

Thomas Feng | 2017

“of being a self in a song”

for solo piano

Notes

For better or for worse, my acquaintance with Bach's *Goldberg Variations* is inextricably tied to Glenn Gould's relic 1981 recording. The slow tempos and incessant vocalizing that strike many others as eccentric have been, for me, part of my initial and lasting (and beloved) impression of this music, and not so eccentric at all.

While preparing to write this piece, I read somewhere that Gould habitually vocalized to make up for whatever he could not "get" out of the piano, like some kind of reflex. Apocryphal as it may be, I found this idea poetic (especially in light of his recording of Bach's "Goldberg" aria – vocal music written for an instrument with no obvious vocal qualities); Gould's recording (and indeed, his artistry) is marked by what he couldn't hold back. And so, Gould's humming, both in itself and as an icon of inescapable selfhood, provided the inspiration for this short piece.

The title is taken from Anne Carson's novel-in-verse, *Autobiography of Red*: "Meanwhile, music pounded / across hearts opening every valve to the desperate drama of being / a self in a song".

This piece was written at the kind request of Prof. Inna Faliks for the Dialogues and Re-imaginings Festival at UCLA.

for Mindy Cheng

"of being a self in a song"

Thomas Feng (2017)

Free, light, and spontaneous; as if sung to oneself

♩ = ca. 40

grace notes always relaxed, but clear

una corda; pedal sparingly only to connect phrases

tre corde

relax... ...move forward

16

5 3 3 6 3

5 5 6 3

3 3 3

5 4

(– Bach, "Goldberg" Aria)

20 **Quasi senza misura; with momentum** ♩ = ca. 75

fp

l.h. [(h)]

5

f

Ped.

fp

5

7

f

p

* Ped.

rall.

ff

mark the D#'s

let ring

3

3

p

(- Schönberg, Op. 19)

Ped. →

21 **As at first; musingly** ♩ = ca. 40

p

(\langle) sfz sub. p

3

5

una corda

(depressed silently)

* una corda

tre corde

hold with middle pedal →

25

tre corde

rall.

let ring

ppp

una corda

*... lift gradually **

(– Bach, "Goldberg" Aria)