1. **Penderecki**
   a. Born November 23, 1933, in Debica, Poland
   b. “In the years before World War II, Krzysztof took piano lessons without much success…From 1946 to 1951, Krzysztof excelled at the violin while attending grammar school.”¹
   c. “Penderecki studied composition privately with Franciszek Skołyszewski and then (1954–8) with Malawski and Wiechowicz at the State Higher School of Music (now the Academy) in Kraków. On graduating, he joined the staff of the school as a teacher of composition.”²
   d. “His first major success came in 1959 when *Strofy* (‘Strophes’), *Emanacje* (‘Emanations’) and *Psalmy Dawida* (‘Psalms of David’) were awarded the top three prizes at a competition organized by the Union of Polish Composers. Subsequently he came to the attention of two influential figures who were to prove crucial in bringing his music to audiences outside Poland: the publisher Hermann Moeck… and Heinrich Strobel [German music critic and administrator]”.³
   e. Compositional periods:
      i. Early period (avant-garde), Middle period (late 1960’s: neo-romantic return to tradition), Late period (1980’s: synthesis of modern and traditional)

2. “**Threnody**”
   a. *History*
      i. Completed 1960
         1. Originally titled 8’37”. Present title was given after the work’s completion.⁴
         a. “‘[The piece] existed only in my imagination, in a somewhat abstract way. When Jan Krenz recorded it and I could listen to an actual performance, I was struck with the emotional charge of the work. I thought it would be a waste to condemn it to such anonymity, to those “digits”. I searched for associations and, in the end, I decided to dedicate it to the Hiroshima victims’ (1994).”⁵

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³ Ibid.
ii. Predecessors:
   1. “Varèse’s conception of music as spatial…opened the door to music that centered not on melody, harmony, or counterpoint but on sound itself…Composers now wrote pieces whose material consists primarily of striking sound combinations that create interesting and novel textures, organized by gradual or sudden processes of change. One of the first to write such music for acoustic instruments was Iannis Xenakis…[i]n Metastaseis (1953-54).”

iii. Editions:
   2. 1961 P.W.P. (Przedstawicielstwo Wydawnictw Polskich), Warsaw, Poland.
   3. 1961 (also 1970’s) Belwin-Mills (Melville, NY)
   6. 1961 NY: Edwin F. Kalmus
   7. Also, Schott.

iv. Awards:
   1. Fitelberg Composers Competition, Katowice, Poland, May 1960, 3rd prize.
   2. Ministry of Culture and Art Award, 3rd degree, July 1962.

v. World Premiere:
   1. (Live:) Sept. 22, 1961
      a. Warsaw Autumn Festival, Krakow Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, Andrzej Markowski conducting.
   2. (Radio Recording:)

b. Analysis
   i. Organization:
      1. “The work divides clearly into three parts, the second providing a contrasting middle section, the third returning to music that resembles the opening. The division between the first two sections is unambiguous [abrupt change in texture and timbre at m. 26]…preceded by a long, sustained single note [solo cello] with diminuendo leading to five seconds of silence. The second and third sections overlap, the third beginning some eight seconds before the second ends (mm. 63-64).”

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7 That is all that is mentioned (no years or any other details) in the only catalogue presently discovered in this student’s search, which is Bylander’s Krzysztof Penderecki: A Bio-Bibliography (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 44.
2. Regarding m. 26 – “…a sequence of pointillistically-scattered sounds which, despite sounding improvised, are intricately woven into a 36-voice canon.”

   a. “Orchestra 2 answers Orchestra 1 as a strict canon at a distance of 12 bars, but with the instrumentation altered (quasi-inversion) whereby the parts of the 4 violins are answered by 2 basses and 2 cellos, etc. A symmetrical axis occurs between bars 42 and 43, when all the voices are mirrored, though again with altered instrumentation (like a retrograde inversion). Bars 16-19 are not included in the mirror. Thus in Orchestra 1 bars 42 and 43 match, likewise 41 and 44 etc., up to 30 and 55. In Orchestra 2 the symmetrical axis falls 12 bars later between bars 54 and 55. Orchestra 3 follows Orchestra 2 canonically at a distance of two bars, without the first four bars which are also left out of the mirroring; the instrumentation here does not change. The canon is sustained rhythmically and, with a few exceptions, dynamically as well, though the pitches may be a fourth or fifth removed. Such structural relationships within the ordering of the material, like the pointillistic refraction of this section clearly show the influence of the Second Viennese School and in particular Webern’s principles of symmetrical organization.”

   ii. Graphic Notation:

   1. “Graphic notation and extended instrumental techniques featured in many Polish orchestral works of the 1960s. However, unlike most of his contemporaries, Penderecki proved an instinctive dramatist”.

   2. See “Symbols/Technique” in Performance Practice, section c.

   3. A thick black line crossing along the length of a staff indicates a cluster of pitches. Below each occurrence of such, the composer indicates the actual pitches to played (typically, one pitch per instrument) in parentheses on a small staff below the one harboring the black cluster indication.

   a. However, on Anthology pg. 396, the composer explains, “Exact notation is given in the parts.”

   4. Measure 18, Anthology pg. 399: a visual “swell”, as each individual part enters one after the other.

   iii. Instrumentation

   1. 52 Strings:

   a. 24 violins, 10 violas, 10 cellos, and 8 basses

   b. Individual players are grouped differently throughout the work:

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9 Mieczyslaw Tomaszewski, Liner Notes.
i. *Example:* Compare beginning (Violins: 1-6, 7-12, 13-18, 19-24 / Violas 1-5, 6-10 / Cellos 1-5 / 6-10, Basses 1-4, 5-8) to measure 18, pg. 399 (every instrumentalist plays a separate part).

ii. Middle section divides into three separate Orchestras.

iv. “He drew on two contrasting compositional techniques: the extreme freedom of **aleatoricism** and the exacting one of **serialism.**”

1. Examples of aleatoricism:
   a. Instructions for measure 6: “Each instrumentalist chooses one of the 4 given groups [of extended techniques] and executes it (within a fixed space of time) as rapidly as possible.”
   b. Rhythmically irregular tremolos and vibrato
   c. [In referring to 2.a. below]: “…the duration is that given in the score, though it will vary from performance to performance, and in Penderecki’s latest recording…he now takes 9 minutes 45 seconds to conduct the work though fifteen years earlier he had indicated 8 minutes 26 seconds in the score!”

2. Examples of serialism:
   a. Strict time indications, notated in seconds, at the bottom of the score.
   b. Specific pitches notated in individual parts, which collectively form a cluster.

v. “The real strength of *Threnody* lies not only in the associative values it evokes, but in its compelling sense of drama…The source of *Threnody*’s drama comes from two opposing forces: **sustained clusters** and **points of sound.**”

   1. The interplay of texture style (made manifest by sustained clusters) and pointillism.

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**c. Performance Practice**

i. Symbols/Technique

   1. See pg. 409 in Anthology for composer’s list of extended playing techniques.
      a. Included techniques are: various quarter tones, notes of indefinite pitch, bowing the instruments in various places (e.g., between tailpiece and bridge, on tailpiece, on bridge), percussion effects made by striking the body of instrument, and various speeds of vibrato and tremolo.

   2. Anthology pg. 398, measure 16:

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12 Mieczyslaw Tomaszewski, Liner Notes.
15 Foy, “Textural Transformations”, 64.
16 Ibid.

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a. “Flageolet tones”, more commonly known as harmonics. The indication of a glissando that follows the notation for flageolet tones lets the player know to execute a glissando of harmonics.

3. More common (standard) techniques are also used:
   a. con/senza sordino = with/without mute
   b. pizz. (pizzicato)/arco = plucked/bowed
   c. ord. = ordinario = return to “normal” bowing after use of an extended technique
   d. s.p. = sul ponticello = bow as close to the bridge as possible (without being on top of it)
   e. s.t. = sul tasto = bow near or barely over the fingerboard
   f. c.l. = col legno = bowing with the stick, instead of (or with very, very little) hair
   g. l. batt. = legno battuto = striking the string with the stick of the bow.
Bibliography

Books


Articles


Dissertations


Online Sources


Recordings

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