



AMERICAN CLASSICS

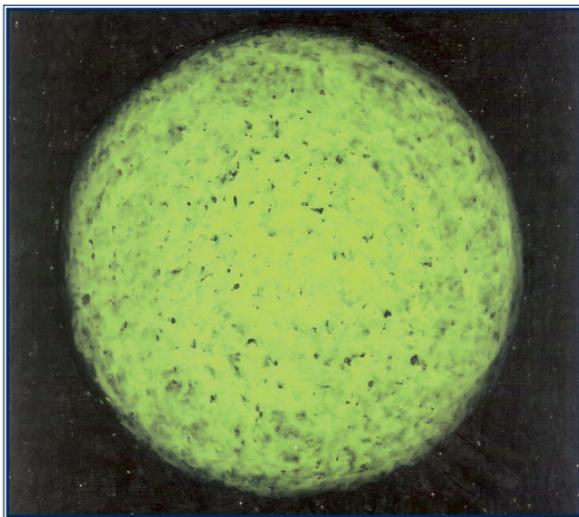


# GEORGE ROCHBERG

## Piano Music • 4

Carnival Music • Four Short Sonatas  
Variations on an Original Theme

Sally Pinkas, Piano



George  
**ROCHBERG**

(1918-2005)

**Piano Music • 4**

**Carnival Music (1971) 27:36**

- |                         |      |
|-------------------------|------|
| 1 I. Fanfares and March | 4:12 |
| 2 II. Blues             | 5:07 |
| 3 III. Largo doloroso   | 5:04 |
| 4 IV. Sfumato           | 8:00 |
| 5 V. Toccata-Rag        | 5:13 |

**Four Short Sonatas (1984) 12:35**

- |                                 |      |
|---------------------------------|------|
| 6 No. 1. Poco allegro piacevole | 4:22 |
| 7 No. 2. Molto rubato           | 4:21 |
| 8 No. 3. Allegro assai          | 1:44 |
| 9 No. 4. Presto                 | 2:08 |

**10 Variations on an Original Theme (1941) 28:33**

Theme: Andante affettuoso – Variation 1: Quasi Scherzo –  
Variation 2: Quasi Etude – Variation 3: Quasi Capriccio –  
Variation 4: Quasi Toccata – Variation 5: Quasi Arabesque –  
Variation 6: Quasi Rhapsody – Variation 7: Quasi Ballade –  
Variation 8: Quasi Gigue – Variation 9: Quasi Nocturne –  
Variation 10: Quasi Chorale – Variation 11: Quasi Ricercare –  
Variation 12: Quasi Intermezzo – Finale

## George Rochberg (1918-2005)

### Piano Music • 4

**Carnival Music, Suite for Piano Solo** (1971)  
**Four Short Sonatas** (1984)  
**Variations on an Original Theme** (1941)

The only one of Rochberg's piano works to employ popular musical idioms, *Carnival Music, Suite for Piano Solo* (1971) evokes beloved American and European traditions: 'Blues' and 'Toccata-Rag' originate from the composer's very early years as a jazz pianist in 1930s New Jersey, while 'Fanfares and March' pays homage to circus music. The pensive and dreamy heart of the Suite, 'Largo Doloroso', is followed by 'Sfumato', in which delicate sound webs are woven around apparitions from Brahms's *Capriccio Op. 76, No. 8* and Bach's triple counterpoint *Sinfonia No. 9, BWV 795*. 'Sfumato', Rochberg tells us, is 'a style of painting during the Renaissance in which figures, shapes, objects emerged out of misty, veiled, dreamy backgrounds.'

Opposites abound in all of Rochberg's music, yet in *Carnival Music* one encounters a particularly stark juxtaposition of exuberance and introspection. Here great power contrasts with deep reflection, without any mitigating force.

The *Four Short Sonatas* (1984) were commissioned by the United States Information Agency for its Artistic Ambassador Program. The pre-classical definition of sonata as a one-movement sound-piece seems appropriate here: each of the four sonatas explores one set of ideas, in concise manner (Scarlatti sonatas are the model for this type). Yet the four pieces also follow a Classical four-movement sonata pattern. In 'Poco allegro piacevole' the fluent, opening gesture gradually intensifies before it is stopped abruptly by static, repeating chords – a sort of second theme. A development ensues, leading to a recapitulation: sonata form is apparent. The 'Mesto' (sad) and 'Violente'!

characters interact in the slow, dramatic and rhetorical 'Molto rubato', while the A – B – A 'Allegro assai' is a scherzo *par excellence*, and the final 'Presto' is as brutal as it gets. In all, these are four highly charged character pieces.

Written in the grand Romantic piano style of the late nineteenth century, *Variations on an Original Theme* (1941) is a virtuoso piece in D flat major, an unusual and unsettling key. Unabashedly beautiful and shamelessly expressive, the work is a remarkable achievement for a 23-year-old composer (who also gave its first performance). When the work was revised in 1969, Rochberg offered the following commentary:

*This work was composed in New York City in 1941-when N. Y. was still a habitable city and you could walk from the West side to the East side in the dark of Central Park at midnight without being afraid. The only real change I have made in it is to restore two variations (VIII and IX) which I'd left out of the 1941 version; and to add to the original two-voice skeleton of Variation VIII a third voice, changing also the original dotted rhythmic cell to a triple one. In effect, then, Variation VIII is a "new" piece.*

*It may seem strange to some that I should want to rescue this early work of mine from oblivion twenty eight years later. I do so because the passage of years has not diminished its energy or profile; and because it no longer matters to me what "style" a work is (or was) composed in so long as it is music. The virtue of this set of Variations does not lie in anything but the fact that it succeeds in being a set of Variations. And if it gives pleasure to the pianist who plays it and to the listener who hears it, what more can I ask?*

Sally Pinkas

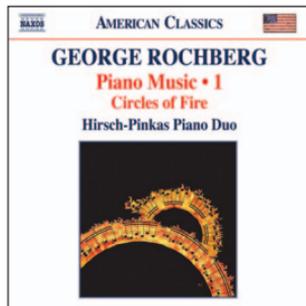
## Sally Pinkas

Photo: Robert Eddy

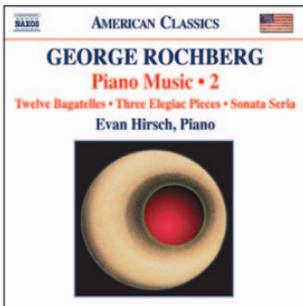


Since her London debut, Israeli-born pianist Sally Pinkas has concertized widely in the United States, Europe, Russia, China and Africa, as soloist and as a member of the Hirsch-Pinkas Piano Duo (with husband Evan Hirsch). She has participated in summer festivals at Marlboro, Tanglewood, Aspen, Kfar 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. Deeply committed to teaching, Pinkas serves as Professor of Piano at the Music Department, Dartmouth College (Hanover, NH), and as Pianist-in-Residence at Dartmouth's Hopkins Center for the Arts. She lives in Medford, MA.

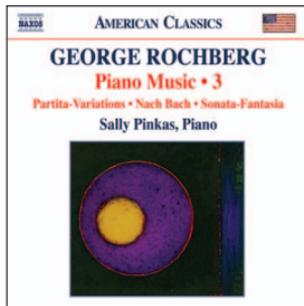
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## AMERICAN CLASSICS

Opposites abound in George Rochberg's music, never more so perhaps than in *Carnival Music*, his only piano work to employ popular musical idioms, where one encounters exuberance and introspection, great power and deep reflection. His *Four Short Sonatas* hark back to a time when 'sonata' referred to a single-movement composition, though Rochberg has cunningly grouped these brief pieces into a work that follows the Classical four-movement pattern. Unabashedly beautiful and shamelessly expressive, the *Variations on an Original Theme* is a virtuosic composition in the unsettling key of D flat major.

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 (1918-2005)

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- 1-5** **Carnival Music**  
 (1971) **27:36**
- 6-9** **Four Short Sonatas**  
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- 10** **Variations on an Original  
 Theme (1941)** **28:33**

**Sally Pinkas, Piano**

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Playing  
 Time:  
**68:45**

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