Before he died, my uncle, George Steffen, gave me a set of four old faded black and white maps of various regions of the United States. These maps, dating from the 1860s, held a mystery, he said. They were valuable because of something they revealed about the history of the United States. “They are probably worth a lot of money,” he chuckled. With that he said it was up to me to figure out the mystery, and true to his word he took the “secret” with him when he passed away a few years later. He had given them to me encased in two pieces of black cardboard with envelopes taped around the four corners to hold everything together. On two of the envelopes were written the enigmatic words “The Four Attic Window’s” and “First Fort” with a simple line depiction of Fort Argyle. George was an amateur historian, had worked for Denoyer-Geppert, an old Chicago mapmaking firm that was purchased by Rand McNally, and had been a radar specialist in the Air Force during the Korean War.

Regardless of the surrounding mystery, the four maps are beautiful examples of cartography during the 17th through 19th centuries. After storing the maps for several years in my basement, and not thinking too much about their significance, I came up with a solution. Each would be used compositionally for a single movement of the piano piece you now hold in your hands. Each map would therefore be “window” into each of the four pieces.

The maps in order are as follows:

I. *Virginiae Item et Floridae Americae Provinciarum, nova Descriptio*  
   (Jodocus Hondius, first published in Mercator’s Atlas in 1606)

II. *La Luisiana Cedida al Rei N.S. Por S.M. Christianisima, con la Nueva Orleans, e Isla en que se halla esta Ciudad*  
   (don Thomas Lopez de Vargas Machuca, 1762)

III. *Plano del Puerto de Panzacola Cituado En Latitud de 30. grs. 14. mints. Meridia De Thenerifez*  
   (Identical to map by José Porlier, 1761 but with different legend)

IV. *Plano del Puerto de San Francisco*  
   (Similar to map published by Arrowsmith in 1825)

PERFORMANCE NOTE

*The Four Attic Windows* is not a four movement “Sonata.” Rather, each “Window” is complete in itself. Therefore, while it is preferred that the entire work be performed as a set, it is nonetheless possible to perform 1, 2, or 3 “Windows” without the others.
The Four Attic Windows
I: Virginae Item et Floridae

Piano

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calmly as before
II. La Luisiana Cedida al Rei N.S. Por S.M. Christianisima, con la Nueva Orleans, e Isla en que se halla esta Ciudad Don Thomas Lopez de Vargas Machuca, Madrid, 1762

Construida sobre el mapa de Mr. d'Anville. Por D. Thomás Lopez.
The Four Attic Windows

II: La Luisiana

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\[ \text{\textcopyright \hspace{1pt} 2009 Christopher Preissing} \]
"Plano de la Nueva Orleans"

Stately (one measure = one block)

con pedale
III. Plano del Puerto de Panzacola
Cituado en Latitud de 30 grs 14 mints Meridio de Thenerifez
The Four Attic Windows
III: Plano del Puerto de Panzacola

Christopher Preissing

\( \downarrow \) = 112 precise, yet indifferent

Piano

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“Puerto de Pansacola”
Deep and dark

con ped.
frantic (as before)

senza ped.
precise, yet indifferent (as before)
IV. Plano del Puerto de San Francisco
The Four Attic Windows
IV: Plano del Puerto de San Francisco

\[ \frac{9}{4} \] with gusto

\( \text{holding back} \)

\( \text{sempre} \)

\( \text{sub. mf} \)

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as before

holding back