

= Threni (Stravinsky) =

Threni : id est Lamentationes Jeremiae Prophetae , usually referred to simply as Threni , is a musical setting by Igor Stravinsky of verses from the Book of Lamentations in the Latin of the Vulgate , for solo singers , chorus and orchestra . It is important among Stravinsky 's compositions as his first and longest completely dodecaphonic work , but is not often performed . It has been described as " austere " but also as a " culminating point " in his career as an artist , " important both spiritually and stylistically " and " the most ambitious and structurally the most complex " of all his religious compositions , and even " among Stravinsky 's greatest works " .

Stravinsky composed Threni in 1957 ? 1958 for the Venice Biennale , and it was first performed there in September 1958 . A performance in Paris two months later was a disaster , attributed to inadequate performers and insufficient rehearsals . It led to mutual recriminations between Stravinsky , Pierre Boulez and Robert Craft . The work was first published in 1958 and first recorded in 1959 , in a recording conducted by the composer .

As Threni was intended for concert rather than liturgical use , Stravinsky chose the text freely from the early chapters of the Book of Lamentations . It has three movements : the large central movement is surrounded by two much shorter ones . Ernst Krenek composed a setting of the Lamentations in 1942 , and Stravinsky acknowledged that it might have influenced him . He considered it less likely that works by Renaissance composers , including Tallis , Byrd and Palestrina , had influenced him , although he had studied such music .

= = History = =

Stravinsky composed Threni between the summer of 1957 and the spring of 1958 , beginning it on 29 August 1957 at the piano of the nightclub in the hotel where he was staying in Venice , and completing it before 27 March of the next year . It was first performed on 23 September 1958 in the hall of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco , Venice . Stravinsky dedicated the performance to Alessandro Piovesan , director of the Venice Biennale , who had recently died .

The first Paris performance , on 14 November 1958 , was disastrous . According to Stephen Walsh , Pierre Boulez failed to fulfil his undertaking to obtain adequate performers , and those that he could obtain broke down several times . The audience response was polite at first , but when Stravinsky refused to return and take a bow , it gradually descended into jeers . Stravinsky said he would never conduct in Paris again . Stravinsky felt humiliated by what he called a " scandalous concert " , writing in his diary immediately after the performance that it was the " unhappiest concert of my life " and blaming Boulez for the result . Robert Craft adds that Boulez had promised to rehearse Threni , but failed to do so . Stravinsky nevertheless had a share in the blame for not cancelling the concert despite the pleas of family and friends , including his wife and Nadia Boulanger . Conceding that the performance was a " catastrophe " , Boulez nevertheless insisted that he did in fact participate in the piano rehearsals , together with Stravinsky , whom he had tried in vain to persuade to be more firm with the singers . He concluded that Stravinsky " was not a good conductor ; he was a terribly lousy conductor " , and the problems with the singers were compounded because " the orchestra had been ill @-@ prepared by Craft " . While agreeing that the singers were " absolutely awful " , Boulez protested they had been chosen not by himself , but by an agent in charge of the Aix @-@ en @-@ Provence festival .

Stravinsky himself conducted the first recording in January 1959 with the Columbia Symphony Orchestra . This recording has been reissued several times since first being published on LP in 1959 , and forms part of the 2007 release of Stravinsky 's works by Sony .

Threni was first published by Boosey & Hawkes in 1958 . Conducting from this score is difficult because of a shortage of bar lines . Asked by Robert Craft about this , Stravinsky said , " The voices are not always in rhythmic unison . Therefore , any bar lines would cut at least one line arbitrarily " . He recommended the conductor to " merely count the music out as he counts out a motet by Josquin " . However , a revised edition , with several changes to the barring as well as some corrections , was issued in 1965 .

Stravinsky had already used twelve @-@ tone technique earlier in the 1950s , both in *Canticum Sacrum* (1955) and in *Agon* (1957) . But neither of these is exclusively dodecaphonic , whereas *Threni* is .

= = Orchestration = =

Threni is scored for one soprano , one contralto , two tenor and two bass soloists , chorus and an orchestra of 2 flutes , 2 oboes , cor anglais , 2 clarinets (second doubling alto clarinet in F) , bass clarinet , contrabass sarrusophone , flugelhorn , 4 horns , 3 trombones (1 alto , 1 tenor , 1 bass) , tuba , timpani , tamtam , harp , celesta , piano and strings . (The flugelhorn is actually listed as " bugle " by the publisher , though in the " orchestration " list at the head of the score the specification is for " Contralto Bugle in B ? (Fluegelhorn) " , and in the score itself , where all the other instruments are named in Italian , it is called in French and German , " Bugle C @-@ alto (Flügelhorn) " . However , the part is played on the flugelhorn . The French word for flugelhorn is bugle à pistons , and the Italian is flicorno .)

= = General attributes = =

= = = Text = = =

Stravinsky wrote *Threni* for the Venice Biennale , not for liturgical use , and he chose the words himself to suit his musical purposes . The complete text is included in Kuster 's analysis . The text includes the Hebrew letters that begin the verses in some chapters of the Lamentations of Jeremiah . These are always set for chorus and have been likened to " a series of illuminated initials embellishing a manuscript " .

= = = Musical style = = =

Stravinsky himself described his treatment of pitch in *Threni* as " a kind of ' triadic atonality ' " , contrasting this with the " tonality repetition " of his ballet scores . *Threni* makes extensive use of canons . It also uses pitchless chanting in the choir ? the first time Stravinsky had done this .

The score calls for a large orchestra , but never uses it in tutti , preferring small groups of individually selected instruments at any one time .

The principal 12 @-@ tone row for *Threni* is D ? -G ? -G ? -A ? -C ? -A ? -D ? -B ? -E ? -C ? -F ? -F ? . Stravinsky makes considerable use of the tonal ? even diatonic ? possibilities of this row . However , Stravinsky does not really use twelve @-@ tone technique in depth in this work , relying on free transposition and combination , selection , and repetition , so that the character of the music is actually not very different from his earlier works : the beginning of " *Sensus spei* " , for example (especially the many repeated notes in the alto solo , and the repeated response from the chorus) , recalls *Renard* and *Les noces* , and the two short passages for strings and chorus near the beginning setting the Hebrew letters caph and res are reminiscent of places in *Orpheus* (1948) .

= = = Influences = = =

The work most likely to have influenced Stravinsky 's *Threni* is the *Lamentatio Jeremiae prophetae* , opus 93 , by Ernst Krenek , for 8 @-@ part unaccompanied choir , composed in 1942 but only published in 1957 (the year before *Threni*) . Stravinsky himself said that he liked this work , that he had read a treatise by Krenek on twelve @-@ tone counterpoint , and that " Perhaps my own *Threni* shows contact with [Krenek 's] Lamentations . " Stravinsky 's decision to rely on a tactus beat rather than on barlines in the " *Querimonia* " section is one instance .

Edgar Murray finds *Threni* less expressive than the Krenek , and more like the Lamentations of Thomas Tallis . Stravinsky , however , while acknowledging that he had studied the Tallis settings

and works by William Byrd and Palestrina , did not believe that they had influenced his music .

Other resemblances have been observed ? for example , the male @-@ quartet episode in the " Querimonia " was probably suggested by Carlo Gesualdo 's Aestimus sum ? though such things may be better characterized as " identifications " than " influences " .

The series used by Pierre Boulez in his Structures 1a is found in the sketches for Threni , but it differs so fundamentally from the row Stravinsky actually used that its relevance to Threni is unclear .

= = Movements = =

Threni has three movements , corresponding to the three chapters of the Lamentations of Jeremiah from which the texts used in the work are taken . The following is a summary . A detailed musical analysis and the complete Latin text , side by side with the English of the King James version of the Bible , are available in the thesis by Andrew Kuster .

= = = 1 . De Elegia Prima = = =

After a short orchestral introduction , the movement begins with the words " Incipit lamentatio Jeremiae Prophetiae " (here begins the lamentation of the prophet Jeremiah) , after which the music sets Lamentations chapter 1 , verses 1 , 2 (first part) , 5 (first part) , 11 (last part) and 20 . A Hebrew letter precedes each verse used .

= = = 2 . De Elegia Tertia = = =

This movement uses text from chapter 3 of Lamentations , with a Hebrew letter preceding each block of three verses . It is much longer than the other two movements combined , and is divided into three sections :

Querimonia

(complaint) uses verses 1 ? 6 and 16 ? 21 .

Sensus spei

(sense of hope) uses verses 22 ? 27 , 34 ? 36 , 40 ? 45 and 49 ? 57 .

Solacium

(solace) uses verses 58 ? 64 .

= = = 3 . De Elegia Quinta = = =

This is by far the shortest movement of the work . It begins with the words " Oratio Jeremiae Prophetiae " (prayer of the prophet Jeremiah) , after which the music sets Lamentations chapter 5 , verses 1 , 19 and 21 . No Hebrew letters are associated with this text .

= = Discography = =

Stravinsky : Threni , id est Lamentationes Jeremiae Prophetiae (1957 ? 58) , Igor Stravinsky Conducting . Bethany Beardslee (s) ; Beatrice Krebs (contralto) ; William Lewis and James Wainner (tenors) ; Mac Morgan (baritone) ; Robert Oliver (bass) ; The Schola Cantorum (Hugh Ross , dir .) ; Columbia Symphony Orchestra ; Igor Stravinsky conducting (recorded 5 ? 6 January 1959 , New York) . LP recording , monaural . Columbia Masterworks ML 5383 . New York : Columbia Records , 1959 . Reissued on Stravinsky : Choral Works . Igor Stravinsky Recorded Legacy 14 . 2 @-@ LP set . CBS 37527 ? 37528 . [N.p.] : CBS , 1981 . Reissued on Igor Stravinsky Edition , Vol . 11 . 2 @-@ CD set . Sony SM2K 46301 . [N.p.] : Sony Classical , 1991 . Reissued on Disc 21 (88697103112 @-@ 21) , " Sacred Works vol . 2 " , of Works of Igor Stravinsky . 22 @-@ CD set . Sony Classical 88697103112 . New York : Sony BMG Music Entertainment , 2007 .

Stravinsky Vol . VI : Symphony of Psalms , Les Noces , Lamentations of Jeremiah . The Philharmonia ; The Simon Joly Chorale ; Robert Craft , cond . In Les Noces : International Piano Quartet , Tristan Fry Percussion Ensemble , Alison Wells (soprano) , Susan Bickley (mezzo @-@ soprano) , Martyn Hill (tenor) , Alan Ewing (basso profundo) ; In Threni : Julie Moffat (soprano) , Jennifer Lane (mezzo @-@ soprano) , Martyn Hill and Joseph Cornwell (tenors) , David Wilson @-@ Johnson and Martin Robson (basses) . (Symphony of Psalms recorded 5 & 6 January 2001 ; Les Noces recorded 8 & 9 January 2001 ; Threni recorded 25 ? 30 June 2001 ; all recorded at Abbey Road Studio One , London , England .) Koch KIC @-@ CD @-@ 7514 . New York : Koch International Classics , 2002 .

Stravinsky : Threni , Requiem Canticles . Collegium Vocale Gent ; Royal Flemish Philharmonic ; Philippe Herreweghe , cond . Christina Landshamer (soprano) , Ewa Wolak (alto) , Maximilian Schmitt (tenor) , Magnus Staveland (tenor) , Florian Boesch (bass) , David Soar (bass) , recorded 13 ? 15 October 2014 . PHI ? LPH020 . Phi Classics , 2016 .