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# **Sorrow and Serenity in Visions of Impermanence: Penderecki's *Eighth Symphony***

Krzysztof Penderecki's *Eighth Symphony*, entitled "Lieder der Vergänglichkeit", belongs to the category of "vocal symphonies". These are hybrid works consisting of a chain of orchestral songs strung together like the movements of a large instrumental composition. The scoring may include several vocal soloists, one or two choirs, and a large orchestra. The Symphony no. 8 is one of three consecutive vocal symphonies in Penderecki's oeuvre. Their numbering has intrigued many music lovers. In 1996 and 2005 the composer of at the time five instrumental symphonies<sup>1</sup> introduced the piece with the subtitle "Seven Gates of Jerusalem" as Symphony no. 7 and another, called "Lieder der Vergänglichkeit", as Symphony no. 8, respectively, without at that point having completed a sixth symphony. This puzzlement lasted for ten years after the premiere and publication of the revised version of Symphony no. 8 in 2007. It was only in 2017 that Penderecki's sixth symphony, entitled

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<sup>1</sup> Symphony no. 1 (1972-1973), Symphony no. 2 ("Christmas Symphony," 1979-1980), Symphony no. 3 (1988-1995), Symphony no. 4 (*Adagio*, 1989), Symphony no. 5 (1991-1992).

“Chinesische Lieder”, was completed. It had its premiere in the Chinese city of Guangzhou, to be followed in May 2018 by the first European performance in Dresden – the two cities that had jointly commissioned the work.

This Symphony no. 6 offers a critical clue: its eight poems draw on the same literary source from which, roughly one hundred years before Penderecki, Gustav Mahler chose the seven poems for his famous composition *Das Lied von der Erde*. It is a poetry collection entitled *Die chinesische Flöte (The Chinese Flute)*, comprising of free translations of famous Chinese poems from the Tang dynasty (618-907), published in 1907 by the German poet Hans Bethge (1876-1946)<sup>2</sup>. When Mahler’s work with six songs for two vocal soloists and orchestra was published in 1912, it was announced as a symphony; the prominent Mahler conductor Leonard Bernstein described *Das Lied von der Erde* as “Mahler’s greatest symphony”.

There is thus an important link between Penderecki and Mahler. Mahler integrated vocal parts into his symphonies on various occasions: Symphony no. 2 (*Resurrection Symphony*) adds two soloists and a choir to the orchestra, Symphony no. 3 one soloist and two choirs, Symphony no. 4 only a soprano soloist. Most prominently, Mahler’s Symphony no. 8 is scored, in addition to the orchestra, for eight vocal soloists, two large mixed choirs and a boys’ choir. It would be an exciting task to examine the relationship and important differences between these two “eighth symphonies”, but that will have to wait for another occasion.

Penderecki’s Symphony no. 8 is scored for soprano, mezzosoprano, and baritone soloists, choir, and orchestra. It was commissioned by the Cultural Ministry of Luxemburg for the opening of the Concert Hall Grande-Duchesse Joséphine-Charlotte, and is dedicated to the venerated Kraków professor, Mieczysław Tomaszewski.

Penderecki’s original structure of the work, completed in 2005, consists of nine “movements”, which appear as three blocks of three. Each block is based on three German poems set in their entirety; in addition, the first song in each group of three is expanded with one stanza from a three-stanza poem by Rainer Maria Rilke.

2 In the 15 years 1907-1922, Bethge compiled 15 volumes with “translations” (i.e. artful adaptations) of Oriental poetry, familiarizing German readers with the most famous works from China, Japan, India, Persia, Turkey, Armenia, and Egypt.

### **“Lieder der Vergänglichkeit”, original structure of 2005**

9 complete poems, with insertion of the 3 stanzas of a tenth poem

1. “Nachts” (Eichendorff) + “Ende des Herbstes”, stanza I (Rilke)
2. “Bei einer Linde” (Eichendorff)
3. “Flieder” (Karl Kraus)
4. “Frühlingsnacht” (Hesse) + “Ende des Herbstes”, stanza 2 (Rilke)
5. “Sag’ ich’s euch, geliebte Bäume?” (Goethe)
6. “Im Nebel” (Hesse)
7. “Vergänglichkeit” (Hesse) + “Ende des Herbstes”, stanza 3 (Rilke)
8. “Herbsttag” (Rilke)
9. “O grüner Baum des Lebens” (Arnim)

Penderecki therefore chose texts by three romantic poets from two consecutive generations<sup>3</sup> and contrasted them with texts by three poets working in the early 20th century<sup>4</sup>. The first performance took place in Luxemburg on 26 June 2005. Subsequently, Penderecki responded to a commission for a work celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Beijing Music Festival by expanding the symphony with three additional poems: one by an additional early-20th-century poet, one on a poem by Li Tai-Po from *Die chinesische Flöte*<sup>5</sup>, and one – the third altogether – on another poem by the romantic poet Eichendorff. This revised version was premiered on 24 October 2007 in Beijing and published in the same year. As my diagram shows, Penderecki each time adds these poems in different places within the original 3 x 3 grouping, thus de-emphasizing the earlier impression of structural regularity.

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3 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749-1832 (1 poem), Achim von Arnim, 1781-1831 (1 poem), Joseph von Eichendorff, 1788-1857 (2 poems).

4 Karl Kraus, 1874-1936 (1 poem), Rainer Maria Rilke, 1875-1926 (2 poems), and Hermann Hesse, 1877-1962 (3 poems).

5 Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), Li Tai Po (701-762) / Hans Bethge (1876-1946).

**“Lieder der Vergänglichkeit”, expanded structure of 2007**

12 complete poems, with insertion of the 3 stanzas as before

- 1. “Nachts” (Eichendorff) + “Ende des Herbstes”, stanza I (Rilke)
- + 2. “Der brennende Baum” (Brecht)
- 3. “Bei einer Linde” (Eichendorff)
- 4. “Flieder” (Karl Kraus)
- 5. “Frühlingsnacht” (Hesse) + “Ende des Herbstes”, stanza 2 (Rilke)
- 6. “Sag’ ich’s euch, geliebte Bäume?” (Goethe)
- 7. “Im Nebel” (Hesse)
- + 8. “Der Blütengarten” (Bethge after Li Tai Po)
- + 9. “Der Abschied” (Eichendorff)
- 10. “Vergänglichkeit” (Hesse) + “Ende des Herbstes”, stanza 3 (Rilke)
- 11. “Herbsttag” (Rilke)
- 12. “O grüner Baum des Lebens” (Arnim)

Penderecki’s *Eighth Symphony* is a work of profound spiritual content. One of the two crucial aspects is the “transience” mentioned in the subtitle. The German adjective “vergänglich” has many nuances; in daily language, it means impermanent or perishable. The noun invites a meditation on the truth that all facets of life on earth are impermanent, from flowers and insects via animals and humans to trees and even mountains and continent positions. For his “Songs of Transience”, Penderecki selected texts about trees: a musical monument to the trees he has planted in the park grounds around his manor at Lusławice. The poetic descriptions double as meditations on the relation between humans and nature, and on transience as a key element of our earthly condition.

While each poetic text deserves a thorough interpretation, here I intend to give just a few hints on Penderecki’s focus on organic nature as a particularly impressive symbol of transience: The first block opens with Eichendorff’s gentle night scene, where the world seems to be at peace. The chiming of bells startles a doe, which immediately goes back to sleep. The shade of the forest feels like the rim of life, while the moving tree tops tell of the Lord passing by and blessing both forest and life. The

appended first stanza from Rilke's "End of Autumn" acts as a counterpoint. It speaks about omnipresent change, caused by something rearing up and bringing death and sorrow. The poem "The Burning Tree", which Brecht wrote while still a schoolboy, turns a tree burning before the backdrop of a dark evening sky into an image of suffering and transfiguration. Despite all-consuming red flames, the tree stands majestic, glorious until the very last minute, when its trunk finally collapses with a momentous crash amidst a dance of red flames. The two subsequent poems reflect the passing of time. The mature man returning to the linden tree whose bark he once marked with the initials of his first love finds the tree aged, the bark hardened and gnarled, and the letters a mere blur, just like the love they were meant to eternalize. By contrast, the former lover's own wound has never quite healed. Even more short-lived is the lilac in Kraus's poem: Barely announcing the coming of spring in the first stanza, it is in full bloom before you turn around. The poet gives thanks for the splendor, aware that in no time it will be a thing of the past.

The second block of poems begins with another gentle and peaceful evening scene. A light breeze moves the twigs of a chestnut. In the gardens, trees dream in moonlight, and the poet, setting aside the violin he has been playing all day, also settles into dreams. The attachment to the song with stanza 2 from Rilke's poem once again provides a counterpoint: Gardens are forever changing, and there is no evidence that their wilting shapes will ever come to life again. Conversely, Goethe contemplates the trees he has once planted, celebrating their growth and wishing that the young love who inspired the planting could enjoy the trees side by side with him. In the subsequent poem, Hesse describes a walk through the fog of old age, symbolized in trees that "do not see one another" but live in utter loneliness. As long as life is bright, there are plenty of friends. But once darkness has fallen or one's sight has become clouded, fullness gives way to loss. Nobody is wise who does not know the murky side of life. By contrast, the Tang dynasty poet Li Tai Po appreciates nature precisely because it is transient, and encourages us to absorb the image of a fully blossoming garden into our soul so as a lasting imprint of beauty and fulfilment.

The third block of poems begins with a long Eichendorff poem that juxtaposes the idyllic nature of a "beautiful green forest" with the treachery and sadness of human enterprises. The forest provides refuge,

reminding humans of what is essential in life. The Hesse poem whose title, *Transience*, focuses the topic of Penderecki's *Symphony no. 8*, makes the tree as a symbol of individual life explicit. Like any deciduous member of an arbor, it too will eventually lose its leaves and, after many such cycles, will ultimately become tired until the very last glow is gone. The final stanza from Rilke's end-of-autumn poem confirms this weariness, concluding with the observation that heaven refuses an answer to our perennial question about emptiness. The second Rilke poem in the symphony, set as an undivided whole, also addresses autumn as the season of resignation. A glance backward may remind us of the fullness of summer, but looking forward, we must recognize that from where he stand, most options are closed as so much of the year – and of our life – has already passed. In Achim von Arnim's poem, which Penderecki chose as a conclusion of his "*Songs of Transience*", we find ourselves in winter. As the poet affirms, with the right attitude, this can be a time of wisdom: while the green tree of life stays in our hearts, its wintry skeleton provides orientation in a landscape deep in snow. The poet understands that this is the point where he must relinquish thoughts and reason in favor of the understanding of the heart, and that in this way he will find himself on the path to eternity.

To summarize: The tree, often visualized as a loner, inspires thoughts about vulnerability and the suffering from passing time, not least because it seems to tall and sturdy. The most melancholy images are those presented in the three separately inserted stanzas from the Rilke poem about the "end of autumn" and the reflections in two of the Hesse poems; the most comforting associations structure the lyrics of this symphony in a symmetric pattern: they appear as a frame and in the center.

This brings me to the music. I will comment on seven aspects: 1) the coloring of a song or its segment by means of unusual instruments, an instrumental solo, or notable vertical arrangements; 2) the bell motif as a symbol of joyful attitude to life despite its vulnerability, and the transience motif as its contrast; 3) chromaticism in various guises and other outstanding means of line shaping; 4) canons and fugatos uniting various instruments, various vocal parts, or both; 5) motivic density and vocal structuring in no. 5; 6) the musical relationship of the three separately attached Rilke stanzas to one another and to the preceding songs; and 7) tonal and other framing devices in the "coda" of the

three Rilke inserts and in the material of the first and last symphonic movements.

Beside the three individual human voices, there are several instrumental soloists. Some of them call particular attention because they add a color that is otherwise not part of the orchestra. This is the case with the alto flute framing the poem about the burning tree with two languid cadenzas, the bamboo flute giving a special flavor to the Chinese poem, the church bell in the final stanza of the Rilke inserts, and the bass trumpet, which plays three extensive inserts in the final movement – not from within the orchestra, but in the hall. The distinction by added instrumental soloists also applies, albeit to a lesser degree, to players rising from the orchestra for short cadenzas and then merging back into the *tutti*, such as the tubular bells chiming in the first poem when we hear about the Lord passing by, the oboe taking a leading role in no. 3, the English-horn framing no. 5, and the French horn moving into the hall in the coda of the Rilke inserts. A third kind of coloring appears with Penderecki's background clusters. They are all soft and thus do not call for attention but rather speak to the listeners' subconscious. Yet they cover the entire spectrum from densely packed to diatonic clusters. In the framing sections of song no. 2, the members of the choir sustain freely chosen notes on 50 ocarinas in an untuned cluster that conveys the eerie scene of a majestic tree in full blaze. In two songs on peaceful poems, nos. 1 and 5, the violins open with 12-tone clusters in 2 and 3 octaves respectively and, in the latter, even present a descending *glissando* of a trilled 24-tone cluster. Conversely, Penderecki envelops the framing sections of Hesse's depressing poem "Fog" in diatonic five-tone clusters manifested both vertically and in overlapping scalar curves.

Turning to the thematic material, I begin with the two figures that recur in several songs. Both are introduced in the opening movement. The first is a semitone fall, G-flat to F, that is later widened to a falling minor ninth. Such a note-pair is well-known in the tradition of classical music as a "sigh" motif. Significantly though, Penderecki uses it in this symphony exclusively in the songs that describe a peaceful atmosphere. The "sigh" recurs prominently in movement 5, the setting of Hesse's "Spring Night", where it sounds a perfect fifth higher, and again in the final song, where it initiates the cadenza of the bass trumpet with the original pitches G-flat–F as a falling minor ninth (Example 1, p. 32).



**Nachts**  
(Joseph von Eichendorff)

**12**  
**8**  
Andante sostenuto

Picc. (3)  
Ob. 1  
Cl. 2 (Clarinetto in La)  
Cr. 1 2  
Tr. bassa 40

con sord.  
quasi da lontano  
a2  
pp

nella sala  
p

Example 1. K. Penderecki, *Symphony No. 8*: the falling semitone, later a minor ninth, mm. 1-4, 7-8, 40-42

The second motif expresses elation. It is introduced by the tubular bells, which chime, as already mentioned, when the text speaks about the Lord passing through the treetops. The “bell motif” with its larger ascending intervals, fifth and tritone, and smaller falling ones, semitone and fourth, can be heard as a kind of enthusiastic curve. Before the bells have completed the presentation of the motif, the mezzo-soprano begins its imitation to the words “schlagen die Glocken” (chime the bells). The vocal soloist then uses the motif for an extensive vocalise, while the imitation continues in the orchestra with entries by horn, clarinet, oboe, flute, trumpet, and trombone (Example 2).

**Campane tubolari**  
quasi da lontano

Perc.  
Mezzosoprano  
Ob. 1  
Cl. 1  
Cl. b. (3)  
Cr. 1 2 3 4  
Mezzosoprano

Strom wie ein silbernes Band, Von fern, von fern nur schla-gen die Glock-ken, schla-gen die Glock-ken

a2  
senza sord.  
p

77 77 77

Example 2. K. Penderecki, *Symphony No. 8*: the bell motif in No. 1

In song no. 6, Goethe's blissful glance at the trees he once planted, the "bell motif" is heard in a stacked entry of the solo violin and the soprano soloist at the word "morgenrötlich", which describes the beauty of a reddened sky at dawn, and again in the vocal line at "genießen", to enjoy. (Note that twice in these entries, the falling semitone is once again G-flat-F, by which the bell motif seems to affirm the positive connotation of the "sigh" figure.) Toward the end of the Goethe song, the singers are literally jubilating: The soprano sings two versions of the "bell motif" (with the falling semitone once again G-flat-F) to the words "neue Freude jeden Tag" (new joy every day), and the choir answers with a repeated "joy, joy, joy" in climactic *fortissimo* (Example 3).

The image displays a musical score for a song, likely from a symphony. It features several staves: Soprano solo, Violin I and II tutti, and a full choir (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass). The score includes lyrics in German, such as "wun - der - bar - - - - - ston, - - - - - wun - der - bar - - - - - stin Träu - - - - - me mor - - - - - gen - - - - - mor - - - - - gen - - - - - rot - - - - - lich" and "dicht bei ihr ge - nie - - - - - ßen mag." The score also includes tempo markings like "Quasi un Walzer poco rubato" and "arco". The "bell motif" is highlighted with boxes in several instances, corresponding to the lyrics "morgenrötlich", "genießen", and "neue Freude jeden Tag".

Example 3. K. Penderecki, Symphony No. 8: the bell motif in No. VI

Among the many motifs encountered only within the confines of one song, one stands out. It appears in the setting of Hesse's "Vergänglichkeit" and can thus be considered as a musical symbol for the melancholy side of the emotions expressed in this symphony. (Significantly, this "transience" motif is again launched from the falling semitone G-flat-F.) Penderecki develops it to a major canon at "wie machst du satt," an



The musical score for Example 4, continuing from the previous page, is arranged in a standard orchestral format. The instruments and parts are as follows:

- Woodwinds:** Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Flute (Fg.), Cor Anglais (Cr.), Trumpet (Tr.), and Trombone (Tbn.).
- Percussion:** Campane tubolari (Tubular Bells).
- Vocal Soloists:** Soprano solo, Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B).
- Strings:** Violin II (VI. II), Viola (Va.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.).

Key musical features and annotations include:

- Ob. 1:** A melodic line starting with a *pp.* dynamic, marked with a box.
- Fg. 1 & 2:** Bassoon parts with *mf* dynamics and *cresc.* markings.
- Cr. 1 & 2:** Cor Anglais parts with *p* dynamics and *cresc.* markings.
- Tr. 1:** Trumpet part with a *senza sord.* (without mute) instruction and *mf* dynamic.
- Perc.:** *Campane tubolari* with *mf* dynamic and *l.r.* (ritardando) marking.
- Soprano solo:** Lyrics: "macht ... du ... satt," with a box around the first measure.
- Soprano (S):** Lyrics: "macht du, wie macht du" with *cresc.* and *pp.* markings.
- Alto (A):** Lyrics: "du satt," with a box around the first measure.
- Tenor (T):** Lyrics: "du satt, wie macht du" with *cresc.* and *pp.* markings.
- Bass (B):** Lyrics: "wie macht du satt," with *cresc.* and *pp.* markings.
- VI. II:** Violin II part with a box around the first measure.
- Va.:** Viola part with *mf* dynamic and *cresc.* marking.
- Vc. & Cb.:** Violoncello and Contrabass parts with *mf* dynamics.

Example 4. Cont.

Picc. (3)  
 Fl. 1 2  
 Ob. 1 2  
 Cl. 1-3  
 Fg. 1 2  
 Cfg.  
 Cr. 1 2  
 3 4  
 Tr. 1  
 2  
 Trb. 1 2  
 3  
 Timp.  
 Perc.  
 Campana tubolari  
 Tamtam  
 Gran cassa  
 Soprano solo  
 S  
 A  
 T  
 B  
 Coro  
 VI. I  
 VI. II  
 Va.  
 Vc. div.  
 Cb.

Musical score for Example 4. Cont. showing orchestral and vocal parts. The score includes parts for Piccolo (3), Flute (1, 2), Oboe (1, 2), Clarinet (1-3), Bassoon (1, 2), Bassoon in C (Cf.), Cor Anglais (Cr.), Trumpet (1, 2), Trombone (1, 2, 3), Timpani (Timp.), Percussion (Perc.) including Campana tubolari, Tamtam, and Gran cassa, Soprano solo, Chorus (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass), Violin I (VI. I), Violin II (VI. II), Viola (Va.), Violoncello (Vc. div.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The score features various dynamics such as *f*, *pp*, *cresc.*, and *ff*, and includes performance instructions like *senza cord.* and *mf*. The vocal parts have lyrics in German: "wie macht du satt und satt und müd, und müd, wie machst wie machst wie machst".

Example 4. Cont.

Instrumental lines not employed as symbols are often built from chromatic fragments (consecutive semitones or minor ninths) interspersed with single tritones. Two of the instrumental cadenzas in this symphony, the framing solo of the alto flute in the song about the burning tree and the first of three solos of the bass trumpet in the final song, may serve as examples, along with one of the many canons, also from no. 2 (Example 5).

**Der brennende Baum**  
(Berthold Brecht)

The image shows three staves of musical notation. The top staff is for Fl. c. (Alto Flute), marked 'Moderato senza misura' and 'con Verstärkung'. It features a melodic line with chromatic fragments and tritones, with rhythmic notation below: T s T s, s T s s T, s, s T. A 'rall.' section follows. The middle staff is for Tr. bassa, marked 'poco meno allegro, tenuto molto, senza misura', with rhythmic notation: s T s, s s T s s s s T, s s s s s, s, s s T s s s T. The bottom staff is for Tr. bassa (I), marked 'poco rall.', with rhythmic notation: s s s s T s s s, f s s, s, s s s s T s, s, s s s s s. Below these are staves for VI. I, VI. II, Va., Vc., and Ch., showing a canon-like texture with chromatic movement.

Example 5. K. Penderecki, *Symphony No. 8*: line shaping with semitones/minor ninths (s) and tritones (T)

An interesting color results when a mainly line made up of semitones, minor ninths, and individual tritones is shared by two complementing instruments (Example 6, p. 38). Vocal lines are less often so extensively chromatic. Among the notable features are the vocalises already mentioned and passages in which a vocal line is doubled not by a single instrument but by a *Klangfarbenmelodie* of several instruments. (Example 7, p. 38).

Example 6: Line shaping with semitones/minor ninths and tritones in complementary instrumental parts.

Musical score for Example 6. The top staff is for Clarinet (Cl.) in 2/4 time, starting with a half rest followed by a melodic line with semitones and tritones. The bottom staff is for Violin solo (Vl. solo) in 2/4 time, starting with a half rest followed by a melodic line with semitones and tritones. The tempo marking is "(rall.) - - - a tempo poco agitato". Performance markings include "pizz" (pizzicato) and "arco" (arco) for the violin.

Example 7: Vocal line doubled in *Klangfarbenmelodie*

Musical score for Example 7, showing the vocal line doubled in *Klangfarbenmelodie*. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Cor Anglais (Cr.), Timpani (Timp.), Percussion (Perc.), and Soprano solo. The vocal line is "lei - se lei - se lei - se von al". The instrumental parts are marked with "pp" (pianissimo) and "arco" (arco).

Example 6 and 7. K. Penderecki, *Symphony No. 8*: line shaping with semitones/minor ninths and tritones in complementary instrumental parts

Polyphonic textures appear in a surprisingly large range of participants. As Penderecki's treatment of the "transience motif" has shown, the orchestra builds intense canons and fugatos. One particularly elaborate example occurs in the final song, where winds and strings unite to a canon with six entries mixing original and inverted direction (Example 8, p. 39).

**agitato molto**

23

Va.

Vc.

Cb.

30

Picc. (3)

Fl. 1  
2

Ob. 1  
2

C. I.

1

Cl.

2

Cl. b. (3)

Fg. 1  
2

Cr.

3  
4

Trb. 1  
2

VI. I

VI. II

Va.

Vc. div.

Cb.

Example 8. K. Penderecki, Symphony No. 8: *tutti* canon in No. XII

The same song also includes a genuine vocal canon (Example 9, p. 40), while the Goethe song No. VI features a vocal/instrumental fugato with entries in various rhythmic shapes (Example 10, p. 40-41).



S  
O grü-ner Baum des Le-bens in mei-ner Brust, in mei-ner Brust, in mei-ner Brust, in mei-ner Brust ver-

A  
O grü-ner Baum des Le-bens in mei-ner Brust, in mei-ner Brust, in mei-ner Brust, in mei-ner Brust ver-

Coro  
O grü-ner Baum des Le-bens in mei-ner Brust, in mei-ner Brust, in mei-ner Brust, in mei-ner Brust ver-

T  
O grü-ner Baum des Le-bens in mei-ner Brust, in mei-ner Brust, in mei-ner Brust, in mei-ner Brust ver-

B  
O grü-ner Baum des Le-bens in mei-ner Brust, in mei-ner Brust, in mei-ner Brust, in mei-ner Brust ver-

Example 9. K. Penderecki, Symphony No. 8: vocal canon in No. XII

Soprano solo  
ein. Brin-get Schat-ten, brin-get Schat-ten brin-get, brin-get Schat-ten brin-get Fröh-lic-te.

Coro  
S  
Brin-get Schat-ten brin-get tra-get Fröh-lic-te tra-get neu-

A  
tra-get Fröh-lic-te neu-

T  
Brin-get Schat-ten, brin-get, tra-get Fröh-lic-te, tra-get neu-e

B  
tra-get Fröh-lic-te, neu-

Soprano solo  
neu-e Freu-de je-den Tag. je-den Tag.

Coro  
S  
-e Freu-de je-den Tag. je-den Tag.

A  
-e Freu-de je-den Tag.

T  
Freu-de je-den Tag. je-den Tag Freu-de.

B  
-e Freu-de je-den Tag.

Example 10. K. Penderecki, Symphony No. 8: vocal/instrumental fugato in No. VI

The musical score for Example 10 consists of several parts:

- Cr. (Clarinet):** Part 1 (1, 2) and Part 3 (3, 4). Part 1 has a dynamic marking of *mf*. Part 3 has a dynamic marking of *f*. A tempo marking *a2* is present above the first staff.
- Tr. (Trumpet):** Part 1 (1, 2) and Part 3 (3, 4). Part 1 has a dynamic marking of *f*. Part 3 has a dynamic marking of *f*.
- Tbn. (Trombone):** Part 1 (1, 2) and Part 3 (3, 4). Part 1 has a dynamic marking of *f*. Part 3 has a dynamic marking of *f*.
- Perc. (Percussion):** Part 1 (1, 2) with the instruction *Campane tubolari*. It has a dynamic marking of *f*.
- Coro (Chorus):** Parts S (Soprano), A (Alto), T (Tenor), and B (Bass). The lyrics are: "Brin - get Schat - ten, tra - get Fröh - le neu - e Freu". The Soprano part has a dynamic marking of *f*. The Tenor part has a dynamic marking of *f*.

Example 10. Cont.

Hesse's "Frühlingsnacht" is a prime example for Penderecki's thematic permeation. There are three motivic figures: a "sigh" [a], here in the highest octave, a twofold rising glissando in the violas [b], and a flute figure [c]. Then there are the various pedals on B-flat [x], the 12-tone clusters in the violins [y], and a homophonic gesture [z], which serves as a cadential affirmation of the key of B-flat minor. On a different level of thematic importance are the entries of the English horn, which engages in a dialogue with the baritone soloist.

Furthermore, this song ends with the second of the separately attached Rilke stanzas. The music shares with stanzas 1 and 3 from the poem about the "end of autumn" the scoring for choir, the absence of the vocal soloists, and a scarce instrumental accompaniment. At the same time, the musical material continues from the main song to which the stanza is attached, which is also the case in the other two stanzas. The Rilke

stanzas thus occupy a medium position between a thirteenth poem and a textually offset “coda” to songs with independent lyrics. To this twofold role, Penderecki adds a third perspective when he expands stanza 3, which is attached to song no. 10, with an instrumental postlude. This 13 bar postlude functions as a kind of codetta to the three separated Rilke stanzas and, by restating the 12-tone clusters from nos. 1 and 5, also to the two peaceful poems to which the two preceding Rilke stanzas are attached. In this way, the “codetta” balances the melancholy mood of the divided Rilke poem.

This internal codetta is just one of several framing devices. Penderecki creates a tangible connection between the opening of the first and last songs (Example 11).

The image shows a musical score for Mezzosoprano solo. It consists of four staves of music. The first three staves are vocal lines with lyrics. The lyrics are: "Ich ste-heißend des schat-zen wie an des die Län-der wie däm-mernde Mal-ten, der Strom wie ein sil-bernes Band, Von fünf von fünf nur schla-gen die". The fourth staff is a solo line with lyrics: "O-gel-ner Bann-als Le-ten in mei-ner Brust ver-mückt". The score includes dynamic markings such as *mp*, *pp*, and *f*. There are also some annotations in boxes and circles highlighting specific melodic figures.

Example 11. K. Penderecki, *Symphony No. 8*: framing in F-Phrygian – recurring figures in the vocal lines of Nos. I and XII

Both feature the mezzosoprano soloist singing a contour in F-Phrygian, and these contours are related to one another to an amazing degree: not in the sense of a self-quotation or conventional recapitulation device, but intuitively comprehensible nevertheless. The second overarching connection is that of the three Rilke stanzas: poetically owed to the lines deriving from a single poem, musically in their coloring of barely bolstered choral voices, and tonally in that as an imagined whole, the Rilke poem is anchored in F.

Tonality is in fact the third device used to create unity. The keynote F, intermittently supported by its tritone B-natural, winds its way through the twelve songs. No. I opens with a 6-bar prelude presenting something like a silent struggle of B and F: F is tremoloed in the first violins and later also sustained in the clarinet, while both the cello motif and the 12-tone

chord of the second violins peak on B. F wins out and is maintained as an anchor throughout stanza I. The conclusion returns to F, before the added Rilke stanza leads away from it. In no. II, the dramatic second stanza closes with an eight-tone chord over F, played by all winds and strings in fivefold *fortissimo* attacks. No. V, as we have seen, opens on B-flat (conventionally the dominant of F). This time it is the added Rilke stanza that provides the conclusion on F, even one in a very harmonic F minor. In No. VI, the vocal/instrumental coda with which Penderecki expands the poem concludes on an exultantly repeated "*Freude, Freude, Freude*" sounding in an enriched F-major triad. In No. VII, the recapitulating fourth stanza is solidly rooted in F. No. X – the third song to be expanded by a Rilke stanza – begins with 17 measures over F, with its initial stanza features a canon based on the "motif of transience", which describes a turn figure around the pitch F. Finally, No. XII opens over F, with the mezzo-soprano beginning with a contour in F-Phrygian. The majestic third stanza, launched by the bass trumpet from B-natural, soon settles again on F. After some harmonic detours, the symphony closes on two static pitches: B-natural and F, against which the choral voices (except for some basses) and the strings (without the basses) rise in slow *glissando* to the highest register in their reach, where they die away. The keynote and its tritone are further corroborated by the three salient motifs: the sigh motif with its semitone fall from G-flat to F, the bell motif in its two guises [E-B-F-E-B and F-C-G-flat-F-C], and the transience motif with its turn figure around F: G-flat-F-E-F.

In a commentary on occasion of the first European performance of the symphony in Warsaw on 31 January 2008, Penderecki confessed: "The symphony is my autobiography, it is as if a diary written with notes, everything that has happened in my life in the last 35 years, [...] it is the sum of experiences, [...] the most important music of my life"<sup>6</sup>.

And Regina Chłopicka writes in her contribution to the volume *Music as a Message of Truth and Beauty*:

The *Eighth Symphony* allows us to raise the veil which conceals the thoughts and ideas from the internal world of the composer, where his two passions for music and nature, for composing and planting

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6 Quote after R. Chłopicka, *Krzysztof Penderecki "Saint Luke Passion" and the "Eighth Symphony «Lieder der Vergänglichkeit»" – in the Sphere of Existential Reflection*, trans. W. Chłopicki [in:] *Music as a Message of Truth and Beauty*, eds T. Malecka, M. Pawłowska, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, Kraków 2014, p. 416.

trees, are inextricably linked. Time past, recalled by the words of great German poets, leads to melancholic existential reflection. The human being and the tree are subject to the same laws of transition, and the suffering and lonely search for the path to take define the condition of man in the world, although, as von Arnim writes, the trail is infinite<sup>7</sup>.

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Chłopicka Regina, Krzysztof Penderecki "Saint Luke Passion" and the "Eighth Symphony «Lieder der Vergänglichkeit»" – in *the Sphere of Existential Reflection*, trans. W. Chłopicki [in:] *Music as a Message of Truth and Beauty*, eds T. Malecka, M. Pawłowska, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, Kraków 2014.

## Smutek i spokój w wizji niestałości, czyli VIII Symfonia Pendereckiego

### Streszczenie

*VIII Symfonia* Krzysztofa Pendereckiego *Lieder der Vergänglichkeit* przynależy do tradycji symfonii wokalnych. Oparta – w uzupełnionej wersji z roku 2007 – na poezji niemieckiej powstałej pomiędzy 1780 a 1920 rokiem, jest dziełem dogłębnie duchowym. Penderecki dobrał rozmaite teksty o drzewach; jest to muzyczny pomnik drzew, które zasadził w swym lusławickim parku. Opisy poetyckie są zarazem medytacjami na temat związku człowieka i natury. Poruszają temat przejściowości i słabości kondycji ziemskiej, zestawione jakby w kontrapunkcie z wizjami spokoju i radości w obliczu pogodnego porządku i świętości wszelkiego życia na tej planecie. W oparciu o krótkie opisy całościowej struktury oraz perspektyw każdego z zawartych w dziele wierszy, w artykule tym skupiam się na kluczowych elementach języka muzycznego, kładąc nacisk zwłaszcza na ich rolę w osobistym poszukiwaniu podjętym w *VIII Symfonii* przez kompozytora.

**Słowa kluczowe:** symfonia wokalna, przemijanie, poezja niemiecka, drzewa, Penderecki

**Keywords:** *Liedersinfonie*, transience, German poetry, trees, Penderecki

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, p. 430.