

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, precisely 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 subjugates 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

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♩ = 168 senza rubato

mf *p* *f* *f* *f*

mf *p* *f* *f* *f*

4 *pp* *pp* *ff* *p* *ff* *ff* *ff*

pp *ff* *ff* *p* *fff* *p* *fff* *fff* *p* *fff*

8 *pp* *fff* *p* *fff* *p* *fff* *fff* *p* *fff*

12 *fff* *p* *fff* *p* *fff* *p* *fff* *fff* *fff* *p* *fff* *fff* *p* *fff*

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

17

Dynamic markings: *fff*, *pp*, *fff*

Rehearsal marks: #2. 1. — #3. - 2.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 17 through 20. The top staff is in bass clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Measure 17 has a *fff* dynamic. Measure 18 has a *pp* dynamic. Measure 19 has a *fff* dynamic. Measure 20 has a *fff* dynamic. There are rehearsal marks for the first and second endings of measures 19 and 20.

21

Dynamic markings: *p*, *fff*, *fff*, *pp*

Rehearsal marks: #2. 1. — #3. - 2.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 21 through 24. The top staff is in bass clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Measure 21 has a *p* dynamic. Measure 22 has a *fff* dynamic. Measure 23 has a *fff* dynamic. Measure 24 has a *pp* dynamic. There are rehearsal marks for the first and second endings of measures 23 and 24.

25

Dynamic markings: *fff*, *fff*

Rehearsal marks: 5:4, 5:4

Detailed description: This system contains measures 25 through 28. The top staff is in bass clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Measure 25 has a *fff* dynamic. Measure 26 has a *fff* dynamic. Measure 27 has a *fff* dynamic. Measure 28 has a *fff* dynamic. There are rehearsal marks for measures 27 and 28.

29

Dynamic markings: *fff*, *pp*, *sffz*, *pp*, *p < f*, *f*, *pp*

Rehearsal marks: sourd. sèche métallique

Detailed description: This system contains measures 29 through 32. The top staff is in bass clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Measure 29 has a *fff* dynamic. Measure 30 has a *pp* dynamic. Measure 31 has a *sffz* dynamic. Measure 32 has a *pp* dynamic. There are rehearsal marks for measures 30 and 31.

32

Dynamic markings: *pp < fff*, *pp*, *ff*, *ff*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 32 through 36. The top staff is in bass clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Measure 32 has a *pp < fff* dynamic. Measure 33 has a *pp* dynamic. Measure 34 has a *ff* dynamic. Measure 35 has a *ff* dynamic. Measure 36 has a *ff* dynamic.

37

Dynamic markings: *sff*, *sff*, *sff*, *sff*, *sff*, *sff*, *pp*, *fff*, *pp*

Rehearsal marks: sans sourd.

Detailed description: This system contains measures 37 through 40. The top staff is in bass clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Measure 37 has a *sff* dynamic. Measure 38 has a *sff* dynamic. Measure 39 has a *sff* dynamic. Measure 40 has a *sff* dynamic. There is a rehearsal mark for measure 37.

½ legato
sans sourd.

40 *p*

45 *p*

50 *fff*

55 *pp* *fff*

59 *f* *p* *ff* *p* *fff* *p*

62 vibr. lent accel. flatt sec, serre

p *fff* *p*

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

65 $\frac{1}{2}$ legato *mf*

mf $\frac{1}{2}$ legato

70

74 *fff*

fff

79 *mf* *cresc.*

mf *cresc.*

83 *f*

f

87

90

f

p *fff*

mp *ff*

f

fff

pp *mp* *ff*

sourd. wa-wa avec tube sorti au maximum

94

sfff *sfff* *sfff* *p*

sfff *sfff* *sfffz*

p *f* *pp*

pp

sourd. wa-wa avec tube sorti au maximum

99

fff

pp *fff*

fff

pp *fff*

sans sourd.

sans sourd.

104

mp *f*

pp *fff*

mp *f* *pp*

*) 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.

109 *sourd. sèche métal.*

pp *p* *mf*

fff *pp* *ff* *mf*

sourd. sèche métal.

114 *sans sourd.*

fff *fff* *p* *fff* *pp* *pp* *fff* *pp*

p *f* *p* *p < fff* *pp* *fff* *pp*

sans sourd.

117

ff *mf* *pp*

ff *mf* *pp* *ff* *f > pp*

lip down

119 *lip down* *(note la plus grave)*

pp < mp *pp* *ppp*

pp < mf > pp *mp* *pp* *8ba.* *ppp*

lip down *(note la plus grave)*

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