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*Paradise Lost*

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# In the Beginning of Penderecki's *Paradise Lost*

SCOTT MURPHY

## Abstract

Instead of using Milton's famous opening lines, librettist Christopher Fry begins the text for Krzysztof Penderecki's opera *Paradise Lost* with the invocation that opens Book III, which alludes to acts of creation both biblical and literary. While the primordial effects of Penderecki's instrumental introduction to the opera parallel this allusion in easily discernible ways, his melodic lines used within this introduction also parallel this allusion in ways understood using recent theoretical perspectives on the composer's neo-Romantic style. These melodies exhibit a rare feature of paradoxicality, in that they are at once finite and infinite within stylistic constraints. This musical paradox corresponds to notions of paradox in accounts of cosmological creation, in a literary-operatic creation in which the author is character, and in the hypostatic union of the divine and human in Jesus Christ, a union foregrounded more in Fry's and Penderecki's opera than in Milton's original poem.

It is 29 November 1978. The stage of the Chicago Lyric Opera is still shrouded in darkness as a virtually inaudible, almost sub-audio rumble emanates from the void. The murkiness sustains itself from half of the string bass section, which has tuned its instruments *scordatura* from the already extended lowest string down a whole step from C<sup>1</sup> to an open B<sub>♭</sub><sup>0</sup>, an obscure pitch in both perceptual and stylistic senses.<sup>1</sup> The world premiere of Krzysztof Penderecki's largest work to date, *Paradise Lost*, is underway.

Example 1 provides a piano-score reduction of the ensuing thirteen bars, along with annotations that will be explained in due course. To musicologist Regina Chlopicka's ears, 'the theme emerges from silence slowly, before our eyes. Unformed sound matter starts acquiring the shape of motives, low and dark registers slowly lighten up, changing tone colours.'<sup>2</sup> After these opening bars, this instrumental introduction to Penderecki's *sacra rappresentazione* continues to swell in texture, register, dynamics, and contrapuntal density until the intensity reaches a breaking point and the orchestra implodes; only the B<sub>♭</sub> bass pedal survives unscathed. As the motives from the opening bars begin to regroup, a voice representing *Paradise Lost*'s poet John Milton resounds through the dark hall. Yet his narrated prologue for the first act begins not with the epic poem's famous opening verses, but rather with lines selected from the invocation that commences Book III:

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- 1 B<sub>♭</sub><sup>0</sup>, even when played by a stringed instrument, has a very low 'toneness,' the disambiguating term for a pitch's clarity of perception that David Huron introduces when summarizing the relevant literature in 'Tone and Voice: A Derivation of the Rules of Voice-leading from Perceptual Principles,' *Music Perception* 19/1 (2001), 7ff.
- 2 Regina Chlopicka, *Krzysztof Penderecki: Musica Sacra – Musica Profana* (Warsaw: Adam Mickiewicz Institute, 2003), 95.

B. Cl.  
Vcl. 1  
Bass 1  
*p*

Bass 2  
Bs. Drum  
*p*

MELODY CLASS 6-16

4  $\text{B}\flat$  6 E 1 F 1  $\text{F}\sharp$  6 C e B e ( $\text{B}\flat$ )

Hn 2  
Timp.  
Vla. 2  
*p*

Vcl. 2  
CBass Cl.

Bsn.  
Vla. 1  
Vcl. 1

7 *p*

+ B. Cl., C.  
Bsn., Tba. on  
pedal  $\text{B}\flat$

MELODY CLASS 8-34

10  $\text{B}\flat$  6 E 1 F 1  $\text{F}\sharp$  1 G 6  $\text{D}\flat$  e C e B ( $\text{B}\flat$ )

Vln. 2 *p*

Cl. 2  
Vln. 3 *p*

**Example 1** Penderecki, *Paradise Lost*, Act I, Scene 1, bb. 1–12.  
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*Hail, Holy Light! Before the sun, before the heavens thou wert  
 May I express thee?  
 But thou revisitest not these eyes that roll in vain to find thy piercing ray.  
 Thus with the year seasons return, but not to me returns  
 Day, or the sweet approach of Eve or Morn,  
 Or summer's rose, or human face divine.  
 Shine inward.  
 There plant eyes, that I may see  
 And tell of things invisible to mortal sight.*<sup>3</sup>

Immediately thereafter, light bathes the stage, accompanied by a scintillating and dissonant harmony in high winds and strings. A mixed chorus intones the text 'Sing, heavenly muse/What in us is dark illumine/And justify the ways of God to man', which comes from early in Book I – specifically, lines 6, 22, 23, and 26. Only thereafter does Milton as narrator return to present the poem's initial lines, thus concluding the prologue:

*Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
 Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
 Brought Death into the world, and all our woes,  
 And loss of Eden.*<sup>4</sup>

What is a listener seated in Chicago's Civic Opera House to make of this introduction? First, if this listener knows Milton's original poem well, he or she may recognize not only the aforementioned permutation, but also other decisions that shift the weight of the narrative in both explicit and subtle ways. Second, if this listener knows well a new approach to writing melodies that Penderecki had begun to adopt in the 1970s, then this listener is well positioned to appreciate something special, even singular, about the music of this work's beginning. My ultimate goal in this article is to suggest correlations between these textual changes and this musical singularity.

As the opera unfolds, one familiar with Milton's poem will find librettist Christopher Fry's permutation of its original ordering in this introduction hardly anomalous, as Milton's own chronology of events markedly differs from that of the Bible. Fry's ordering throughout his libretto markedly differs from both chronologies, as skillfully demonstrated in a comparative analysis of all three texts by Agnieszka Draus. As for the opera's beginning, she notes that

3 These lines are taken verbatim from the full score. In the Chicago premiere, the narrator (Milton) said 'Thee I revisit' instead of 'May I express thee?', 'Thus with the day' instead of 'Thus with the year', and 'Ev'n' instead of 'Eve'. Only in this last instance is the performed narration closer to the original poem.

4 The libretto omits 'till one greater Man/Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat', which immediately follows 'and loss of Eden' and immediately precedes 'Sing, heavenly muse', suggesting an early de-emphasis of Christ, which is balanced by the early de-emphasis of Satan owing to the libretto's reordering of Milton's text. My analysis will suggest how Penderecki's music can be interpreted as countering this subtle shift of focus away from Christ.

[while] Milton begins his poem with the lamentation of the Fallen Angels[,] Penderecki starts his opera with a scene set toward the end in Milton, that of the lamentation of Adam and Eve after the Fall. He concentrates on the human experience and desists from presenting us with any of the history preceding the creation of Man: the creation of the universe, the war in Hell and the fall of the Rebel Angels.<sup>5</sup>

While this interpretation adeptly characterizes the drama that follows the prologue, it glosses over possible implications of the texts used in the prologue itself. The invocation that begins Book III, provided in full in Table 1, contains some of Milton's most autobiographical and self-revealing aspects of the entire poem. Although Fry lifts but a small percentage of lines – and some only in part – from the invocation, which are printed in bold, he nonetheless captures how the poet finds his blindness both insufferable ('but thou/Revisit'st not these eyes, that rowle in vain/To find thy piercing ray') but also symbolic of his artistic endeavors ('Shine inward/there plant eyes/that I may see and tell/Of things invisible to mortal sight'). The use of the latter also establishes a clear framing function – a veritable author's preface – for the dramatic content of the opera. However, despite its formal segregation from Genesis's drama, the connotations of Milton's prologue in Fry's *Paradise Lost* seep through the frame, in that the Book III invocation draws a parallel between Milton's literary creative act and God's cosmological creative act. Although Milton does not directly refer to the creation story until Book VII – as Raphael relates to Adam how the world was created after Satan was thrown out of Heaven – the language of the Book III invocation strongly alludes to the opening verses of Genesis for the first time in the poem. In particular, the lines within the rectangular enclosure in Table 1 invoke the imagery of Genesis 1: 1–2: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.' Literary scholar Dale G. Priest takes this parallel further:

[In the Genesis verses,] the Spirit, acting for God, will function as creative agent to invest chaos with form. In such a way the bard [Milton] hopes to gain access to a high but secondary creative power (the gift of 'holy Light') to assist and inspire him in his task of rendering more luminous to human eyes the otherwise obscure mysteries of his subject.<sup>6</sup>

Although Fry's prologue only touches on the Genesis reference in the Book III invocation, Penderecki's music seizes it more firmly, albeit through more abstract means. Chlopicka's portrayal of the opening bars quoted earlier strongly resonates with biblical cosmogony. What about these opening bars in particular suggests a connection to the opening verses of

5 Agnieszka Draus, 'Krzysztof Penderecki, *Paradise Lost*. From Milton's Poem to the *sacra rappresentazione* Libretto', in *Krzysztof Penderecki's Music in the Context of 20th-Century Theatre*, ed. Teresa Malecka (Krakow: Akademia Muzyczna, 1999), 174.

6 Dale G. Priest, 'Toward a Poetry of Accommodation: The Invocation to Book III of *Paradise Lost*', *The South Central Bulletin* 41/4 (Winter 1981), 112.

**Table 1** Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book III, lines 1–55. (The prologue of Fry's libretto is shown in bold. The rectangular enclosure spotlights the reference to Genesis 1: 1–2.)

**Hail holy light**, offspring of Heav'n first-born,  
 Or of th' Eternal Coeternal beam  
**May I express thee** unblam'd? since God is light,  
 And never but in unapproached light  
 Dwelt from Eternitie, dwelt then in thee,  
 Bright effluence of bright essence increate.  
 Or hear'st thou rather pure Ethereal stream,  
 Whose Fountain who shall tell? **before the Sun,**  
**Before the Heavens thou wert**, and at the voice  
 Of God, as with a Mantle didst invest

The rising world of waters dark and deep,  
 Won from the void and formless infinite.

Thee I revisit now with bolder wing,  
 Escap't the Stygian Pool, though long detain'd  
 In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight  
 Through utter and through middle darkness borne  
 With other notes then to th' Orphean Lyre  
 I sung of Chaos and Eternal Night,  
 Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down  
 The dark descent, and up to reascend,  
 Though hard and rare: thee I revisit safe,  
 And feel thy sovran vital Lamp; **but thou**  
**Revisit'st not these eyes, that rowle in vain**  
**To find thy piercing ray**, and find no dawn;  
 So thick a drop serene hath quencht thir Orbs,  
 Or dim suffusion veild. Yet not the more  
 Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt  
 Cleer Spring, or shadie Grove, or Sunnie Hill,  
 Smit with the love of sacred song; but chief  
 Thee Sion and the flowrie Brooks beneath  
 That wash thy hallowd feet, and warbling flow,  
 Nightly I visit: nor somtimes forget  
 Those other two equal'd with me in Fate,  
 So were I equal'd with them in renown,  
 Blind Thamyris and blind Mæonides,  
 And Tiresias and Phineus Prophets old.  
 Then feed on thoughts, that voluntarie move  
 Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful Bird  
 Sings darkling, and in shadiest Covert hid  
 Tunes her nocturnal Note. **Thus with the Year**  
**Seasons return, but not to me returns**  
**Day, or the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn,**

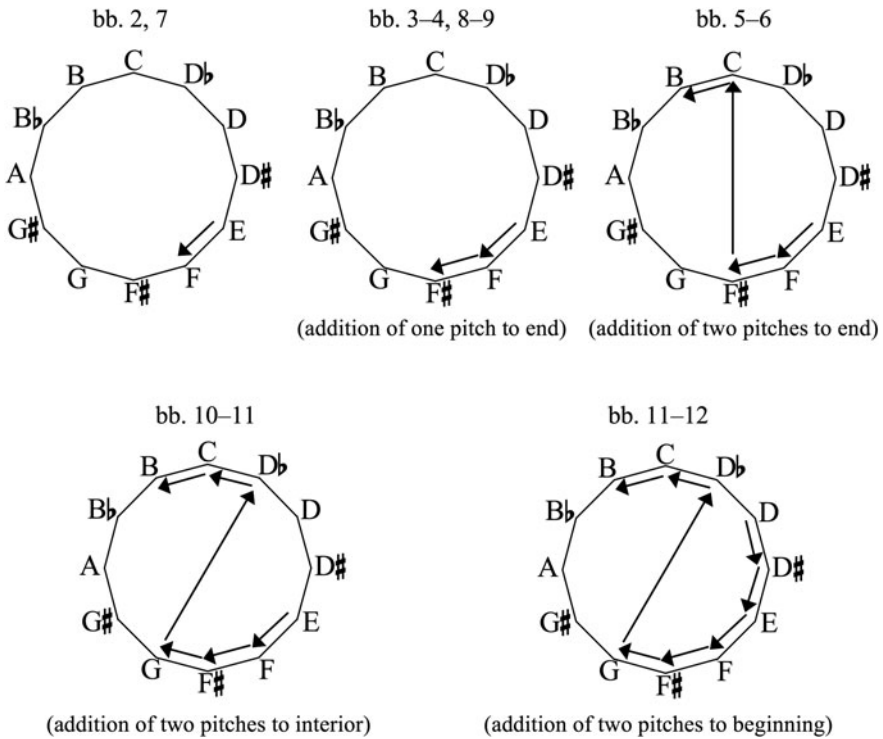
Table 1 Continued

Or sight of vernal bloom, **or Summers Rose,**  
 Or flocks, or herds, **or human face divine;**  
 But cloud in stead, and ever-during dark  
 Surrounds me, from the chearful waies of men  
 Cut off, and for the book of knowledg fair  
 Presented with a Universal blanc  
 Of Natures works to mee expung'd and ras'd,  
 And wisdome at one entrance quite shut out.  
 So much the rather thou Celestial light  
**Shine inward,** and the mind through all her powers  
 Irradiate, **there plant eyes,** all mist from thence  
 Purge and disperse, **that I may see and tell**  
**Of things invisible to mortal sight.**

Genesis? The contra B<sub>1</sub> pedal conjures both 'dark' and 'deep' senses, and its sheer longevity lends a primordial timelessness to the scene. (*Paradise Lost*'s opening bass pedal, which lasts for five full minutes, bests Wagner's primordial E<sub>1</sub> bass pedal that begins *Das Rheingold* by around a minute and a half.) The absence in bb. 1–4 and 7–9 of any metrical periodicity, the musical equivalent on a microcosmic scale of the regular synodic rhythm of day and night, also contributes to this timelessness. (From this perspective, another Wagnerian opening, that of *Parsifal*, comes to mind.<sup>7</sup>) The first motive in b. 2 could not be a more primeval melodic idea, as it has the fewest number of notes in its breadth (two) and the smallest number of equal-tempered semitones in its single interval (one). Subsequent melodic undulations might be heard as the slow cresting and falling of broad, massive waves, or, closer to Chlopicka's reading, a glacially-paced yet systematic growth of order out of chaos, connoting events a bit later in the creation story. Example 2 chronicles this latter interpretation; the opening melodic cell E–F in b. 2 grows both from without (on both the leading and trailing edges) and within to form longer melodic strands. Most, if not all of these processes aggregate to an overall formal process of *creatio ex nihilo*, the term used to describe comparable openings in orchestral works by Bruckner, Mahler, and so forth.<sup>8</sup> (This formal technique is one of many that Penderecki drew from tradition during his so-called 'Neo-Romantic' period, of which *Paradise Lost* is representative.) Since these various elements – the virtually endless bass pedal, the notable lack of metre, the deliberate motivic maturation from a single seed – occur together in the opera most profusely at this point (in the beginning), this singular musical event also befits an association with a singular historical event: creation.

7 Penderecki's music invites such intertextual connections, particularly with Wagner's music, as the opera contains both a literal quotation – the 'In fernem Land' music from *Lohengrin* sounds as Adam names the swan in scene B of Act I – and a significant allusion – the sequence of minor triads that often leads up to the 'Satan chords' begins with a transposition of Alberich's 'Tarnhelm' progression.

8 For one such discussion, see Warren Darcy, 'Bruckner's Sonata Deformations', in *Bruckner Studies*, ed. Timothy L. Jackson and Paul Hawkshaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 256–77.



**Example 2** Growth of melodic material in bb. 1–12.

Yet, from another perspective, this musical beginning seems hardly set apart. Its melodic material archetypically conforms to certain constraints that permeate Penderecki's neo-Romantic music. Penderecki scholarship has posited that the composer's melodic lines from this period generally comply with two restrictions: *ic1/6 concentration*, in which adjacent pitch classes in a melody tend to be separated most often by the pitch-class (and often registral) interval of a semitone or, second most often, a tritone; and *9-pc diversity*: melodic spans that do not duplicate a pitch class tend to be on average nine notes long.<sup>9</sup> For example, the melodic line D–D $\sharp$ –E–F–F $\sharp$ –G–D $\flat$ –C–B in bb. 11–12 of Example 1 perfectly meets both of these constraints, since it exclusively uses semitones that are relieved with a single tritone, and the nine-note melody never reuses a pitch class. These constraints are visually apparent within the last circle of Example 2, which represents this melody spatially: the melodic motion is either along the perimeter (semitonal) or a diameter (tritone), and no pitch class is repeated. The melodic line E–F–F $\sharp$ –G–D $\flat$ –C–B–F–F $\sharp$ –G in bb. 10–11, which exclusively uses semitones and tritones but repeats pitch classes after spans of merely six or seven notes, is still representative although it falls a bit short of the norm of 9-pc diversity. Generally

<sup>9</sup> I coin these terms and summarize this scholarship in 'A Model of Melodic Expectation for Some Neo-Romantic Music of Penderecki', *Perspectives of New Music* 45/1 (Winter 2007), 186–92.



speaking, the modernist 'contratonal' aesthetic aim of 9-pc diversity is to avoid sounding a pitch class again 'too soon'. In the case of E–F–F#–G–D<sub>b</sub>–C–B–F–F#–G in bb. 10–11, short-term echoic memory of its incipit may fade during the long B, thus mitigating the pitch-class duplication. Other factors – phrase breaks or protracted durations, the obvious recycling of melodic components, and so forth – also temper such violations, such that one is able to discern that these constraints are essential features of this music despite its occasional noncompliance, much like one is able to discern that the common-practice repertoire is essentially diatonic despite its use of chromaticism.

These two constraints efficiently encapsulate the remarkable consistency of melodic material in *Paradise Lost*, particularly the instrumental lines. However, this consistency also has ramifications for dramatic interpretations of its melodic content. Chlopicka claims that the opera associates the tritone with Satan, in accord with the extra-musical connection between the interval and the *diabolus in musica* ostensibly begun in medieval times and perpetuated in various well-worn guises for centuries thereafter.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, this association comes to the fore, but only harmonically, owing almost entirely to a class of 'Satan' chords. These chords stack alternating minor seconds and tritones at least six notes high, and often accompany Satan, his minions, and/or the world of Hell.<sup>11</sup> But the preponderance of tritones in the melodic fabric of the opera generally dilutes the *diabolus* association in the horizontal dimension;<sup>12</sup> more precisely, the tritone does not appear in Satan's vocal lines more often than those of any other character. Moreover, if Satan's vocal lines use any distinctive melodic material throughout the opera, it is the hexatonic scale: a six-note collection formed by alternating minor seconds and minor thirds that does not contain a single

10 'The musical character of the protagonists is based on a special hierarchy of intervals, in which opposite poles are occupied by the octave and the tritone. The harmony of an octave, being uniform, pure, and perfect, symbolizes the figure of God, while the dynamic and tension-provoking tritone traditionally belongs to the realm of Satan (cf. medieval *diabolus in musica*).' Regina Chlopicka, *Musica Sacra*, 97.

11 These chords are discussed in some detail by Ewa Wójtowicz in 'Some Harmonic Aspects of Krzysztof Penderecki's *Paradise Lost*', in *Krzysztof Penderecki's Music in the Context of 20th-Century Theatre*, ed. Teresa Malecka (Krakow: Akademia Muzyczna, 1999), 168. She notes two apposite deviations from this pairing of 'Satan' chords and their narrative correlates: when Satan is tempting Eve and disguising his true nature (absence of 'Satan' chords), and during Eve's sensual dance after eating the apple (presence of 'Satan' chords). She also suggests that Satan's presence permeates the entire opera, since '[t]he minor second and tritone intervals are the basic materials of the expressive melodic line used throughout the whole of *Paradise Lost*.' (p. 164) However, this puts the cart before the horse. The general preponderance of the tritone and semitone are simply aspects of Penderecki's neo-Romantic melodic style, but, as it will be soon argued, the way tritones and semitones are placed in order creates characteristic patterns that may be associated with narrative aspects. One may consider a 'Satan chord' as a Penderecki melody turned ninety degrees into a harmonic verticality, in that adjacent pitch classes span either a semitone or a tritone and pitch-class duplication is avoided, except that, in this case, adjacencies are in registral space instead of in time. Therefore, the 'Satan chord' is thus appropriately associated with Satan not because it simply contains tritones, but it contains the *maximum* number of tritones for a Penderecki 'melody' of any given length.

12 One way in which Penderecki overrides this dilution is to accentuate the tritone somehow. For example, in the orchestra, flagrant and incessant semitonal runs that span a tritone and end on long accented pitches amplify Satan's proclamations of victory during scene B of Act II (bb. 153–164).

tritone between any two of its members. Example 3 provides four important passages within Satan's vocal material that contain a complete hexatonic collection (placed within brackets).<sup>13</sup>

Penderecki's consistent employment of melodic semitones and tritones also seems to have ramifications for the distinctiveness of the opening. Harold Blumenfeld, in reviewing the opera for *The Musical Times*, noted that:

Penderecki has extracted the bulk of his orchestral music from one basic chromatic musical gesture, in dual form: two rising semitones followed by three semitones descending from above them (and, by extension, three upward and four downward semitones): slippery material to support so huge an edifice. He subjects this material to exhaustive manipulation, but most of his variation techniques are too obvious, even on first hearing.<sup>14</sup>

When focusing on melodic intervals *tout court*, Penderecki's opening bars appear to either blend into the canvas, or, in Blumenfeld's reading, constitute a pattern that is replicated to generate the opera's sonic wallpaper. Not only does the melodic material of these bars exclusively use semitones and tritones and eschew pitch-class duplication, establishing the opera's melodic staple, but the rising and falling gesture Blumenfeld describes also reappears throughout the work. Therefore, while other aspects of this instrumental introduction suggest an association with the genesis of the cosmos, it would seem that the melodic material is too 'slippery' to adhere to this association, as it is simply not distinctive enough. The purpose of the analysis that follows is to suggest otherwise. First, I will draw and build upon a recent study of Penderecki's neo-Romantic melodies, tease these melodies apart from one another in meaningful ways, and demonstrate that two of the pitch-class sequences in Penderecki's opening bars of *Paradise Lost* exhibit a very special musical feature. Then, I will build a case for a correlation between this musical feature and the extra-musical concepts of biblical Creation, Milton's creation, and the incarnation of Christ.

The two restrictions of 9-pc diversity and ic1/6 concentration can serve not only as stylistic generalizations, but also as bases for a robust yet idiosyncratic set of expectations that one familiar with this style can bring to a melody embedded within a work written in this style.<sup>15</sup> For instance, if the melody E–F–F#–C–B in bb. 5–6 were to be followed by another

13 The identification of only four hexatonic collections in all of Satan's vocal material may seem, on the surface, to hardly justify the labelling of the hexatonic collection as 'distinctive melodic material' associated with Satan. However, since there are only four unlike hexatonic scales, the odds of six different randomly chosen pitch classes forming a hexatonic scale are quite small: 1 in around 671 (2880 ordered hexatonic scales divided by 1932612 ordered, non-duplicative pitch-class sequences). Satan has roughly 950 vocal notes throughout the opera, not counting immediate repetitions. The odds that at least four hexatonic collections will appear as contiguous sequences among 950 randomly chosen notes is around 5.4%. Adding to the statistical significance of the hexatonic collection are the facts that the excerpts of Example 3 are set apart in their formal function from Satan's other melodic passages: for instance, Example 3a is Satan's first entrance in the opera, and Example 3b is Satan's first entrance in the second scene (Act IB). Lastly, unlike the tritone, the hexatonic scale is not used as often in the vocal material of any of the other characters as it is used in Satan's vocal lines.

14 Harold Blumenfeld, 'Review of *Paradise Lost*', *The Musical Times* 1632 (February 1979), 145–46.

15 I explore this set of expectations more fully in 'A Model of Melodic Expectation'.

## a. Act IA, bb. 192–95

192 Is this the re - gion this the soil

*mf*

194 the clime that we must change for Hea - ven?

## b. Act IB, bb. 52–55

52 Though Heav - en be shut this place may lie ex - posed Let us learn what

*mf*

55 crea - tures what crea - tures there in - ha - bit

## c. Act IB, bb. 103–6

103 But I should ill be - come this throne if dif - fi - cul - ty or dan - ger

*mf*

105 should de - ter - mine from the great at - tempt

## d. Act IIA, b. 78

78 Be - hold the wo - man a - lone! With - out the man whose strength I shun

*mf*

**Example 3** Excerpts from Satan's vocal material.

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note and conform to the two restrictions, then the pitch class B<sub>♭</sub> would be the most expected, as it is the only pitch class that is either a semitone or a tritone from the final pitch B and has not yet been presented in the melody. This has the potential to create an expectation similar to that provoked by a dominant triad or a leading tone in tonal music: all other things being equal, there is exactly one highly expected continuation. While there are other melodies such as this that have only one highly expected continuation, there are others that have two equally plausible continuations, and still others that have none. This tripartite categorization of all possible 'Penderecki melodies' from two to eight notes long, which make up what I have called the 'Penderecki set', is reprinted and further described in Table 2. The melodies are first gathered into 111 classes by transpositional or inversional equivalence, since all melodies in a class will share the same 'expectancy profile'. The melody E–F–F<sub>♯</sub>–C–B, for example, is considered equivalent to melodies such as F–F<sub>♯</sub>–G–C<sub>♯</sub>–C and E–D<sub>♯</sub>–D–G<sub>♯</sub>–A; all three are in 'melody-class' 5–4, which is represented by a prime form of 01287 in the set-class nomenclature of Allen Forte.<sup>16</sup>

The next column in Table 2 represents the series of pitch-class intervals in the melody: 1 for ascending semitone, 6 for tritone, and 11 for descending semitone, or their pitch-class equivalents. (In both the prime form labels and the interval series, 't' represents 10 and 'e' represents 11). The column marked '# PC CONT' indicates the number of ways a melody in a particular class may continue to another pitch class while not violating the two restrictions of the style. Melodies in sixty-four classes have exactly two such continuations, melodies in forty-one classes have exactly one, and melodies in only six classes have none. I have described melodies in this last and smallest category as *terminal*, as they cannot continue without contravening the two restrictions, so they might as well stop. Indeed, some of Penderecki's terminal melodies do just that; one from my earlier article is reprinted in Example 4. To continue the tonal analogy from earlier, the endings of terminal melodies are akin to tonic triads or tonic scale degrees, in that they evince relatively little bias as to what chord or melodic tone should follow.

Two additional descriptors that extend this taxonomy will be useful in the ensuing discussion. First, a Penderecki melody is *cyclic* if its first and last intervals span the unordered pitch-class interval of a semitone or tritone; a 'Y' in the 'CYCLIC' column of the Table singles out the eighteen classes that contain cyclic melodies.<sup>17</sup> This allows a cyclic melody to repeat itself without infringing upon ic1/6 concentration. Indeed, some of Penderecki's cyclic melodies do just that; one from *Paradise Lost*, a frantic 11-note violin ostinato repeated multiple times during a *senza misura* section, is provided in Example 5. Second, a Penderecki melody is *paradoxical* (abbreviated to PRDXCL in the Table) if it is both terminal and cyclic. As indicated in the Table, only three melody classes – 6–16, 8–25, and 8–34 – out of the 111 in the Penderecki set belong to both the set of six terminal melody classes and the set of eighteen cyclic melody classes, and are thus paradoxical. This term is intended to capture a

<sup>16</sup> Allen Forte, *The Structure of Atonal Music* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1973), 12.

<sup>17</sup> The prime form of a cyclic melody always ends in 1, 6, or e.

**Table 2** The Penderecki set. LB: 'Forte' label; PF: Prime form (t = pc 10, e = pc 11); INT: Interval series (e = pc interval of 11); # PC CONT: number of different pitch classes that can follow the melody without violating the constraints; CYCLIC: Y (yes) if PF ends with a 1, 6, or e; PRDXCL (paradoxical): Y (yes) if #PC CONT = 0 (terminal) and CYCLIC = Y.

LB	PF	INT	# PC CONT	CYC- LIC	PRD- XCL
2-1	01	1	2	Y	
2-2	06	6	2	Y	
3-1	012	11	2		
3-2	017	16	2		
3-3	067	61	2		
4-1	0123	111	2		
4-2	0128	116	2		
4-3	0178	161	2		
4-4	0176	16e	1	Y	
4-5	0678	611	2		
4-6	0671	616	1	Y	
5-1	01234	1111	2		
5-2	01239	1116	2		
5-3	01289	1161	2		
5-4	01287	116e	1		
5-5	01789	1611	2		
5-6	01782	1616	1		
5-7	01765	16ee	2		
5-8	06789	6111	2		
5-9	06782	6116	2		
5-10	06712	6161	2		
6-1	012345	11111	2		
6-2	01234t	11116	2		
6-3	01239t	11161	2		

LB	PF	INT	# PC CONT	CYC- LIC	PRD- XCL
6-4	012398	1116e	1		
6-5	01289t	11611	2		
6-6	012893	11616	1		
6-7	012876	116ee	1	Y	
6-8	01789t	16111	2		
6-9	017893	16116	2		
6-10	017823	16161	2		
6-11	01765e	16ee6	1	Y	
6-12	017654	16eee	2		
6-13	06789t	61111	2		
6-14	067893	61116	2		
6-15	067823	61161	2		
6-16	067821	6116e	0	Y	Y
6-17	067123	61611	2		
6-18	067128	61616	1		
7-1	0123456	111111	1	Y	
7-2	012345e	111116	1	Y	
7-3	01234te	111161	1	Y	
7-4	01234t9	11116e	1		
7-5	01239te	111611	1	Y	
7-6	01239t4	111616	1		
7-7	0123987	1116ee	1		
7-8	01289te	116111	1	Y	
7-9	01289t4	116116	2		

contradiction that one knowledgeable of Penderecki's melodic constraints may experience.<sup>18</sup> On the one hand, the melody has run its full course within the two imposed melodic restrictions; that is, a typical Penderecki melody would go no further. On the other hand, the melody teeters on the brink of returning to its beginning while maintaining ic1/6 concentration; that is, a typical Penderecki melody could go further. Because 9-pc diversity is

18 Previous music-theoretic studies that employ a methodology of paradox for hermeneutic ends include Richard Cohn, 'Uncanny Resemblances: Tonal Signification in the Freudian Age', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 57/2 (2004), 285–323; Berthold Hoeckner, 'Paths Through *Dichterliebe*', *19th-Century Music* 30/1 (2006), 65–80; and Candace Brower, 'Paradoxes of Pitch Space', *Music Analysis* 27/1 (2008), 51–106.

Table 2 Continued

LB	PF	INT	# PC CONT	CYC- LIC	PRD- XCL
7-10	0128934	116161	2		
7-11	0128765	116eee	2		
7-12	01789te	161111	1	Y	
7-13	01789t4	161116	2		
7-14	0178934	161161	2		
7-15	0178932	16116e	0		
7-16	0178234	161611	2		
7-17	0178239	161616	1		
7-18	01765et	16eee6e	2		
7-19	017654t	16eee6	2		
7-20	0176543	16eeee	2		
7-21	06789te	611111	1	Y	
7-22	06789t4	611116	2		
7-23	0678934	611161	2		
7-24	0678932	61116e	1		
7-25	0678234	611611	2		
7-26	0678239	611616	1		
7-27	0671234	616111	2		
7-28	0671239	616116	2		
7-29	0671289	616161	2		
8-1	01234567	1111111	1		
8-2	012345et	111116e	1		
8-3	01234te5	1111616	1		
8-4	0123498	11116ee	1		
8-5	01239te5	1116116	2		
8-6	01239t45	1116161	2		
8-7	01239876	1116eee	1	Y	
8-8	01289te5	1161116	2		
8-9	01289t45	1161161	2		
8-10	01289t43	116116e	0		
8-11	01289345	1161611	2		
8-12	0128934t	1161616	1		

LB	PF	INT	# PC CONT	CYC- LIC	PRD- XCL
8-13	0128765e	116eee6	1	Y	
8-14	01287654	116eeee	2		
8-15	01789te5	1611116	2		
8-16	01789t45	1611161	2		
8-17	01789t43	161116e	1		
8-18	01789345	1611611	2		
8-19	0178934t	1611616	1		
8-20	01782345	1616111	2		
8-21	0178234t	1616116	2		
8-22	0178239t	1616161	2		
8-23	01765et4	16eee6e	1		
8-24	01765et9	16eee6e	2		
8-25	017654te	16eee61	0	Y	Y
8-26	017654t9	16eee6e	2		
8-27	01765439	16eeee6	2		
8-28	01765432	16eeeeee	1		
8-29	06789te5	6111116	1		
8-30	06789t45	6111161	1		
8-31	06789t43	611116e	1		
8-32	06789345	6111611	1		
8-33	0678934t	6111616	1		
8-34	06789321	61116ee	0	Y	Y
8-35	06782345	6116111	1		
8-36	0678234t	6116116	2		
8-37	0678239t	6116161	2		
8-38	06712345	6161111	1		
8-39	0671234t	6161116	2		
8-40	0671239t	6161161	2		
8-41	06712398	616116e	0		
8-42	0671289t	6161611	2		
8-43	06712893	6161616	1		



**Example 4** Example of a terminal melody – Penderecki, *The Devils of Loudon*, Fig. 4<sup>–5</sup>.  
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**Example 5** Example of a cyclic melody – Penderecki, *Paradise Lost*, Act IA, b. 251.  
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on a sliding scale – ‘the lengths of Penderecki’s non-duplicative pitch successions exhibit a substantial degree of variance’ around an average of nine pcs<sup>19</sup> – the word ‘typical’ can assume two different meanings in my two prior sentences, and give rise to a contradiction peculiar to paradoxical melodies.<sup>20</sup>

From this vantage point, the beginning of the opera assumes an exceptional role: it is the only time in the entire two-hour work in which melodies from two of the three paradoxical melody classes – 6–16 and 8–34, as shown in Example 1 – are presented in immediate succession. Therefore, this unusual paradoxical feature is highlighted in this opening simply by employing two different melodies that both possess it. (Because this singular event occurs at the beginning of the work, recognition of this paradoxical feature requires foreknowledge of Penderecki’s preoccupation with 9-pc diversity and ic1/6 concentration, which prevails in his First Violin Concerto, premiered over two years before *Paradise Lost*, and which occurs frequently but more sporadically in his music throughout the 1970s). Timbre, register, and texture also play special roles in creating the experience of paradox during this prelude. In the first four bars, there is little rationale for melodically connecting the sustained pedal B<sub>1</sub> with the E–F and E–F–F# motives, although the B<sub>1</sub>–E tritone technically exemplifies ic1/6 concentration: the B<sub>1</sub><sup>0</sup> pitch is too low and barely audible, and the time interval between its attack and the E in b. 2 is too long. However, in b. 4, the B<sub>1</sub> pedal is rearticulated an octave higher with ‘cello and clarinet timbres, and the following motive starting on E comes sooner with the same timbres, creating a stronger melodic ligation for the six pitches bracketed under 6–16 in Example 1. If one allows this reading, then the dual status of b. 4’s B<sub>1</sub> as initial melodic tone and pedal tone invokes the paradox in a dramatic way, for when the listener arrives at the end of the B<sub>1</sub>–E–F–F#–C–B succession, there simultaneously exist the opposing senses that the melody has painted itself into a corner, but that

19 Murphy, ‘A Model of Melodic Expectation’, 189.

20 Although a sliding scale might suggest categorical ambiguity rather than contradiction – like red shading into orange or violet – the small sizes of the cyclic and terminal subsets relative to the size of the Penderecki set, their respective association with two antithetical temporalities that I will propose later, and a serendipitous relationship with one of Kierkegaard’s turns of phrase backs up my application of paradox as term and concept.

it could be heard to continue to the still-sustaining pedal B<sub>1</sub>, which is at once first in the melody and potentially next in the melody. The music vacillates between a well-defined ending (being terminal), and an option for not ending (being cyclic) or perhaps even never ending, considering how the subsequent pitches run through the same pattern, now with the bassoon colour providing the timbral link and the longer 8–34 melody conjuring another paradox.

Whereas my earlier study examines some of the syntactical ramifications of Penderecki's two melodic restrictions, I endeavour here to suggest some of the semantic potential of this system by proposing two narrative correlates to this musical-structural paradox. First, as argued earlier, the choice to begin the opera with a citation of the opening invocation from Book III, instead of the opening of Book I, clearly refers to the first day of creation when God created the heavens and the earth. Advocating a relational view of time (in contrast to a Newtonian view of absolute, unbounded time), philosopher and theologian William Lane Craig states that 'God would exist timelessly and independently 'prior' to creation; at creation, which he has willed from eternity to appear temporally, time begins, and God subjects himself to time by being related to changing things.'<sup>21</sup> A scientific view of creation can lead to similar notions; for example, physicist Paul Davies writes that 'just as the big bang represents the creation of space, so it represents the creation of time. . . Crudely speaking, time itself began with the big bang.'<sup>22</sup> There is little impediment to interpreting a cyclic melody as representing timelessness: although the melody itself unfolds in time, the notion that the melody persists along the same 'trajectory' and yet somehow returns to its point of origin resonates with notions of the atemporal. A setting of the phrase '*In sempiternam*' ['in the eternal'] from Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, as shown in Example 6, serves as one such example using a more conventional sequential trajectory: although the ascending minor-third transpositions linearly direct the music away from G minor, the music nonetheless returns to G minor. If one correspondingly interprets terminal melodies representing finitude and the temporal, then a paradoxical melody would best represent the singular moment in which time's absence and time's presence stand back to back, the moment of creation. Furthermore, since Fry's libretto incorporates Milton as a character (albeit a narrator) in the opera based on the poet's creation, the parallels between God as cosmological creator and Milton as literary creator intimated in the Book III invocation buttress this paradox: Milton is outside of, and then participates in, the opera's narrative and chronology, just as God is outside of, then participates in, time itself.

Second, and even more speculatively, I would like to put forward that these melodies presage a significant change in focus that occurs in Fry's and Penderecki's reworking of Milton's poem. In Regina Chlopicka's interpretation of the original epic, 'Milton presents Christ as a hero, or a powerful leader, equipped with a full selection of attributes of power, fighting against Satan in order to render his complete defeat.'<sup>23</sup> Indeed, although Milton

21 William Lane Craig, 'God, Time, and Eternity', *Religious Studies* 14 (1979), 503.

22 Paul Davies, *God and the New Physics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 18.

23 Regina Chlopicka, 'Paradise Lost: A Contemporary Interpretation of the Biblical Story of Salvation', in *Krzysztof Penderecki's Music in the Context of 20th-Century Theatre*, ed. Teresa Malecka (Krakow: Akademia Muzyczna, 1999), 144.





Example 6 Rossini, *Stabat Mater*, No. 10, bb. 87–91.

paints an elaborate picture of the Son of God's sacrificial love during Book III, he also makes this decree: 'Nor shalt thou by descending to assume / Man's nature, lessen or degrade thine own' (303–4). In contrast, Chlopicka notes that 'in Penderecki's work, the figure of the Messiah is stripped of any external features of grandeur and power'.<sup>24</sup> His melodic lines sung in English bear a much stronger relationship to those of Adam and Eve than the spoken dialogue and Hebrew melismas that combine to form the Voice of God. The impression is that Penderecki's Christ (never named as such in Milton's poem, instead referred to only as 'Son of God') has in fact assumed at least some of Man's nature.

However, this change of focus accentuates a central contradiction of Christian theology that, as with my first interpretation, involves time. On the one hand is the view of God as eternal: as Saint Anselm describes it, God 'exists neither yesterday, today, nor tomorrow, but directly outside of time'.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand is a rejection of the eternal God by theologians such as Paul Tillich and Karl Barth, who view God's complete temporality as a necessary component of the Christian message.<sup>26</sup> The finitude of the life of Jesus Christ, God Immanuel, is a keystone of this argument. Rather than choose a side, Søren Kierkegaard views this contradiction as cutting to the very heart of Christian faith, proposing the 'thesis that God has existed in human form, was born, grew up, etc. is certainly the paradox *sensu strictissimo*, the absolute paradox,'<sup>27</sup> the paradox 'that God, the eternal, has entered into time as an individual human being'.<sup>28</sup> By beginning his opera with two paradoxical melodies, Penderecki invokes in purely musical terms a circumstance analogous to that of Kierkegaard's view of Christ, and puts into relief the entire drama of Adam and Eve's fall by anticipating Christ's appearance in Act II, when He offers 'life for life'. Musicologist Siglind Bruhn employs a similar mapping scheme in her analysis of Messiaen's music; she proposes that a certain 'rhythmic signature' that recurs throughout the composer's programmatic oeuvre signifies 'the human aspect of the Son of God' by juxtaposing four non-retrogradable

24 Regina Chlopicka, 'Paradise Lost: A Contemporary Interpretation', 144.

25 Saint Anselm, *Proslogion*, trans. B.J. Charlesworth (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), chapter 19.

26 See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), and Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics II (i)*, trans. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956).

27 Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. by Howard V. Hong (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1974), 61.

28 Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992), 596.

rhythms ('time-annihilating palindromes'), which represent the atemporal, against an expanding rhythmic series, which represents the linear and temporal.<sup>29</sup> However, unlike Messiaen's signifiers, which are presented successively, Penderecki's signifiers of the atemporal and temporal coexist at the moment ending a paradoxical melody, and are thus united into a single simultaneity, much like the hypostatic union of the divine and human in the single figure known as Jesus Christ.

Reviewing the 1978 premiere of *Paradise Lost*, Art Lange wrote that 'the weighty tone and monochromatic musical effects are not convincing because the composer himself has not fully determined how to balance the modern expressionistic techniques which he helped pioneer with the traditionally communicative styles of the past'.<sup>30</sup> If Lange used 'modern expressionistic technique' to refer to certain timbral and textural effects that predominate in Penderecki's music from the 1950s and 1960s and play a supporting, intermittent role in this late-1970s opera, and used 'traditionally communicative styles' to refer to the occasional citations of Wagnerian triadic progressions and Bach chorales, then it falls outside the scope of this study to confirm or rebuke this criticism. However, if these turns of phrase are construed more broadly, then I believe this study suggests one way in which such a balance might be understood: Penderecki's two melodic constraints both allude to early twentieth-century expressionistic techniques of aggregate saturation and melodic angularity and austerity, and also give rise to a set of expectations analogous to certain communicative styles of tonality. Moreover, this balance is attempted not through pastiche, through the juxtaposition and opposition of tonal and post-tonal styles in a single work, as it is in so many other post-modern musical compositions. Rather, Penderecki manages, within a melodic style that is relatively simple (or even simplistic, some might say), to unite modern sounds with expectations that mirror those of tonality under a single idiom. Thus, this melodic style that permeates much of Penderecki's opera, which can create singular paradoxical moments with three special melodies, is in itself a paradox on another level, and perhaps reflective and representative of Kierkegaard's paradoxical Christ, through whom paradise is regained.

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29 Siglind Bruhn, *Messiaen's Interpretations of Holiness and Trinity: Echoes of Medieval Theology in the Oratorio, Organ Meditations, and Opera* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2008), 82–83.

30 Art Lange, 'Penderecki's *Paradise Lost*', *Tempo* 128 (March 1979), 35.

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