Keren

an interpretation for two trombones written for Stephen Menotti by Mike Svoboda (2022)

Iannis Xenakis (1986)

From the original score:

Keren in Hebrew means "horn". Work written for and dedicated to Benny Sluchin. First performed on September 19, 1986 at the Musica Festival in Strasburg by Benny Sluchin.

"This is an essentially melodic, often modal, work, with however two highly virtuose passages requiring the utmost agility. It is noteworthy that the use of glissandi, a technique that comes naturally to the instrument, is limited to two short episodes, preciscely because Xenakis wanted to avoid too obvious a cliché ... Like that of Beethoven, Xenakis' music, austere, uncomfortable (intellectually as well!), is music of peremptory and regal gestures, whose abrupt grandeur subjetes and confounds, a music of better than elemental power, telluric, never anecdotal, never sentimental, but expressive to the highest degree, making us feel ashamed of our weaknesses, exalting our courage: music of a formidable master of energy ..."– Harry Halbreich

A personal comment:

Like a good deal of compositions by Xenakis, Keren presents the performer with many impossibilities: phrases that are too long for one breath, the lack of rests (there is only a single 16th note rest notated), etc. These problems need creative solutions which the player addresses based on knowledge, objectives, and personality. Having listened to countless performances from dozens of players, taught the work for the past 30 years, and performed it myself since 1989, I feel I have now found an approach in which I can reconcile my respect for the composition and the realities of performing it. This includes a strict tempo, a literal realization of the dynamics as possible, and – perhaps most importantly – interpreting the commas (breath marks) as added time. Since all most players, I have experienced added time, such as when changing the mutes, before and after difficult passages, and simply when they get tired in the end, I suggest interpreting the commas as added time right from the beginning. This sets a tone for the audience and expectations for the music to come. However, the long 32nd note passages still remain impossible to play as a soloist without taking a few breaths and thus breaking the flow.

If one so will, performing *Keren* entails making your own version of the work – adding rests where none are notated and interrupting the flow of passages to breath – which ends up varying substantially from what is notated in many ways. This interpretation for two trombones should be seen as an experiment, an attempt to experience the work in a form that is closer to what is expressed through the notation, than is possible with one performer. It is not an arrangement condoned by the publisher in any way, and therefore, strictly speaking, not legal.

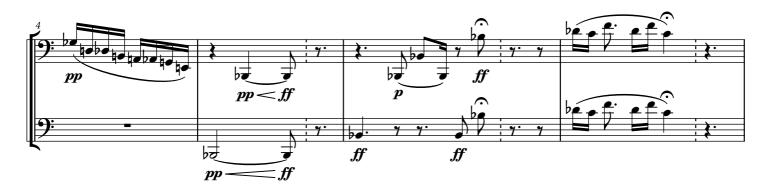
– Mike Svoboda in September 2022

Keren

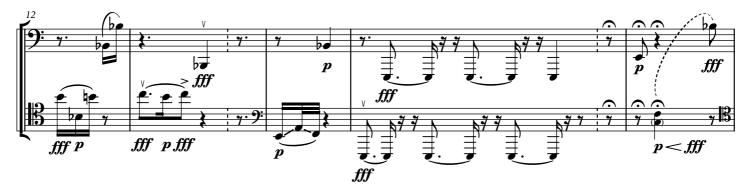
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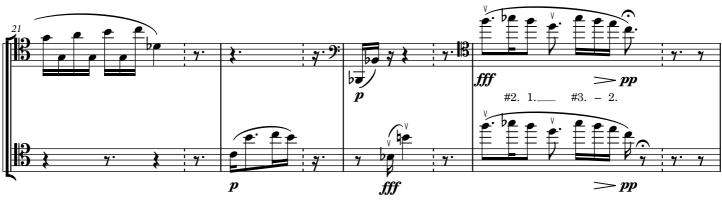






*) The rests after the dotted bar lines represent the commas (breathe marks) notated by Xenakis and interpretated as added time. These are just suggestions and could be longer or shorter as notated here, but should should vary greatly from one another.

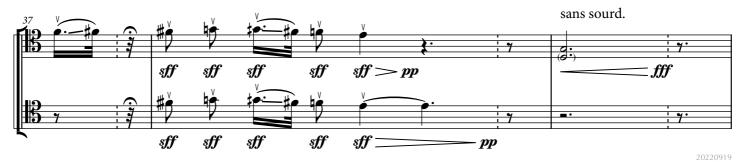










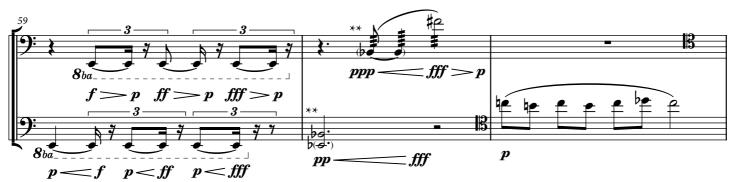


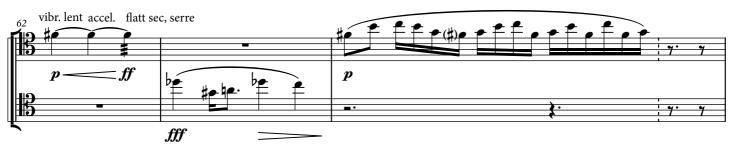






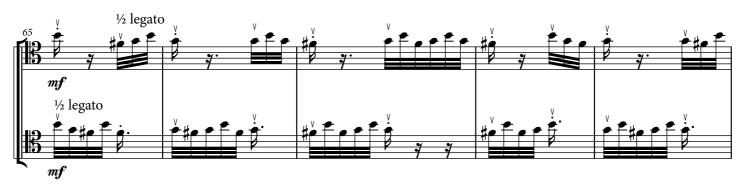




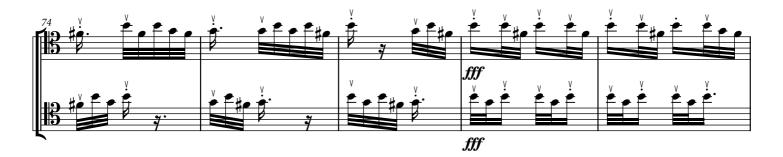


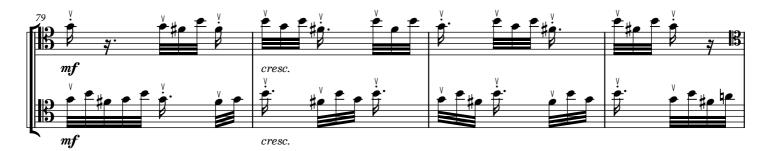
*) The β or β notes notated with a staccato marking in this and the following passage to facilitate the reading and are not played *staccatto* but instead simply in the length of a β matching the other trombone.

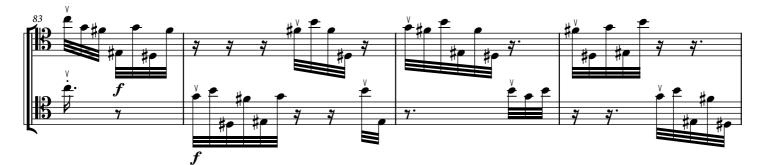
**) In case the low lip-multiphonics are not playable in something close to *fortissimo*, an *ossia* similar to something suggested here could be used.



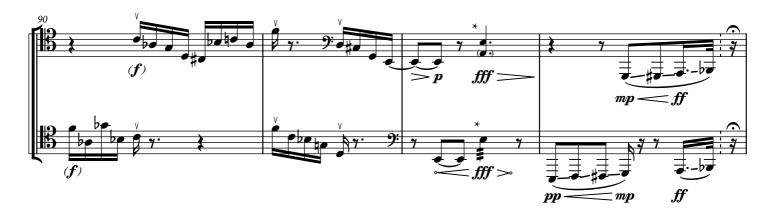




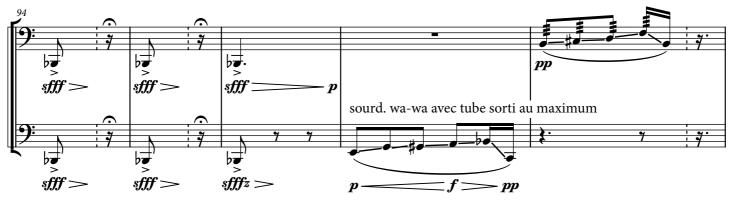


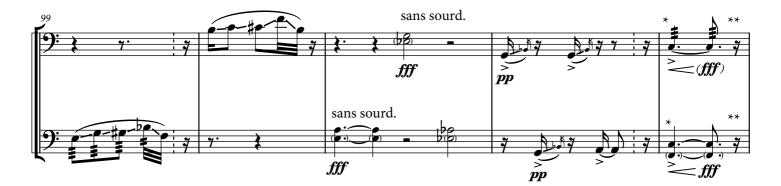






sourd. wa-wa avec tube sorti au maximum

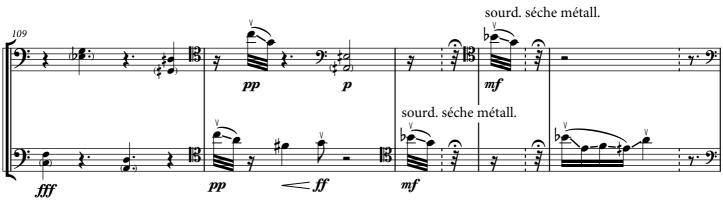


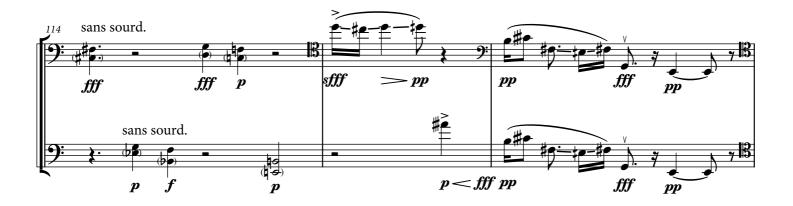


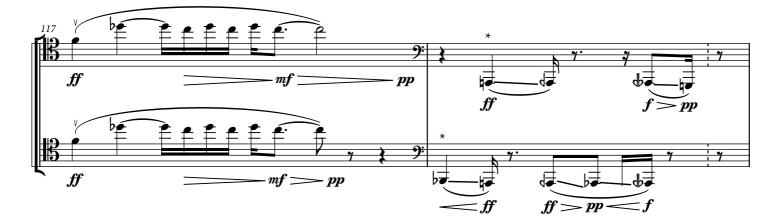


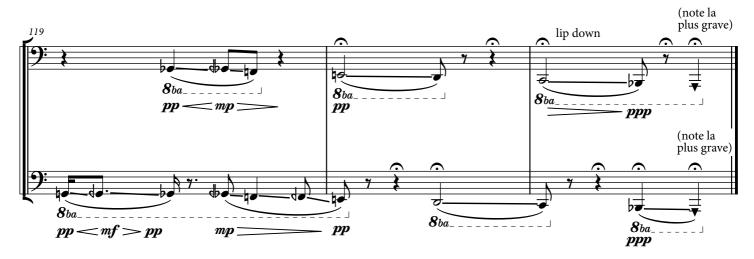
*) As before, if the player can attack the lip-multiphonic in fortissimo (fortississimo?), then an ossia is not necessary.

**) This rest is not from Xenakis – the only one he notated in bar 100 in Trombone 1 – but within the rhythmic value of the written note, as are the rests in bar 116. 20220919









*) Strive for a combined continuous glissando between the two trombones.