

Bálint Karosi (1979-)

Orpheus' Harp

(2010)

Cantata for solo tenor, organ, percussions, violin and harp.

(to Szabolcs Brickner)

Duration: Ca. 20 minutes.

Commissioned by the Bartók Béla National Concert Hall in 2009

First Performance: February 8, 2010, Bartók Béla National Concert Hall, Budapest, Hungary
Szabolcs Brickner, tenor, Kristóf Baráti, violin, László Fassang, organ, Tamás Schlanger, Boglárka
Fábry percussions, Bálint Karosi conductor.

Orchestration:

Large pipe organ with three man./ped. & two enclosed divisions & sostenuto.

Solo violin, solo harp,

1st Percussion:

Vibraphone, Crotales, Marimba, Anvil, Tubular Bells, Tom-tom, Xylophone, Gong Bass Dr. (vertical)

2. Percussion: Marimba, Crotales, Cymbales, Congas, Bongos, Bass Drum (horizontal), Timpani

Notes:

This cantata is based on "Orpheus and Eurydice" by the Polish poet Czesław Miłosz. I composed it for my friend Szabolcs Brickner, winner of the Gold Medal of the 2008 Queen Elizabeth Voice Competition in Brussels, Belgium. I used the entire text in English, however, for this occasion, the Concert Hall commissioned the first Hungarian translation by István Kovács, that was projected on a screen in real time.

Czesław Miłosz: Orpheus and Eurydice

Standing on flagstones of the sidewalk at the entrance to Hades
Orpheus hunched in a gust of wind
That tore at his coat, rolled past in waves of fog,
Tossed the leaves of the trees. The headlights of cars
Flared and dimmed in each succeeding wave.

.
He stopped at the glass-paneled door, uncertain
Whether he was strong enough for that ultimate trial.

.
He remembered her words: "You are a good man."
He did not quite believe it. Lyric poets
Usually have - as he knew - cold hearts.
It is like a medical condition. Perfection in art
Is given in exchange for such an affliction.

.
Only her love warmed him, humanized him.
When he was with her, he thought differently about himself.
He could not fail her now, when she was dead.

.
He pushed open the door and found himself walking in a labyrinth,
Corridors, elevators. The livid light was not light but the dark of the earth.
Electronic dogs passed him noiselessly.
He descended many floors, a hundred, three hundred, down.

.
He was cold, aware that he was Nowhere.
Under thousands of frozen centuries,
On an ashy trace where generations had moldered,
In a kingdom that seemed to have no bottom and no end.

.
Thronging shadows surrounded him.
He recognized some of the faces.
He felt the rhythm of his blood.
He felt strongly his life with its guilt
And he was afraid to meet those to whom he had done harm.
But they had lost the ability to remember
And gave him only a glance, indifferent to all that.

.
For his defense he had a nine-stringed lyre.
He carried in it the music of the earth, against the abyss
That buries all of sound in silence.
He submitted the music, yielded
To the dictation of a song, listening with rapt attention,
Became, like his lyre, its instrument.

.
Thus he arrived at the palace of the rulers of that land.
Persephone, in her garden of withered pear and apple trees,
Black, with naked branches and verrucose twigs,
Listened from the funereal amethyst of her throne.

.
He sang the brightness of mornings and green rivers,
He sang of smoking water in the rose-colored daybreaks,
Of colors: cinnamon, carmine, burnt sienna, blue,
Of the delight of swimming in the sea under marble cliffs,
.

Of feasting on a terrace above the tumult of a fishing port,
Of the tastes of wine, olive oil, almonds, mustard, salt.
Of the flight of the swallow, the falcon,
Of a dignified flock of pelicans above a bay,
Of the scent of an armful of lilacs in summer rain,
Of his having composed his words always against death
And of having made no rhyme in praise of nothingness.

.
I don't know - said the goddess - whether you loved her or not.
Yet you have come here to rescue her.
She will be returned to you. But there are conditions:
You are not permitted to speak to her, or on the journey back
To turn your head, even once, to assure yourself that she is behind you.

.
And so Hermes brought forth Eurydice.
Her face no longer here, utterly gray,
Her eyelids lowered beneath the shade of her lashes.
She stepped rigidly, directed by the hand
Of her guide. Orpheus wanted so much
To call her name, to wake her from that sleep.
But he refrained, for he had accepted the conditions.

.
And so they set out. He first, and then, not right away,
The slap of the god's sandals and the light patter
Of her feet fettered by her robe, as if by a shroud.
A steep climbing path phosphorized
Out of darkness like the walls of a tunnel.
He would stop and listen. But then
They stopped too, and the echo faded.
And when he began to walk the double tapping commenced again.
Sometimes it seemed closer, sometimes more distant.
Under his faith a doubt sprang up
And entwined him like cold bindweed.
Unable to weep, he wept at the loss
Of the human hope for the resurrection of the dead,
Because he was, now, like every other mortal.
His lyre was silent, yet he dreamed, defenseless.
He knew he must have faith and he could not have faith.
And so he would persist for a very long time,
Counting his steps in a half-wakeful torpor.

.
Day was breaking. Shapes of rock loomed up
Under the luminous eye of the exit from underground.
It happened as he expected. He turned his head
And behind him on the path was no one.

.
Sun. And sky. And in the sky white clouds.
Only now everything cried to him: Eurydice!
How will I live without you, my consoling one!
But there was a fragrant scent of herbs, the low humming of bees,
And he fell asleep with his cheek on the sun-warmed earth.

Orpheus' Harp

for Tenor, organ, harp, 2 percussionists and violin.
2009

Balint Karosi 1979

$\text{♩} = 52$ freely, improvised

A $\text{♩} = 60$

Violin *p solo* *espressivo* *mp* *mf*

Organ
pp Sw. Voix Celestes
Sost. on Sw. Pos. Gt.
Ch. Unda Maris
Gt. Gedeckt. 8'

Harp *p* *mf* *mf*

Perc. 1 *fff* *pp* *f*

Perc. 2 *fff* *pp*

$\text{♩} = 52$ **A** $\text{♩} = 60$

The score is written for five instruments: Violin, Organ, Harp, Percussion 1, and Percussion 2. The Violin part begins with a tempo of 52 and a 'freely, improvised' instruction. It features a section marked 'A' with a tempo of 60. The Organ part includes instructions for 'Open and close swell boxes on the opposite direction rhythmically' and specific registrations: 'Sw. Voix Celestes', 'Sost. on Sw. Pos. Gt.', 'Ch. Unda Maris', and 'Gt. Gedeckt. 8''. The Harp part has dynamic markings of *p*, *mf*, and *mf*. Percussion 1 has dynamic markings of *fff*, *pp*, and *f*. Percussion 2 has dynamic markings of *fff* and *pp*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic hairpins.

13

Vln. *piu espr.* *p*

T. *mf espr.* Stan - ding on flag stones of the side - walk of the ent - rance to Ha - des

Org. (8) (8)

Hp. *sfz* *mp* *sfz* *mf* *mp* *mf*

Vib. *mp*

Perc. II *mf* *p* *sfz* *p* *mf* *Vib.* *mf*

B

Detailed description: This page of a musical score contains six staves. The Violin (Vln.) staff starts at measure 13 with a melodic line featuring triplets and a dynamic of *piu espr.* followed by *p*. The Tenor (T.) staff has lyrics: "Stan - ding on flag stones of the side - walk of the ent - rance to Ha - des" with a dynamic of *mf espr.*. The Organ (Org.) staff has two systems of chords, with dynamics (8) and (8) above. The Harp (Hp.) staff has a complex accompaniment with dynamics *sfz*, *mp*, *sfz*, *mf*, *mp*, and *mf*. The Vibraphone (Vib.) staff has a melodic line with a dynamic of *mp*. The Percussion II (Perc. II) staff has a rhythmic accompaniment with dynamics *mf*, *p*, *sfz*, *p*, *mf*, and *mf*. A section marker **B** is placed above the Perc. II staff. Various musical notations like triplets, slurs, and accents are present throughout.

71 H $\text{♩} = 104$

Vln. *mf solo poco espr.*

I. *mechanical, poco espr.*
mf
 us-ual-ly have as he knew cold hearts It is like a me-di-cal con-di-tion per-fec-tion in art is gi-ven in-ex-change

Org.

Hp.

Vib. *mf* Mar

Cg. 7-7 ♩
f solo with improvised accents

201 **P** $\text{♩} = 120$

Vln. *mf* *solo mf* *mf*

T. *lyrical* *mf* For his de fense — He had a nine stringed lyre — He car-ried in it the

Org. *p Sw. 8'* *mf Pos. 8'*

Hp. *Bisbigliando* *pp* *f* *mf*

Gong: *ppp* *p* *mp* *mp* *mp*

Perc. II *p* *mp*

2/16

Vln. *espr.* *f*

T. *cantabile*

Org.

Hp. *f solo*

Cym. *mp*

Perc. II

mu-sic of the earth A gainst the a byss that bur - ries all, That bur - ries