THE SONORISTIC STRUCTURALISM OF KRZYSZTOF PENDERECKI
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To my parents
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PREFACE

At first glance, the reader may justifiably wonder why this book concerns the earliest works of Krzysztof Penderecki. Why not the most recent output of the Polish composer? Have not works such as Threnody or Fluorescences received enough discussion over the past few decades? To answer those questions, let me briefly explain the present enterprise.

Some five years ago, during the first year of my assistantship at the Music Academy in Katowice, I required students to analyse some of Penderecki's early, so-called "sonoristic" pieces. The outcome of that assignment proved unsatisfactory, however, because the students tended to describe Penderecki's pieces as chaotic assemblages of sound phenomena rather than as works of art. Only later did I realize that the same could be said of almost all the analyses of Penderecki's sonoristic works that I had read thus far. As a rule, they merely described things that anyone could easily see by looking at the scores. Such analyses offered the reader a description of the works, not an explanation. This situation did not seem to disturb the authors. From their perspective, Penderecki's sonoristic style was obviously meant to exemplify musical chaos, and an inherent property of chaos is that it does not admit any explanation. Yet this is exactly why, for a rationalist, chaos poses the greatest challenge. Indeed, Penderecki's sonorism aroused my analytical inclinations: If I have found previous analyses of his works unsatisfactory—I asked myself—can I do any better?

Provided chaos presents the greatest challenge, then there can be no greater achievement than to derive order from it, particularly when this order turns out to reside not merely in the mind of the observer, but also in the object itself. Towards the end of 1994, I visited Krzysztof Penderecki in April 1995, at his house in Krakow. I asked him whether the sonoristic system—discussed in the following pages and at that time already reconstructed by me—was an accurate model of the compositional procedures he had employed in writing his pieces of the early 1960s. The confirmation I received from the composer's own lips encouraged me to write the present book. Still, this book—which constitutes my doctoral dissertation—would not have come into being without the gracious help of several other people and institutions. To list them here is the author's privilege. First, I wish to thank my supervisor, Prof. Eero Tarasti, the head of the Department of Musicology at the University of Helsinki. I had the chance to work under his guidance thanks to the Centre for International Mobility (CIMO), the institution that twice—in the academic years 1993-94 and 1995-96—granted me a scholarship to Finland. As regards the mathematical aspects of my thesis, I am indebted to Leszek Bartłomiejczyk from the Silesian University in Katowice, Poland, for his worthy suggestions concerning fuzzy set-theory as a tool for representing the basic categories of Penderecki's sonoristic system. The person whose help was literally invaluable to me during the last months of work on this project is Richard Littlefield from Baylor University, Texas, who with infinite patience improved the English language of my book, while also taking into consideration all my stylistic wishes. For help in computer matters, I could always count on Mateusz Bien from the Computer Studio of the Music Academy in Katowice, Poland, who is also the editor of this volume. The publishing houses PWM and Schott have kindly granted me their permission to reprint excerpts from Penderecki's scores as musical examples in this book, and my home Music Academy in Katowice contributed financially to its publication.
In closing, my thoughts turn to my parents. Without the daily example of their persistence, without their constant encouragement and help in all practical matters, this book could never have been written. I dedicate it to them as a token of my gratitude and love.

Danuta Mirka
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Gliwice, Poland