

ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Style and Compositional Techniques in Vincent Persichetti's Ten Sonatas for Harpsichord

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DATE: December, 2009

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This dissertation presents the ten sonatas for harpsichord written by American composer Vincent Persichetti (1915-1987). The research aims to define the specific approach to musical style that Persichetti embraced in these works. The methodology employs an analytical approach to define that style. The introductory chapter places the harpsichord sonatas in the context of Persichetti's keyboard repertoire and his general musical output and outlines the limited scholarly research available on the topic. The second chapter contains a short biography of the composer and a review of existing literature pertinent to this study. In the third chapter, the ten sonatas are individually analyzed. The concluding chapter summarizes common stylistic traits found in the analyses. It emphasizes the importance of these works for contemporary harpsichordists, denoting Persichetti's passion for the rediscovered instrument in the last several years of his life. The stylistic elements found in Persichetti's harpsichord sonatas include the use of classical forms, the preference for contrapuntal craft as exemplified accompanied melody, mirror technique, and complementary rhythms, the amalgamated harmonic language, the

frequent use of polychords, the use of dynamic markings as indicators of the registration as well as for musical expression and the use of the full range of the harpsichord. This research references for the first time the composer's *Tenth Harpsichord Sonata*, published posthumously in 1994.