

This paper analyzes how the work *Kassandra*, by the Greek composer Iannis Xenakis, musically translates the dislocated voice of the prophet Cassandra from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. The argument of the paper is inspired by Prins' discussion of Virginia Woolf's thoughts on the difficulties involved in translating Cassandra's voice (Prins 2006), and it relies on work by classicists on Cassandra's role in the *Agamemnon* (Kovacs 1987; Morgan 1994). It also responds to the findings of musicologists and cultural historians studying Xenakis' life and work (Harley 2004; Matossian 1986), as well as to Xenakis' own compositions, both musical and exegetical (Xenakis 1955, 1987, 1996).

Xenakis (1922-2001) was one of the most idiosyncratic and influential of contemporary composers. A trained civil engineer who became embroiled in resistance and revolutionary activity in Nazi-occupied Athens, he escaped to Paris where he worked in Le Corbusier's architectural studio through the 1950s. Meanwhile he continued to pursue his musical studies and to explore his Greek national roots (Xenakis 1955). With the support of Messiaen, Xenakis began to flourish as a composer whose work synthesized his knowledge of mathematics, architecture, and ancient Greek literature.

Xenakis originally wrote the music for an English-language production of the *Oresteia* in Michigan (1966). He insisted on fidelity to the cultural context of Aeschylus' drama, describing his setting, which integrated speech, music and dance, as 'total theater' (Xenakis 1996). When he re-wrote the music as a concert suite he arranged for the text, now in Aeschylus' Greek, to be sung entirely by the chorus. Then in 1987 Xenakis agreed to a staged performance of his *Oresteia* suite in Sicily. For this he composed *Kassandra*, a work for baritone and percussion that fitted into the *Agamemnon* movement of *Oresteia*. In this piece the single baritone voice sings the part of both chorus and, in falsetto, Cassandra.

*Kassandra* uses several strategies to highlight a notion of estrangement through miscommunication that is also fundamental to Aeschylus' portrayal of Cassandra in the *Agamemnon*. In both 'texts' this estrangement comes about from a disruption of the relationship between sound and sense. Xenakis' work first illustrates this with its striking contrast between the intimate instrumentation of the *Kassandra* interlude and the rest of the chorally-driven *Oresteia*. Within *Kassandra* the interaction between the melodic baritone and the rhythmic percussionist also contributes to this theme. The baritone voice itself shifts between singing, speech and inhuman noise, including bird-like fluting and glissandos. These noises respond to Klytemnestra's description of Cassandra's foreign speech as that of a swallow (Aesch. Ag. 1050). Finally, the single baritone voice slipping in and out of falsetto marks the conflicting narrative perspectives of Cassandra and the chorus, while it also points to the gendered characterization of Cassandra, whose incomprehensible prophecies are a result of her ambiguous sexual relationship with Apollo. In Xenakis' work, therefore, the fluid boundaries between sound and sense are translated to express the experience of violent displacement suffered by Aeschylus' Cassandra, Xenakis' Cassandra, and indeed by Xenakis himself: a Greek refugee in Paris and an architect in the world of music.