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Troping of Meaning in Penderecki's *Credo**

The words we use to characterize expressive or spiritual states in music
are often construed as metaphors, and yet they typically describe
actual or literal features of the music. To speak of music as grieving
can be considered a rather literal description if the music possesses
a constellation of features such as heaviness, slow tempo, weeping or
sighing gestures, dark register, and minor mode that together typically
correlate with expressions of grief in Western music. But music can
create its own metaphors, as I have demonstrated in my work on
musical meaning in Beethoven[1], by combining (or juxtaposing in such
a way that their combination is implied) two such clusters of elements
with independent expressive correlations. What may emerge from the
interaction, or troping, is a new expressive meaning, not unlike the
process of troping in literary language.

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1 Robert S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and
Interpretation*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1994; idem, *Interpreting Musical
Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert*, Indiana University Press,
Bloomington 2004.

For example, if Beethoven combines, in one eight-bar theme, a Baroque contrapuntal sequence with a military fanfare followed by a pastoral musette, the unusual conglomeration of topics demands that we interpret their fusion, or dialogical interaction. In the theme that launches the *finale* of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in A Major, Op. 101 (Example 1), a fanfare-like figure is treated imitatively, creating a 2-3 suspension chain in the first four bars, which is answered by a musette-like combination of syncopated pedal point and swirling sixteenths, evoking the pastoral.

Example 1. L. van Beethoven, Op. 101, *Finale*, mm. 28-38[2]

How might we interpret this profusion of topics? If the fanfare suggests victory, then the learned counterpoint gives that victory the weight of authority (or perhaps the nobility of self-possession). The pastoral musette then inflects that heroic stance with an element of interiority, perhaps suggesting that this is an inner victory of the spirit, rather than merely an outer victory of the will (as in the *finale* of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*).

It is characteristic of late styles to more subtly inflect meaning in this way, and *Credo* provides a wonderful example. Penderecki's eclectic incorporation or referencing of multiple styles is not merely a response to the monolithic manifestos of serialism and its systematic offshoots, as though an aesthetic of pluralism were an act of psychic compensation or

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2   The following example is drawn from the discussion in Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1994, pp. 107, 170-71.

a maneuver to create creative space. Nor is his eclectic approach simply an integration of techniques in quest of a unifying, or at times intentionally fragmentary or even postmodern style. There may be aspects of these motivations at play, but Penderecki's much discussed stylistic synthesis can also be understood in terms of a sophisticated set of tropes – both musical and textual – that creatively interact to support an emergent, and original, expression of spiritual meaning. I will argue that *Credo* speaks to the complex issue of spiritual belief by using these tropes to express and affirm a religious faith that responds to the current state of our world. Going even further than Beethoven's finale to the *Ninth Symphony*, Penderecki masterfully draws his materials from the entire historical range of European music.

The opening theme of the *Credo* (Example 2, p. 16) has already been analyzed for its motives and significant chord relationships by Ann K. Gebuhr[3]. Regina Chłopicka notes that this theme, which returns for a significant climax in the next to last movement, is also the source for themes and motives in the interior movements[4]. Gebuhr further explores these relationships, and although they support my analysis, they will not be the focus of my investigation. Instead, I will explore how troping of music and text operates at different levels in *Credo*.

The opening thematic section (mm. 1-15) may be interpreted tropologically as an allegory, or extended poetic conceit, in which the emergence of historical musical styles tracks the historical sequence of the text, exemplifying the gradual shift from the mystical profundity of God the Father to the incarnation of the divine in Jesus Christ, the Son. The music-historical styles evolve from Medieval chant to Classical functional harmony, with a Romantic epiphany implied at the very last. Note the progressive stages of this evolution, which can only roughly be demarcated into stylistic periods (for each point, see the corresponding circled numbers in Example 2, p. 16):

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3   Ann K. Gebuhr, *Od szkicu do rzeczywistości. Pre-text w „Credo" Pendereckiego* [in:] *Krzysztof Penderecki – muzyka ery intertekstualnej. Studia i interpretacje,* Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, Kraków 2005.
4   Regina Chłopicka, *Krzysztof Penderecki: musica sacra – musica profana: a study of vocal-instrumental works*, trans. W. Chłopicki, Instytut Adama Mickiewicza, Warszawa 2003, p. 130.

Medieval

1. A monophonic, axial chant in B-flat Phrygian mode (m. 1).

2. The emergence of polyphony by oblique motion against a pedal, as found in the first treatises on organum (m. 2).

3. Parallel thirds – neither fourths nor fifths here, but parallel motion as a simple enrichment of the line (mm. 2 ff.), and perhaps suggesting folk-like laments of Eastern-European provenance.

Medieval/Renaissance

4. Emergence of imitation: basses, altos, and tenors imitate the oblique gesture, but with different rhythms and pacing (m. 4).

5. Contrary motion, as the lines become more independent (mm. 4 ff.).

Renaissance

6. Tertian sonorities, derived from lines, but heard as chordal entities (mm. 2 ff.).

7. Oppositional sonority succession to achieve cadential closure: here, a plagal ii half-diminished 4/2 to i in B-flat minor, if labeled anachronistically (m. 4). Carl Dahlhaus[5] referred to this early cadential formula as oppositional (the concept of the _Gegenklang_).

Baroque

8. Hints of harmonic functionality: C Mm4/2, suggesting a V4/2 in F minor, but resolving irregularly to a B-flat m7, which functions enharmonically (A-Flat = G-sharp) as an augmented 6th chord, resolving to an "arrival 6/4"[6] in D minor (mm. 7-8).

9. Picardy-third cadence, but above a "pedestal" pedal point on A (m. 9)

10. Rhetorical break (rest in m. 9)

11. Transposed return as a formal technique (the plagal ii half-diminished 4/2 to i, here transposed to A minor, followed by the Phrygian oblique gesture (m. 9).

5   Carl Dahlhaus, _Untersuchungen über die Entstehung der harmonischen Tonalität_, Bärenreiter, Kassel–Basel–Paris–London–New York 1968.
6   R.S. Hatten, _Musical Meaning in Beethoven…_, op. cit., p. 15.

Baroque/Classical

12. Functional harmony based on the circle of fifths, D: iii-vi-ii-V-V4/2-I6, with strong rhetorical/expressive impact when the contrary motion climaxes on I6 (mm. 11-13).

13. Emergence of functionally-motivated dynamics (*crescendo* to climax in m. 13).

14. "Once-more" technique, as the progression recycles, slightly varied (mm. 13-15).

Classical/Romantic

15. Exceeding the original climax by rhythmic acceleration, and breaking through to a new climax on B-flat in first inversion, a mystical chromatic-third relationship from the previous D in first inversion, with the sudden shift heard as an "epiphany".

Note that the trope of emergence is supported by the move from mystical (pitch-centered) chant in B-flat Phrygian, representing belief in a primordial God, to directional (functional) harmony in D major, representing belief in the incarnation of his Son, an incarnation that is exemplified by emergence of diatonic harmony. The climactic breakthrough to B-flat at the end suggests the mystical provenance of Jesus as Son of God, symbolically affirmed by the union of B-flat in the soprano with D in the bass[7]. The immediacy and annunciatory force of the B-flat first-inversion triad is also due to its allusion to what I call the "recitative chord"[8], a first inversion major chord used frequently by Beethoven to suggest an important shift to direct discourse, as in a recitative (compare the opening of the "Tempest" piano sonata, Op. 31, no. 2). Beethoven uses this effect at the climactic recapitulation of the first movement of the *Ninth Symphony*, with the stunning force of a first-inversion D major chord that serves to announce the impending tragic crux of the movement. Brahms appropriated the effect by beginning his D minor Piano Concerto with a similarly annunciatory first-inversion B-flat chord[9].

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7   The transcendent breakthrough to B-flat also alludes to Mahler, an important intertextual source throughout *Credo*.

8   R.S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*…, op. cit., p. 175.

9   Ibidem, p. 184.

Example 2. K. Penderecki, *Credo*, opening Chorus, mm. 1-15

Penderecki's trope in the opening bars of *Credo* builds increasingly to
a point of powerful affirmation, as the music shifts from linear, Phrygian

mournfulness to harmonic-functional, major-mode brightness. In the course of the final phrase (mm. 13-15) the texture also thickens to ten parts and grows dynamically to *fortissimo*, with the communal force of the voices enhanced by their singing in the same rhythm. This communal accretion helps create a more complex trope; not only do we hear an allegory of historical styles troping the emergence of Jesus as both historically human and incarnation of the divine, but the powerful enunciation of that emergence enhances the trope with a parallel emergence, that of humanity's hope in a greater faith, as mediated by the Son of God.

Troping, of course, has an earlier, musicological meaning, first applied to an historical growth process in Medieval chant. As Richard Hoppin explains, "all tropes have one characteristic in common: they expand standard items in the liturgy by the addition of words or music or both"[10]. One might consider this to be a useful structural definition, but it neglects the expressive troping that inevitably results from such additions to the liturgy. Penderecki's use of textual interpolations in *Credo*, as outlined by Ray Robinson[11] (and earlier by Regina Chłopicka), clearly fits the structural definition given by Hoppin. I will demonstrate how the expressive dimension of troping also comes into play, not only through the addition of text, but through its interaction with surrounding text and their musical settings.

In a global sense, the additions of texts from several sources and languages may suggest a general, "all-embracing" trope — here, a deeply personal embrace of languages and traditions that have special meaning for Penderecki, including Latin selections from the Roman liturgy, Polish hymns, and even, for one phrase, a German Protestant chorale. The two-line Polish addition to the *Crucifixus*: "You who suffer the wounds for us, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us", may be seen to compensate for the absence of the *Christe eleison* from the deleted opening *Kyrie* of the Mass. Indeed, Penderecki's original intention to set the complete Mass had changed during the course of his composing, and he ultimately decided to concentrate on the *Credo*, with its central affirmation of faith.

Expressing in music one's faith in the modern world is a daunting challenge, and Penderecki's textual interpolations may also be understood as a response to this challenge. By expanding the *Credo*, he could enhance the straightforward liturgical ritual of affirmation by dramatizing

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10   Richard Hoppin, *Medieval Music* (The Norton Introduction to Music History), W.W. Norton & Company, New York 1978, p. 144.
11   Ray Robinson, *Studies in Penderecki. Volume 1*, Prestige Publications, Princeton 1998.

a very human struggle toward faith in the encounter with tragedy and grief. For example, Ray Robinson[12] notes that the *Crucifixus* becomes an adoration of the Cross, which is supported textually by the interpolation of the Latin hymn, *Crux fidelis*, as well as a title that appears in the score for a chamber-like meditation for strings, *Crucam tuam adoramus Domine* ("we adore your cross, Lord"). As we will see, in addition to the heightened personal drama of its reflective/meditative moments, Penderecki's *Credo* creates a dramatic scenario that follows the stages of the Passion as recounted in the liturgy of the Credo.

Typically, composers have sought ways to reduce the text of the Credo, which risks becoming a dry listing of beliefs as enunciated in the Nicene Creed. Penderecki's opposite approach to add text, still embraces tradition by dividing of the text into sections treated either meditatively or dramatically. But tropes are abundant in the topical treatment of these sections as well. Beethoven conveyed the mystical holiness and interiority of the miracle of incarnation in his *Missa solemnis* by using the Dorian mode. Penderecki prepares for his *Et incarnatus* third movement by introducing lamenting chromaticism in the second movement to portray the descent to earth from Heaven ("Descendit de caelis"), creating a trope that may be interpreted as Jesus's painful descent into humanity, as an anticipation of the suffering He will face, or both. The tenor soloist anticipates the *Et incarnatus* text by projecting the modal mysticism of D Aeolian in the context of a return of the parallel-thirds motive from the opening of *Credo*. In rondo-like alternation with this tragic and solemn music, Penderecki captures the drama of humanity's response by juxtaposing music of premature, or immature, celebration, complete with dance rhythms and glockenspiel, at the text "Qui propter nos homines / Et propter nostrum salutam", which affirms that Jesus came down for us and for our salvation. The movement, marked *Et incarnatus est* in the score, then begins with a symphonic *Adagio* for strings, perhaps because for Penderecki, mysticism defies verbal expression. However, a melismatic alto aria soon follows.

Having already used a conventional, linear-descending chromatic lament for the descent from Heaven, Penderecki requires yet another strategy to express the emotions attendant upon the *Crucifixus*, which is the typical location for such chromatic laments (as in Bach's B Minor Mass). Penderecki opts instead for stabbing brass notes, viscerally conveying the pain of sharp nails being driven into flesh. This is followed by a Phrygian

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12 Ibidem.

modal lament in the alto solo, also drawn from the opening parallel-third motive (the diatonic-descent-plus-turn figure).

Upon insertion of the hymn *Crux fidelis*, the sopranos and altos again return to the thematic passage in parallel thirds from the opening of *Credo*, until at last a conventional chromatic lament appears, leading to a chaste and brief setting of *Et sepultus est* to convey Jesus's entombment. Then, the drama of this internal Passion pauses for another reflective instrumental set piece, as the strings in chamber music texture enact the adoration of the section entitled *Crucem tuam adoramos Domine*. A funeral march ensues, similar to what one might find in Mahler, and the children sing, in Polish, the interpolated text corresponding to the *Christe eleison*. The role of Jesus is heard above the choir, singing this time in Latin, with the first phrase, "My people, what have I done to thee?" serving as a poignant anticipation of the longer interpolation to come. The chromatic lament pervades this section, leading to another set piece, the interpolated Latin hymn, *Pange lingua*. This is set as a passionate soprano aria, literally singing out the victory that was accomplished by the Cross. The dialogical, Passion-like construction continues with an extraordinarily affective troping of texts and languages under the final notes of the soprano aria, echoed in the oboe. Jesus's plaint is here expanded and shifted to Polish, while layered above it the children's choir sings the single interpolated line of the German Protestant chorale, *Aus tiefer Not schrei ich zu Dir* ("Out of deepest anguish I cry out to Thee"), joining the Polish chorale-style setting until an arrival on a final cadence. This complex troping of languages, styles, and voices may suggest the suffering of the Polish people throughout the wars of the twentieth century, as well as the cries of everyone who suffered under the evil of the Nazi regime. In any case, the troping of suffering and pity is heartrending. The poignant cadence receives mourning commentary by both onstage and offstage solo horns (the latter again recalling Mahler, but in Penderecki's unique melodic style). From the funeral march through this succession of laments, Penderecki has created in effect a higher-level troping of the individual genres of Requiem and Passion with the overarching Mass. The solo clarinet offers the final lament, and when it finally attains a high E, the music cadences, mystically and tragically, with two pairs of chromatic-third-related minor triads, B-flat minor to F-sharp minor, and C minor to E minor, respectively.

In addition to having divided the *Credo* into dramatically contrasting sections, Penderecki also promotes overall continuity through the *attacca* connections between sections and the overarching expressive trajectory of the work. Thus, the subsequent *Resurrexit* section does not shift immediately, as in most classical settings of the Mass, to jubilant music with rising scales, but rather prolongs the tragic aspect of the drama with music more appropriate to a *Dies irae*, as in Verdi's Requiem. Penderecki's motivation for this trope comes from the text, "*Judicare vivos et mortuos*" ("He will come to judge the living and the dead"). A horrific struggle is physically dramatized, and the music tropologically conveys the terror and horror of the judgment to come. Appropriately, the textual interpolation in this movement comes from the *Book of Revelation*, "Then the seventh angel sounded…", and its apocalyptic force is clearly portrayed.

Expressive tropes can be ironic as well as metaphorical, with irony resulting from a contradiction between the connotations of the text ("Resurrexit") and those of the accompanying music (terror and struggle). Interestingly, the music from the *Resurrexit* returns in the following section (*Et in Spiritum Sanctum*) with the words, "Et expecto resurrectionen mortuorum", but now with a new passage for hollow pipes (the boobam) and timpani, suggesting a grotesque vision of the human dead having arisen as skeletons dancing above their graves. The horrific vision of decayed bodies being brought to life is finally undercut by the interpolation of a Latin hymn, *Salva fest die*, with its line, *Qua Deus infernum vicit*, signaling God's victory over Hell. The infernal may have given way to life, but transcendence is still a distant vision.

An expressive trope also emerges from the juxtaposition of public and private modes of experience. Immediately before the excerpt just mentioned, the words *In remissionen peccatorum* ("in remission of sins") is repeated in a *stretto* of endless voices, as though the entire world of sinners were simultaneously confessing their sins. And in the return of the opening Credo statement just prior to that, "invisibilium" is sung by a bass soloist and spun out into the depths, a motivic liquidation that delivers a mystical, personal response in the midst of a collective statement of faith.

Penderecki also creates a larger symphonic continuity by the use of developing variation and returning leitmotifs. At a larger level, one may find tropological significance in the synthesis of choral and symphonic genres, the latter contributing a sense of continuous musical discourse.

The symbolism of tonal regions and dissonance also contributes to the larger dramatic trajectory. For example, the first section ended with the oboe tortuously gaining a high D, but the tonal resolution into D was undercut by a brief A-flat minor chord in the orchestra. *Credo* eventually ends in D, but not before human suffering inflects that ultimate resolution. The final section, expressing belief in the life to come, *Et vitam venturi*, is coupled with a lamenting *Alleluia*, and only the emergent return of the opening *Credo* suffices to dispel this grief with affirmation. Indeed, the final settings of *Et vitam venturi* feature a tortured chromatic ascent, far removed expressively from Beethoven's powerfully positive fugue at this point in his *Missa solemnis*. It is as though Penderecki were representing the very human struggle for faith through tragedy and grief, with the chromatic urging upward enacting a "will to believe" in eternal life. As in Bruckner, however, despite the pilgrim's prolonged efforts, ultimate grace appears suddenly and unearned, here in the form of an abrupt *Amen* in brilliant C major. It was over a pedal C that Penderecki chose to portray the doors figuratively opening for Jesus to ascend to heaven after the tumultuous *Resurrexit*. This peremptory *Amen* on C draws intertextually on the symbolism of C major – compare, for example, the blazing appearance of Light in Haydn's *Creation*. But the completion of Penderecki's drama of belief requires one last breakthrough, here from C to an *Amen* in D, alluding to the earlier breakthrough from D to B-flat in the Credo theme, and completing the symbolic progression from B-flat to D that spans the entire work.

I have explored many levels of troping in Penderecki's *Credo*, and to conclude, I will relate my interpretive concept of troping to Penderecki's own notion of a synthesis of styles. As Ray Robinson writes, Penderecki's "definition of synthesis describes a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. Synthesis cannot depend on the mechanical connecting of elements; it must instead be the homogeneous alloy resulting from a unifying experience"[13]. I have shown that what makes for real synthesis, rather than mere eclecticism, is the way that conflicts between styles, or between music and text, create successful tropes, whether metaphorical or ironical. And these tropes "work" because they fuse the technical with the spiritual. Mieczysław Tomaszewski, commenting on the *Credo*, also emphasizes this interpretation of synthesis:

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13   Ibidem, p. 26.

Credo resulted in a new form of synthesis, a harmonious fusion of highly contradictory features: an expression of force and might with profoundly lyrical emotion. The opening *Credo in unum Deum* resounds with power and strength not heard since Handel's oratorios, Beethoven's *Mass* or Bruckner's *Te Deum*. *Et incarnatus* consists of lyrical and tender phrasing, a new bel canto whose melody nevertheless recalls dodecaphonic practices. *Crucifixus* brings the work to an emotive climax, where contrapuntal voices in an ingeniously woven cluster of melodies, resonate with particularly poignant emotions. The fragment of the plaintive Polish religious song *People, my people, what did I do to deserve this*, appears in the form of an unforgettable refrain from a muted shout to a whisper[14].

Together with the tropes I have examined today, Penderecki's *Credo* projects a continuous, and at times agonizing, drama of the struggle to believe, leading to the grace with which our continuous yearning is ultimately met, through the sacrifice of Jesus. It is a drama filled with tragedy, grieving, and loss; and it suggests an allegorical parallel between the sufferings of Jesus upon having entered the world of humanity, and humanity's own suffering in quest of spiritual salvation. Out of these conjoined tragedies comes, at the very last, the affirmation granted by grace, the final Amen for each individual and for all of humankind, in the unending struggle toward faith. *Credo* is ultimately an expression of that faith, given to us by a composer who fully recognizes the evils of the twentieth century, but who projects his belief in a far greater power.

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14 Mieczysław Tomaszewski, *Krzysztof Penderecki and His Music. Four Essays*, trans. J. Rybicki, Akademia Muzyczna w Krakowie, Kraków 2003, p. 38.

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Tropowanie znaczenia w *Credo* Pendereckiego

S t r e s z c z e n i e

W artykule przedstawiono strategie zestawiania ze sobą różnych stylów muzycznych, a także tekstów w różnych językach, co można określić jako tropowanie *Credo* z Mszy Łacińskiej. Poza definicją tropu dla muzyki średniowiecznej (dotyczącą tekstowych lub muzycznych uzupełnień pieśni liturgicznych), artykuł odwołuje się do tropowania w rozumieniu kreatywnego powstania znaczenia muzycznego za sprawą procesu podobnego do metafory czy ironii. Tropy czysto muzyczne tworzone są poprzez bliskie interakcje odrębnych stylów, tematów i aluzji intertekstualnych w ramach specyficznych lokacji funkcjonalnych. Strategie te wymagają interpretacji opartej na wyjątkowych relacjach znaczeń kojarzonych z każdym elementem muzycznym. Poprzez analizę zawartych w *Credo* różnych sposobów zestawiania jakości muzycznych i tekstowych oraz interpolacji, ukazuję jak Penderecki odnosi się do złożonego problemu wiary i duchowości w naszych czasach. Jego *Credo* jest wyrazem ciągłego, chwilami bolesnego dramatu – wyrazem walki o to, by wierzyć. Prowadzi ona w końcu do zbawienia dzięki poświęceniu Jezusa. Jest to dramat pełen tragedii, żałoby i smutku. Sugeruje alegoryczną analogię cierpień Jezusa, które Go spotkały po staniu się człowiekiem, oraz cierpień człowieczeństwa w poszukiwaniu duchowego odkupienia.

Słowa kluczowe: znaczenie muzyczne, tropowanie, intertekstualność, Penderecki, *Credo*

Keywords: musical meaning, troping, intertextuality, Penderecki, *Credo*