

Morton Gould: musical influences and jazz elements in derivations for clarinet an...

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Benny Goodman's commissioned piece Derivations for Clarinet and Band by Morton Gould combines classical and jazz worlds of music in a well orchestrated piece. Gould was directly influenced by Goodman in this work from their friendship, understanding of what jazz is really about and he knew how to get a horn section to play jazz in a classical composition. Because of the friendship Goodman and Gould had outside of work, Gould's musical influences will also be explored with the analysis of jazz elements in the 1955 piece.

Gould was an American composer known for his American roots in composition. The phrase/term "Americana," is used abundantly in reference to Gould and his compositional history. Compositions often used frequent ideas ranging from jazz idioms, Broadway popular music, folk ideals, and classical motives. This cacophony of differing elements leaves his compositions in limbo between popular music or classical. In his works, evident presence of European style technique helped to solidify the genres of classical and jazz. In a sense Gould's music has been described by some as the illustrations of American culture and personality. Gould himself explained his thoughts on composition in the Washington, D. C. Star in an interview:

America's potential culture has not been encouraged because European ideas have been too influential. Oh great music runs its value regardless of origin, native art must find its roots in the people and their environment which must reflect in the composer's Creations. In spite of discouraging handicaps, American composers today are fighting toward a stronger

recognition of music that can be truly labeled American. but where is Shostakovich will receive praise for injecting burlesque of brass bands and Carnival orchestras and Symphonies, an American composer would be derided if he infused impressions of Cab Calloway or Duke Ellington into a major work...To many , swing and popular music seems the distic, but it's pure elements have compactness and vitality compatible to classical structures. The blues might be adaptable to American light music as the lullaby is to the European. The young American composer, tutored in a jazz age, can feel the tempo of the day with...realism. utilizing popular music idioms can bring artistic significance if done in good taste and sincerity.

Morton had a firm belief that current music of the time should have elements of the nation's various backgrounds and life patterns. By doing this with his music he developed a way to separate the light and serious aspects of music through solidifying the native musical aspects of the country. Schima Kaufman Of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra said that Gould carried " the American idiom to its highest development," and evolved " an individual native musical language which is not a mixture of classical and Jive, but rather Jazz-become-classical." Clearly Gould had the tools in hand to be the one composer that could compose such works involving multiple styles working in harmony. Composing works that grabbed the listener personally with any techniques necessary came to be Morton's specialty. A friendship between Goodman and Gould could be attributed to the masterful compositions of Gould's. When Goodman and Gould met for the first time Gould said, " I was not sure he would cotton to me, and he was not sure I

would cotton to him...but we very quickly got the feeling that once we got past our respective outer facades, whatever protective devices we each used to keep ourselves invisible, we responded to each other." A great example of what spawned from the two working together is shown in a dissertation written by Albert Snavely; what makes this example special is that Snavely for this dissertation sent Gould a questionnaire about the origins of Derivations for Clarinet and Band and any other information about Benny Goodman. Gould responded in the questionnaire saying:

' He (Goodman) apparently liked my music, and felt my kind of creativity might produce something pleasing to him.' Initial composition took place over a period of time, but gold concentrated on ' finalizing the sketches in orchestration during November, 1955.' Gould cannot recall any specific constraints on the composition of the work; however, he was interested in composing something for Goodman and his dance band. Goodman agreed to the idea...I set out to do a classically structured and discipline peace using the Jazz vernacular- the title pretty much says it all- and (the) work I think also reflects the ' Benny Goodman Sound' - which influenced me.

Maureen Hurd was lucky to know Morton Gould as a professor while in residency at Iowa State University. Maureen recalls a story he once told about Goodman explaining the type of close friendship he had with Benny:

He was sometimes asked to accompany Benny Goodman to his interviews, not because Gould would also receive questions, but because he was a calming influence on the sometimes temperamental Goodman...one

interviewer asked Goodman about the 'fish eye' (frequently called 'the ray,' or a look given by an unhappy Goodman to a musician who would supposedly subsequently be fired), and Goodman replied, 'if you ask one more question like that, you're going to find out!'

Benny Goodman was Gould's influence for this piece without doubt. Gould mentions the "Benny Goodman Sound," influenced him while writing this work for Goodman. Seeing here that Goodman also liked the piece is a strong evidence of Gould's understanding in how to use jazz elements in a piece. Goodman has not performed other commissioned pieces based on "he did not like the way it was composed, 'Oh, too many notes.' it was described as a non-stop piece of music without a place to take a breath and Goodman didn't like that." If something isn't right Goodman will not play it; the first recording of Derivations wasn't released for what Gould recalls as "a number of years."

In this analysis the 1965 recording on Meeting at The Summit, and piano reduction was used for musical examples. Derivations for Clarinet and Band was intended for Goodman's own band, meaning the orchestration intended is: 4 saxophones, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, drums, vibraphone/xylophone, piano and bass. Derivations is comprised of four movements titled: Warm-Up, Contrapuntal Blues, Rag and Ride-Out. Gould personally describes each movement and their characteristics:

The first movement, called 'Warm-Up,' is an abstract opening where the instruments sort of flex their muscles. The second 'Contrapuntal Blues,' is a

slow, attenuated, linear section with the instruments weaving in, out, about and across each other in different Blues modes. The third ' Rag,' represents a stylization of a twenties period idea, a nostalgic, rhythmically asymmetric evocation of ragtime. The last movement, ' Ride-Out,' is a galvanizing movement meant to go like a shot. Its accumulating barrage of jazz oriented ostinatos and motives attempts to give the drive and feel of jazz improvisation.

In the first movement it begins with clarinet playing a 3 note motif and the band echoing in longer patterns. In figure 1 m. 5 features a progression of eighth notes played by the clarinet outlining major 7th chords and dominant 7th chords which the band also emulates at m. 9. These moving eighth notes are mainly arpeggiated through the piece; referencing a common jazz practice method of moving through 7th chords. Gould in the first movement also includes a solo in the clarinet part written at m. 124. This solo is integrated into the music in a clever way that's seen easiest in the piano reduction. Figure 2 shows the piano only plays the accompanied chords in the jazz style of " comping," which gives the soloist space to have dynamic growth and for the rhythm section (piano, guitar, bass, drums) to listen for soloistic direction. This sudo solo section ends at the end of the piece despite changes in the frequency of comping chords. This is easily argued based in the matter that most movement is featured on clarinet; frequency of notes, and the higher range of the instrument being played is indicative of showing importance.

The second movement starts alone playing notes written to sound lazy with a hint of gloom ("blues"). Blues elements are evident in the moving notes, the "wrong" notes in the part hint at the idea of the "music played by a tired band at a bar." Throughout the movement the drunken/tired sound is exaggerated by the use of bends, slides and heavy use of crescendos and decrescendos to create a tired-swaying feel. At m. 37 the clarinet enters in quietly playing very scarcely using only a few notes, rarely faster than triplet quarter notes until mm. 109-217; at m. 111 the clarinet is marked as 'freely' playing compounded triplet eighth note rhythms. This is another use of jazz elements to make the piece sound like there are improvised solos by writing in space for the performer. Observed also in the clarinet solo are the absence of numerous accidentals in all parts. What is curious about this particular section is as to why these notes are changed. Could be for a break in the dissonance of the drunken blues feel resembling a short moment of clarity or simply to make the solo easier by using a less complicated note structure. The sound of the piece does change further at this point; looking further into the piece from here a noticeable change in dynamic change alludes to the clarinet solo representing a second wind. This second wind movement ends at m. 154 a few measures after the clarinet part is marked as "forcefully stressed," written in the altissimo range of the instrument. From m. 154 to the end slows and quiets to a slow fade. Gould also writes these remaining measures gradually thinning out the instrumentation and drastically diminishing the dynamics.

Movement three, “ Rag,” is mostly what it sounds like. This movement does represent a rag style tune, but with a bit of a modern twist involving some interesting melodic choices and chord choices. At A, the clarinet has a rather angular melody using a large range of the instrument. These angular movements in the melody are supported by the straight eighth “ rag” motif in the accompanying parts. Frequent modulation and “ asymmetric rhythmic evocation,” shown by the complicated time signature of 7/4 in the “ rag,” represents what Gould was capable of composing while using jazz and European techniques from the classical world. Though the “ rag” is simple in composition, the classical elements Gould brings to the style refresh it with modern instrument voicings/ harmonies and clever use of an unusual time signature.

The final movement “ Ride-Out,” ends the piece with an enjoyable throwback to a classic Benny Goodman style big band. Gould adds some modern jazz twists to the movement in the form of “ cool jazz,” chord qualities; “ harmony in the beginning of the movement is provided by the minor and diminished qualities of “ cool jazz.” The final movement is composed to work like a “ hot band” arrangement, including a fast tempo and a altissimo ranged solo for the clarinet to ride out the rest of the tune on by m. 172 after the drum break at m. 163. Before this moment in the movement, at m. 18 the clarinet quotes the same type of 3 note motif that was used in movement one. This functions as homage to Goodman’s solo habit of quoting the original melody and further expanding the idea; the final movement is hinting at being the expansion of the solo idea. Gould also has

the clarinet and xylophone trade off solos and the drum set take a solo; this movement reprises the main focus of “hot” jazz, solo opportunities. Reference to Goodman era big bands is also shown in mm. 214-249 by making it major. The fast swing rhythm under the texture of the clarinet solo “supports idiomatic Goodman-derived clarinet solos.”

In the original recording of this piece there are elements that the performers added that are not marked in the score, assumed to be part of changes Goodman wanted. For example, the ensemble knows how to play this music with the swing it’s intended to have. Gould’s compositional technique and influence from Goodman’s own music was brought out in this recording. Goodman’s use of vibrato in his playing is best supported with an ensemble that also uses vibrato and utilizes the same inflections he does in jazz performance.

The second movement starts in a soft melancholy sound using slides and bends when deemed necessary. The ensemble also uses far more dynamic swells than what the score has in ink. Because of these choices the ensemble evokes a mood of sad drunkenness by the end of the movement. The development of the mood can be felt from beginning to end, though the mood comes off as something differing from how Gould describes this movement. This seems like more than a tired band at a bar. The progression of getting kicked out of a bar fits the description from the listener. A change of mood can first be heard at m. 37. Before this point the saxophone voices were being layered into this point when clarinet enters with bass adding forward motion sounding like the band in starting to pack up gear. By m. 70

the mood of the piece moves noticeably further away from the blues feel stated in the beginning and in the title. The accompaniment has shifted to triplet eighth notes and increased the tempo which isn't notated in the score. This specific change very well could possibly be part of a Goodman change to get something more musical out of the section to bring more contrast. Trombone comes into the forefront of the texture with a written solo involving many slides in the melody. An obvious mood shift to drunken by m. 89 where this idea actually starts with trumpet involved in a call and answer motif with trombone. When clarinet enters again Goodman in the recording adds a scoop to complement the idea the trumpet and trombone developed. In this recording Goodman doesn't include the written solo at m. 111. This could very well be a section the Goodman decided to leave out for two reasons. The first having to do with the amount of notes to be covered; the second, a possible style choice. Speculating from the current mood of the movement at this point in the recording, the reasonable assumption would include both. Hearing how this movement is set to a possible story, the eighth note triplet motif would be too much. Instead trumpet has a solo of their own design, more lyrical in nature leading smoother into the decrescendo two measures before m. 121. The final difference involves another gradual increase of speed just before m. 145 into m. 154 where the ensemble then slows back to the original tempo. This change makes more sense than what Gould had composed here. The story that was in this movement needed the exaggeration from tempo changes to get the proper closure and rollercoaster feeling of having a bad night.

Not much needs to be said about the third movement in the recording besides the mood being very peppy at first, but growing tired by the end. The third movement starts to give an insight into how the entire piece moves through the differing ideas. The fourth movement by far is the happiest and most exciting of the movements. The big band style in this movement really drives it forward with intensity like Goodman's band did. This is all contributed to the prominent drum part in this movement and the faster passages in the movement. By the end of this movement and listening to the piece at once the bigger picture of the piece becomes clearer if you have knowledge of Goodman's background. The interpretation of this piece that's the most interesting is how the movements are in part a timeline of Goodman's progression through his own career; it makes more sense when Gould and his friendship is considered. "Warm-Up," represents the warm up before the gig. Movement two, "Contrapuntal Blues," may represent the feeling Goodman had while playing with white bands in his earlier years wishing to play real jazz. Supporting this is the overall feeling and mood of the movement, begging to be done and move on to the next movement by the end. "Rag," is characterized by the feelings of nostalgia Goodman would have while jamming with fellow musicians in private playing the jazz they wanted to play; nostalgic is used as a term in the music at letter G. Finally the last movement "Ride Out," best fits the time in Goodman's career after Carnegie Hall that he was able to perform the type of jazz he desired to with the musicians he wanted.

In *Derivations for Clarinet and Band*, Gould demonstrates the fluent skill he possesses to compose a work that is equally a classical or jazz work. Lee Evans summed up the composer by saying, "Gould is, in other words, a many-faceted composer who functions creatively over a wide range of musical expression- from the functional to the abstract- in large and small forms, but basically instrumental/ orchestral oriented." Through analysis of this piece there is little doubt that Benny Goodman was more than just Gould's jazz influence for this work, but also his guide to properly uncover the musical direction and story that could be told as easily with jazz music as it is with a classical work. Gould and Goodman admired each other's work and had mutual respect for each other as artists.