

Harmonic Analysis of Igor Stravinsky's Requiem Canticles, Movements II and III

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Like many other music students early in their studies, I initially felt uninspired by serial composition. In retrospect, I think my aversion towards new harmonic structures grew out of a narrow presentation of the material. There is significant value in presenting twelve-tone method and serial technique through the lens of the creator, Arnold Schoenberg; however, he represents only one approach among generations of innovation. Taking a deeper look into Stravinsky's serial period changed my perspective on serialism. Stravinsky's approach to serial composition is drastically different from Schoenberg's. Both composers were active within each other's lives, although out of respect for Schoenberg, Stravinsky did not present any compositions using the serial method until after Schoenberg's death. Schoenberg wanted to completely abandon tonality and equalize the chromatic scale, whereas Stravinsky respected tonal relationships, using serial technique to diversify and personalize his harmonic language. This is clearly apparent in Stravinsky's writing for voice. He solves compositional puzzles to create singable phrases resembling tonality while being fully constructed with serialism. The expressive qualities of his phrases are not limited by the harmonic language, but instead amplified. Stravinsky's *Requiem Canticles* (1966), a partial setting of the Roman Catholic Mass in nine short movements, comes from his serial period. This piece is a perfect example of expressive and performable serial writing for voice. *Requiem Canticles* demonstrates a philosophical departure from traditional serialism to offer Stravinsky's own unique musical take on the mass.

The first two movements of the mass to feature choir are II. Exaudi, which is a partial setting of what is traditionally the Introit, and the iconic III. Dies Irae. The dissonance of a serial harmonic language conceptually seems like it would pair well with the text from the "Dies Irae." The devotional nature of the text from the "Exaudi," however, seems to be more of a challenge to set serially. Stravinsky selected the last phrase of the Introit from the Latin text: "Exaudi,

orationem meam, ad te, ad te omnis caro veniet.” English translation: “Hear my prayer, all of you. Give, give and all flesh will come.” Stravinsky decides to harmonize this text using rotational arrays and four-part row arrays, each with different functional goals in mind.

In the first five measures of the movement, Stravinsky presents two colorfully orchestrated hexachords. The first hexachord is stated by the harp and flute in an irregular rhythm spanning over a three-octave range. Despite the large intervals separating each of the six pitches, all are some inversion of a major/minor 2<sup>nd</sup> or a perfect 4<sup>th</sup>. If we diagram this first hexachord onto a clockface, we can see the repetition of 2nds and the tritone in the outer interval, A# to D (see figure 1). The second hexachord Stravinsky presents is stacked vertically within the fourth measure. With this chord, we can see Stravinsky is using consonant intervals in the upper voices, stacking two 6ths and a 4<sup>th</sup> on top of two superimposed major 9ths starting in the bass. If we diagram this second hexachord onto a clockface, we can see that hexachord two is constructed through inversional symmetry. The hexachords are inverted over the two pitches they both share, C# and E.

In measure 5, the choir enters singing the text “Exaudi” on the same hexachord from the previous measure. This time hexachord two is voiced strictly with consonances. All the voices within the choir move logically by step or by a 6<sup>th</sup> to create consonant perfect 5ths, minor 3rds, and major 7ths with the other voices in the choir. In just five measures of music, Stravinsky demonstrates three distinctly unique ways to orchestrate a single set, (012346). Making nearly full use of the diversity of intervals in his set (interval class vector 443211), he transitions from a single disjunct line to a unified and singable choir section using the same prime form.

FIGURE 1: Reduction and Analysis of *Requiem Canticles*, Mvmt. II by Stravinsky, mm.1-5

The figure illustrates the harmonic structure of the first five measures of the *Requiem Canticles*, Mvmt. II by Stravinsky. It features two circular pitch class diagrams and a musical score. The left diagram, labeled "Hexachord 1 (H1)", shows a circle of 12 pitch classes with notes C, C#/Db, D, D#/Eb, E, F, F#/Gb, G, G#/Ab, A, A#/Bb, and B. The right diagram, labeled "Hexachord 1 (H2)", shows a similar circle with notes C, C#/Db, D, D#/Eb, E, F, F#/Gb, G, G#/Ab, A, A#/Bb, and B. The musical score below shows measures 1-5. Measure 1 is marked "♩ = 104" and contains H1 [t,e,0,1,2,4]. Measure 2 is marked "I 04" and contains H2 [1,3,4,5,6,7]. Measure 3 is marked "Listen" and contains H2. The lyrics "Ex - au - di, Ex - au - di," are written below the notes.

Stravinsky introduces the next harmonic tool in the next passage, excluding the use of choir. Measures 6 to 8 are an exact restatement of H1 from measures 1 to 3, only this time there is an elision (see figure 2). The last pitch of H1 is included as the highest pitch in the next sounding vertical sonority. This harmony is a development of the previous material, leaning more heavily into dissonances with the inclusion of a tritone in the inner voices, G# to D natural. Measures 8 to 11 make use of an interesting tool found within many of Stravinsky's works: rotational arrays. To make a rotational array, you start with a set, and then cycle the pitch classes so that the 1<sup>st</sup> pitch becomes the last, the 2<sup>nd</sup> becomes the 1<sup>st</sup>, the 3<sup>rd</sup> becomes the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and so on. After all rotations of the set are made, each set is transposed so that the starting pitch matches that of the original set. The result of creating these rotational arrays is a palette of different hexachords which are all unified by their interval constructions. The rotational array for H1 can

FIGURE 2: Reduction and Analysis of *Requiem Canticles*, Mvmt. II by Stravinsky, mm.6-11

FIGURE 3: H1 Rotational Array, *Requiem Canticles*, Mvmt. II by Stravinsky, mm.1-3

<p>H1</p>	<p>H2⊖1</p>
<p>H1⊖1</p>	<p>H2⊖2</p>
<p>H1⊖2</p>	<p>H2⊖3</p>
<p>H1⊖3</p>	<p>H2⊖4</p>
<p>H1⊖4</p>	<p>H2⊖5</p>
<p>H1⊖5</p>	<p>H2</p>

⊖ the set is rotated and then transposed to the 1st note of the original hexachord

be seen in figure 3. Comparing the rotational array to the score, Stravinsky clearly uses all six pitches from H1 $\ominus$ 5 within measures 8 to 10. Stravinsky may have been inclined to use the 5<sup>th</sup> rotation of the first hexachord because it completes the 12-tone aggregate when paired with H2, as can be seen in the bottom of figure 3. Stravinsky reinforces this connection of H1 $\ominus$ 5 to H2 in future sections of the movement (see figure 5).

In measure 11, H2 $\ominus$ 2 is used instead of H2 to create a perfect 5<sup>th</sup> relationship in the bass from G# down to C#. This decision is entirely functional. The bass implies ii-V-I motion, resolving to a re-statement of H2 in measure 12 serving as a functional tonic. The implied sonority in measure 12 is a F# dominant 7 chord missing the chordal 3<sup>rd</sup> (see figure 4). E natural is in the base, but the P5th between the Alto and Soprano reinforces F# as a root. Stravinsky continues composing with rotational arrays in the next sections, this time exclusively for the choir with a small instrumental punctuation. Picking from his palette of rotated sets, Stravinsky sets each word of the text with a different hexachord. The result is a serial harmonic progression that gives each word of the text its own affect. The rocking motion and dissonant counterpoint included in measure 13 between the D# and D natural in the outer voices resolving to a trichord resembling D major 7 (no third) is particularly satisfying.

FIGURE 4: Reduction and Analysis of *Requiem Canticles*, Mvmt. II by Stravinsky, mm.12-16

"Hear my prayer, all of you,"

The figure shows a musical score for measures 12-16. The score is a piano reduction with vocal lines. Measure 12 is labeled 'H2'. Measure 13 is labeled 'H2 2nd rotation'. Measure 14 is labeled 'H2 5th rotation'. Measure 15 is labeled 'H1 2nd rotation'. The lyrics are: 'ex - au - di o - ra - ti - o - nem me - am,'. The score shows complex harmonic structures with various time signatures and accidentals.

The final passage of music for the choir in movement two follows a completely different construction. Stravinsky creates a four-part array, starting with the full statement of his row which was identified previously by combining H1 $\Theta$ 5 and H2. The following two row forms are the Retrograde Inversion (RI) and the standard Retrograde (R). These two forms can be easily constructed using a matrix, but the last row form cannot. The final row form, the Inversion of the Retrograde (IR), is unique to Stravinsky's serial compositions, created by inverting the Retrograde form about the first note of the prime form, A#. If we place these four specific row forms on top of one another we can see the four-part array (figure 5). The resulting 12 vertical tetrachords are the same tetrachords within the choir. Pitches are oriented vertically to create singable consonances, but the horizontal design is determined by the array, jumping from voice to voice. Stravinsky breaks his own rules twice in favor of tonal structures. In measure 18, he incorrectly voices the E# of the IR row from as a G# to maintain the consonant perfect 4th from the previous measure. He also adds a G# in the Soprano of measure 22, create a consonant minor 3<sup>rd</sup> to punctuate the phrase and create a sense of closure.

FIGURE 4: Four-Part Array in *Requiem Canticles*, Mvmt. II by Stravinsky, mm.17-22

17 "give, give and all flesh will come, will come."

ad te, ad te om-nis ca-ro ve-ni-et, ve-ni-et.

P  
t 8 9 2 0 e 1 6 4 3 7 5

RI  
0 2 1 8 t e 9 4 6 7 3 5

R  
5 7 3 4 6 1 e 0 2 9 8 t

IR  
3 1 5 4 2 7 9 8 6 e 0 t

Stravinsky continues to push the harmonic boundaries of his rows all the way to the double-bar line. In the final four measures of the second movement, he devises a completely new harmonic construction. In the previous section, tetrachords were pulled from the verticals in a four-part array (figure 4). Here, hexachords are pulled from the verticals in a four-part array (figure 4). Here, hexachords are pulled from the verticals in the H1 rotational array (figure 3, left column). Stravinsky makes use of all six vertical hexachords, using the first vertical, the unison A#, as a bass. Since these sonorities are not sung by the choir, the voicings can be more diverse and dissonant. The last three sonorities, V4, V3, and V2 are voiced in successive rising motion. Tonal harmony is not being clearly implied in this section, so Stravinsky instead devices a cadential feeling of closure through continuous rising-counterpoint.

FIGURE 5: Reduction and Analysis of *Requiem Canticles*, Mvmt. II by Stravinsky, mm.23-26

The figure displays a musical score reduction and analysis for measures 23-26 of *Requiem Canticles*, Mvmt. II. The score is presented in two parts: a piano accompaniment reduction and a vocal score.

**Piano Accompaniment Reduction:**

- Measure 23: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chords are labeled H1V6, H1V5, and H1V4.
- Measure 24: Bass clef, 4/4 time. Chord is labeled H1V1.
- Measure 25: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chord is labeled H1V3.
- Measure 26: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Chord is labeled H1V2.

**Vocal Score:**

The vocal score consists of six parts, labeled H1 through H1Θ5. The lyrics are: t e 4 2 1 0, t 3 1 0 e 9, t 8 7 6 4 5, t 9 8 6 7 0, t 9 7 8 1 e, t 8 9 2 0 e. The numerical annotations (4, 2, 1, 0, 3, 1, 0, 9, 8, 7, 6, 4, 5, 9, 8, 6, 7, 0, 9, 7, 8, 1, e, 8, 9, 2, 0, e) are placed below the notes in the H1 and H1Θ1 parts.



The third movement, “Dies Irae,” is a horrific hell-scape, in the most literal terms. If the second movement shows Stravinsky’s appeal towards consonance, the third movement shows his appeal towards dissonance. The first measure is a massive sweep of the chromatic aggregate across the orchestra in about one second (see figure 6). The contrabasses are detuning their E strings/C extensions to an unbelievably low and rumbling A#. This is the only pitch they play for the whole movement, serving as one of the unique percussive techniques included within this mass. Despite the dissonant ambiguity of the first measure, Stravinsky prepares the choir’s A#, E#, and F# within the lowest voices of the orchestra to make it singable. The total gesture of this passage is one of contrast, emphasizing the differences between *ff* (mm.1-2) and *pp* (mm.3-4), sweeping dissonance and resounding consonance. This contrast is solidified with the repetition of the text “irae,” initial set as a major 7<sup>th</sup> chord and then set as a tritone on top of a minor 2<sup>nd</sup>. The first measure of the movement returns multiple times as a motive which catalyzes intensity and contrast. The repetition of the gesture from mm.1-2 can be seen in mm. 5-6.

FIGURE 5: Reduction of *Requiem Canticles*, Mvmt. III by Stravinsky, mm.1-6

1  $\text{♩} = 68$

Di - es i - rae, i - rae,

Di - es i - rae, i - rae,

Formal Translation: "Day of wrath, wrath, that day"

5

Di - es - il - la,

Di - es - il - la,

The other percussive technique featured within this movement is ironically within the choir. Instead of singing notated pitches, every member of the choir is chanting in an ominous breathy unison from measures 8 to 13. Compared to the choir passages in the previous section, there is no technique more antithetical than this pitch-less chant, emphasizing the theme of contrasts within the movement. The chant is paired with the most disjunct and dissonant passages within the whole composition, appropriately scored for the keyboard instruments. Stravinsky rhythmizes the aggregate over a much longer passage, four measures this time, using the largest intervals and the most complex polyrhythms possible while still being readable.

FIGURE 6: Reduction of *Requiem Canticles*, Mvmt. III by Stravinsky, mm.7-9

Formal Translation: "will dissolve the world in ashes"

Following the section for the choir and keyboards, two trombones underscore the chant (see figure 7). The first trombone enters with a solo at measure 11 and the second trombone joins at measure 12. Stravinsky shows off his composition craftsmanship in this section. He continues to use the aggregate, but he voices it between the two trombones extremely lyrically to contrast the disjunct keyboards from earlier. Measure 11 implies D minor, until the inclusion of an F# in measure 12 creates a minor 2<sup>nd</sup> with the F natural below. Stravinsky voices the remainder of the aggregate using major 7ths, creating a brief moment of consonance before the next interruption. The rest of the movement repeats these gestures with minor changes in orchestration.

FIGURE 6: Reduction of *Requiem Canticles*, Mvmt. III by Stravinsky, mm.10-14

10  
 Tes - te Da - vid cum Si - byl - la.                      Quan - tus tre - mor est fu -

The first system of the musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is a vocal line in 2/4 time, with lyrics "Tes - te Da - vid cum Si - byl - la.                      Quan - tus tre - mor est fu -". The piano accompaniment is on two staves below. The right hand features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and quintuplets. The left hand has a steady eighth-note accompaniment with some triplet figures.

Formal Translation: "(this is) the testimony of David along with the Sibyl. How great will be the quaking, when the Judge is about to come, strictly investigating all things!"

tu - rus,      Quan - do Ju - dex est ven - tu - rus, Cunc - ta stric - te dis - cus - su - rus!

The second system continues the musical score. The vocal line has lyrics "tu - rus,      Quan - do Ju - dex est ven - tu - rus, Cunc - ta stric - te dis - cus - su - rus!". The piano accompaniment continues with similar rhythmic complexity, including a triplet in the right hand and a triplet in the left hand. The system concludes with a double bar line and a final triplet figure.

Between these two movements, Stravinsky demonstrates an approach to serial harmony which is unique to him. Many composers throughout history have abandoned tonality in search of other philosophical approaches, seeing serial technique as a complete departure from all previous eras of music-making. Stravinsky's relationship with serialism was much different. He did not attempt to abandon his appeal towards other harmonic structures, but instead used serialism to broaden the expressive capabilities of his music. His ability to orchestrate the same idea into so many different functional constructions shows a thorough and personalized understanding of serialism. The selected genre, the mass, is historically overflowing with music in 17<sup>th</sup> century Western tonality. Stravinsky's serial setting of mass marks an expressive growth in the mass genre and serial technique, expanding the wealth of possibilities for composition.