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May 6, 2016

Violin Sonata N. 2 (2000)

Krzysztof Penderecki

Having last spring learned Penderecki's first violin sonata under its premiering musician, Ida Bieler, and then performing it for Penderecki's personal assistant, I feel confident that I understand Penderecki's compositional style fairly well. His motivic use of minor sevenths and Major seconds provide a ambiguous key area, without a leading tone, so that his Perfect fourths and fifths seem like resolutions without truly being so in the traditional sense. Furthermore, his continuous use of dotted rhythms create agogic accents that form a predictable pattern, giving the audience a comforting sense of meter, which his written out and forceful accents then counteract with interest. To me, Penderecki's pieces are similar to the dance-like flow of Bach with the elements of modernism viewed in composers like Bartok.

The specific distinction between Penderecki's first violin sonata and second lies with the second's more languid lines and texture. Written for Anne-Sophie Mutter and influenced by the musical Romantic era and its composers, Penderecki uses chromaticism to give the melodic lines more fluidity and gives the violin and piano part multiple voices of equal importance to produce that polyphonic texture audiences are so used to hearing. Although listeners may at least expect the abruptness between sections that modern composers all seem to promise, Penderecki continues the idea of long lines from his melodies and harmonies into the form itself.

Most easily seen in what I consider the Adagio movement of the five-movement sonata, entitled Nocturne, Penderecki composes a fairly long and flowing passage that comes three times within that movements, similar to the traditional form of a Rondo, and then returns in the Coda of the final movement. In this way, Penderecki's Adagio movement in this sonata reminds me of Brahms' Adagio movement in his second sonata, which I believe, similar to the Brahms' evokes a through-composed feeling and an overall sense of ease during the completion of the piece - again, unlike what audiences may expect of a composition written after 1975.