

Psappha

Composed in 1975

Commissioned by the English Bach Festival

Dedicated to Sylvio Gualda

Composed for 3 groups of metals and 3 groups of wood/skins each divided into high, middle, and low in register.

Skins/woods = 9 sounds (3 high, middle, and low)

Metals = 7 sounds (3 high, 1 middle, and 3 low)

Composed on a graph score and consists of 2,390 blocks in length

Premiered by the dedicatee at Round House, London on 2 May 1976

"Psappha" is an archaic form of "Sappho," a great Greek poetess from the Island of Lesbos, born in the 600's BC. Her style was sensual and melodic, and she was one of the first poets to write from the first person, describing love and loss as it affected her personally. The target of her affections was most commonly female, and today both her name and place of residence have become synonymous with woman-love. This emotion and sentimentality does not seem to manifest in Xenakis' interpretation. Written for six groups of instruments, three of wood and skins and three of metal, Psappha is sharp, brittle, and even violent at times. This intensely masculine work seems almost in contradiction to its title. The inspiration here, however, manifests not as aesthetic, but as structure. **The work's rhythmic structures are derived from small rhythmic cells characteristic of Sappho's poetry.** These rhythms pervade the entire work and make both local and large scale appearances. Much of the specifics of instrument choice is left up to the performer: Xenakis writes, "timbre serves only to clarify the rhythmic structures," suggesting the "words" of this poem are only a secondary color to the structures that contain them.

-Samuel Solomon

- According to Harley, this piece is sectional in nature which is broken up according to metronomic speed and timbre. (at points this is hard to follow)
- Constructed using sieve theory. The first 40 beats are based on a sieve with the indices of 8 and 5. The sieve is $5_0 \cup 5_1 \cup 5_3 \cup 8_0 \cup 8_4 \cup 8_6$ – which is articulated through the notes found in line 2 of Group B.
- He uses the entire 1st forty beats to create a proportional canon starting at 764.
 - Group A starts with Group C entering second and Group B entering last.
 - Each voice uses the exact same material at a different rate of speed.
- Also uses the Fibonacci sequence in the piece. A bold statement occurs at beat 2255 where the bass drum (line 3 of Group C) outlines this from 2 – 55 with accents.

Rebonds

Composed 1987-1989

Dedicated to Sylvio Gualda

Duration 12'

Part A – 2 bongos, 3 tom-toms, and 2 bass drums

Part B – 2 bongos, 1 tumba, 1 tom-tom, 1 bass drum, 5 wood blocks

Can be played in either order AB or BA

Composed based on the golden section and Le Corbusier's *Modular*

Part A

- 60 Measures 4/4 = 960 16th notes **(Right Hand the modular)**
- Predominately thru composed
- Golden System Breakdown
 - 593
 - 367
 - 226
 - 140
 - 86 => 1st long rest
 - 54 => Repetition of Beginning (Pillars)
- Unique building structure of the beginning as he introduces all pitches to be used.

Part B

- 87 Measures 4/4 = 1,392 16th notes **(Left Hand of the modular)**
- Divided into sections based on instrument material
 - 479 / 51 / 20 / 480 / 100 / 20 / 242

GS1 = 532 + 860 => 1st Drum Roll (happens in the 3rd section) – large scale evidence of the Golden Section

Drums 2 (480 sixteenth notes)

- BD Roll happens at count 183 m. 46 (GS = 183 + 297) – small scale evidence of the golden section

Drums 1 (479 sixteenth notes)

- 38 reps of the 5 drum pattern
- 1st two patterns are the exact same as the last two patterns (similar to the pillars of Part A)

Okho

Composed in 1989

Dedicated to Trio le Cercle (Willy Coquillat, Jean-Pierre Drouet, and Gaston Sylvestre)

Duration 13'30"

Scored for 3 djembes and a large African drum

Commissioned for the autumn festival in Paris by the French state on the occasion of the Bicentennial Celebration of the French Revolution.

bord clair = clear edge

bord claue sec = dry slap (closed)

bord claue resonant = resonant slap (open)

basse etouffe = low stifled (closed bass tone)

basse normale = normal (base tone)

basse claue = bass slap

Sectional in formal structure

- M. 1- 24
 - 3 + 2 idea, quarter note = 120
 - Given many variations (m. 7, fugue-like)
- M. 25-59
 - New material at quarter note = 56 is interwoven with material from last section quarter note = 120
- M. 60-73
 - Flurry of 32nd notes with gliss
- M. 74 – 79/80
 - Finger nail rolls
- M. 80 – 116 eighth note = 66
 - Ostinato-like, played with fingernails
- M. 117 – end
 - Alternation between eighth note = 70 and 60
 - Material is reminiscent of previously introduced material
 - Distinct Xenakis writing is seen with the nested polyrhythms