

Krzysztof Penderecki, *Cadenza per viola sola* (1984)

The viola has always been one of Penderecki's favorite instruments, and this is shown in his treatment of the instrument, both in chamber and orchestral music. In 1983, Penderecki composed a concerto for viola as well. At the time he wrote these two pieces, he had largely outgrown the "romantic phase" which produced pieces such as his *Violin Concerto* (1976), the *Symphony No.2* (1979-80), and his *Cello Concerto #2* (1982). These pieces are characterized by his preoccupation with post-Wagnerian chromaticism and a more passionate, seriously expressive mood. Penderecki is probably most famous for his *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* (1960) for 52 string instruments, a piece which uses extreme special effects creating bizarre, frightening sounds. The *Viola Concerto* (1983) and this *Cadenza per viola solo*- an appendix to the viola concerto, not an actual cadenza that is included within the concerto- mark the beginning of Penderecki's new style of compositions where he combines the avant-garde of his early years with the romantic style he wrote in during the 70's and early 80's.

The *Cadenza* begins with Penderecki's "favorite interval", a descending minor second (A-flat to G), creating a sighing effect. This interval is repeated many times as he spins out the phrase within the "Lento" tempo. The entire piece is composed without bar lines, adding to its unpredictability and unsettling yet intense mood that grasps the listener. In the first part, the chromatic sigh motif becomes more and more intensified with triple stop chords and 32nd-note runs being introduced. A series of heavy chords and a rising triplet figure covering a minor ninth on the instrument lead into the fast section of the work, reminiscent of a Bach Violin Partita- only with a Pendereckian twist! The material in this section consists of fast 16th notes with string crossings to an open string, triplets against a drone creating pungent dissonances, jovial parallel thirds, and the rising triplet figure over a minor ninth- similar to the one heard in the opening. The work closes in the "Lento" tempo again, creating an arch form (ABA), in which the piece begins softly, grows in intensity, sustains a loud and violent mood, decreases in intensity, and ends quietly again with the last two notes being Penderecki's favorite interval, the minor second (A-flat to G).

The first performance took place during Penderecki's chamber music festival in Luslawice in September of 1984 performed by Grigorij Schlislin, a Russian violinist/violist much experienced with Penderecki's Viola and Violin concertos.

Notes by Kenneth Martinson