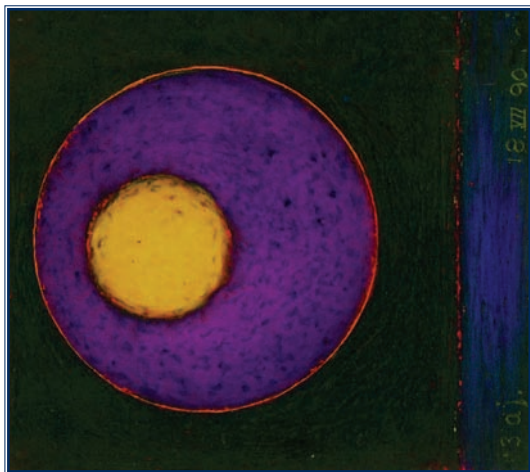


# GEORGE ROCHBERG

## Piano Music • 3

Partita-Variations • Nach Bach • Sonata-Fantasia

Sally Pinkas, Piano



George  
**ROCHBERG**

(1918-2005)

**Piano Music • 3**

**Partita-Variations (1976) 35:00**

1 I. Praeludium	2:47
2 II. Intermezzo	2:20
3 III. Burlesca	0:59
4 IV. Cortège	4:02
5 V. Impromptu	1:53
6 VI. The Deepest Carillon	4:21
7 VII. Tema: Ballade	2:17
8 VIII. Capriccio	1:04
9 IX. Minuetto	2:46
0 X. Canon	1:39
! XI. Nocturne	4:48
@ XII. Arabesque	2:17
# XIII. Fuga a tre voce	3:46

**s Nach Bach (1966) 8:45**

**% Sonata-Fantasia (1956) 23:42**

Prologue – I. Quasi tempo I, ma con molto rubato –  
Interlude A – II. Allegro scherzoso – Interlude B –  
III. Molto lento, contemplativo, quasi parlando – Epilogue

## George Rochberg (1918-2005)

### Piano Music • 3

#### **Partita-Variations** (1976)

#### **Nach Bach, Fantasy for Harpsichord or Piano** (1966)

#### **Sonata-Fantasia** (1956)

*Partita-Variations* (1976), an energetic and exuberant work, makes unpredictable forays into realms of tragedy, innocence, mischief, and heartfelt affection. Based on the principle of a 'baker's dozen', with its theme ('Tema: Ballade') as centerpiece, the work opens with a traditional 'Praeludium' and closes with an obstinate 'Fuga', where 'Praeludium' materials return at the conclusion. The two movements are relentless and brilliant, and their manic drive is equaled only by the ferocious 'Capriccio'.

The rest of the movements appear to be the result of free association which appropriates the full range of musical styles, from Classical ('Minuetto') to Romantic ('Nocturne') to twentieth century ('Cortège'), while using serial ('Canon'), tonal ('Burlesca') and improvisatory ('Arabesque') means. However, this is not a coincidental collection: each movement generates its successor, either by lending a motive or a rhythmic cell, or by allowing for a natural evolution of mood. This is the 'Variations' aspect of *Partita-Variations*, which shapes the work as one large kaleidoscopic frame, fanning out from its central theme.

The work was commissioned by Etsko Tazaki on a grant from the Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation for the Bicentennial Piano Series of the Washington Performing Arts Society.

Composed a decade earlier than *Partita-Variations*, *Nach Bach, Fantasy for Harpsichord or Piano* (1966) was written for the harpsichordist Igor Kipnis. True to its name, it is a fanciful and intensely rhetorical commentary-improvisation on Bach's *Partita No. 6 in E*

*minor*, BWV 830 (indeed, Rochberg's interest in Bach's music is evident throughout his career). The work's atonal, non-metric texture stands in relief to the carefully placed tonal fragments of Bach's music. It is a discourse between two composers active centuries apart, yet united in spirit and dramatic intent.

Incidentally, the mercurial middle section of *Nach Bach* is the source for the aptly named 'Arabesque' of the later *Partita-Variations*. Here as elsewhere Rochberg borrows from his own creation.

In the masterful *Sonata-Fantasia* (1956), Rochberg develops and transforms the tumultuous materials of the opening ('Prologue') in the ensuing 'Interlude A', 'Interlude B', and 'Epilogue'. Between them, three self-contained sections are interposed. I: 'Quasi tempo I, ma con molto rubato' spins out intricately designed chromatic webs based on five measures from Schoenberg's *Sehr langsam* (from Op. 23 No. 1), the character of which haunts the rest of the piece and eventually ends it. II: 'Allegro scherzoso' is a swift movement in A – B – A form, in other words, related to the Classical scherzo and trio. III: 'Molto lento, contemplativo, quasi parlando' elaborates upon two distinctly different canons, then joins them together in a double canon of considerable rhetorical power.

A dark and deeply anguished work, *Sonata-Fantasia* demands the performer's ultimate emotional, intellectual and technical powers. (This is a testament to the composer's pianistic ability, as he was the one to give the première of the work.) It is written in the twelve-tone language – perhaps the only language capable of such expressive extremes. To my mind, the work affirms beyond any doubt the artistic validity and coherence of this much-maligned compositional system.

Sally Pinkas

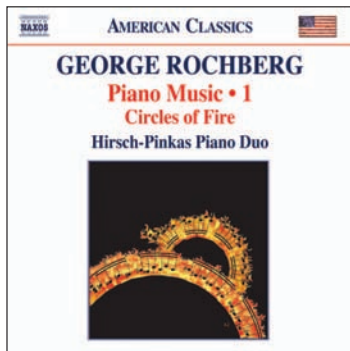
## Sally Pinkas

Photo: Robert Eddy

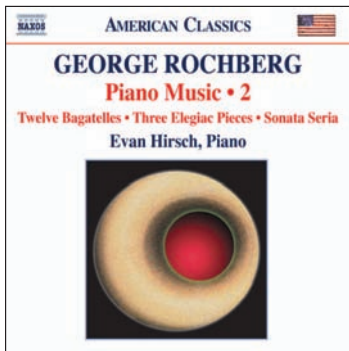


Since her London debut, Israeli-born pianist Sally Pinkas has concertized widely in the United States, Europe, Russia, China and Africa, as soloist and as a member of the Hirsch-Pinkas Piano Duo (with husband Evan Hirsch). She has participated in summer festivals at Marlboro, Tanglewood, Aspen, Kfar Blum (Israel), Rocca di Mezzo (Italy) and Pontlevoy (France), and has appeared as a soloist with the Boston Pops, Aspen Philharmonia, Jupiter Symphony, and the Dobrich Chamber Orchestra (Bulgaria). Her discography includes Debussy's *Twelve Etudes and Estampes* (Centaur), Rochberg's piano works (Naxos), *Bread and Roses: Piano works* by Christian Wolff (Mode), and Fauré's *Thirteen Nocturnes* (Musica Omnia), named one of 2002's best CDs by *The Boston Globe*. A Schumann solo disc, as well as Fauré's two *Piano Quartets*, were recently released on MSR Classics. Pianist-in-residence of the Hopkins Center at Dartmouth College, Pinkas is Professor of Music at the College's Music Department, and a faculty member at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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