

nine pieces for solo piano  
program note

Nine Pieces for solo Piano was composed in late 2010 and premiered by the composer in January of 2011. It is the sixth work for solo piano by Joel Hoffman, following Fantasy Pieces (1975), Concert Study (1978), Hands Down (1986), each for himself? (1991) and at what price? (2004).

An interesting feature of this piece is that the odd-numbered pieces (1,3,5,7 and 9) are all precisely the same length as each other (two minutes) and in addition, they are precisely twice as long as the even-numbered pieces (one minute), which are also all the same length as each other. The tempo of all the pieces is the same: quarter = 96. This would seem to lead to a kind of sameness among the nine pieces. And yet because of the variety, contrast and speed of materials among the pieces, this unifying device is quite subtle.

Another unusual feature of this piece is the use of silence as a structural determinant. There are silences that set the phrases of sound apart from each other. Just as the overall durations of the pieces are carefully controlled, the silences are also organized with the intention of linking the pieces together – they occur at precisely the same points as those in their related pieces, whether even- or odd-numbered. On the other hand, the sounding parts of the pieces - while in many instances related to each other across the set – serve to distinguish each piece as unique within the group.

Joel Hoffman  
2010