

**Cassandra's Dream Song in Context:
Reinventing Greek Mythology through the Contemporary Flute**

Andreani Papageorgiou

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Anders Ljungar-Chapelon

Malmö Academy of Music, Lund University

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Abstract

Author: Andreani Papageorgiou

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The subject of the present thesis stems from my personal interest about the way Greek mythology has influenced the craft of composing for, and playing, the flute. Although I have always been connected to my heritage, this particular interest was piqued during my studies abroad and especially when I began to tackle Brian Ferneyhough's *Cassandra's Dream Song* (1970) for solo flute. Consequently, I have decided to focus on my personal interpretation of *Cassandra's Dream Song*, taking the unique character of the piece into account. To accomplish that, I will first set the framework of the piece by exploring the relation between the flute and Greek mythology prior to *Cassandra's Dream Song*, then briefly presenting Cassandra's myth and appearance in literature throughout the years and finally examining Ferneyhough's profile as a composer's. Afterwards, I will expand on the piece and its notable traits – in particular, the structure and notation – in order to demonstrate how Cassandra's story materialises through the composer's approach. Lastly, I will present how, in my own interpretation, I applied various elements of Cassandra's myth while also keeping in mind all the aforementioned elements of my study.

Keywords: flute, mythology, new complexity, detailed notation, extended techniques, interpretation, emotional conflict, performer's initiative

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1. Greek Mythology in Flute Literature

In order to properly acknowledge the significance of the Greek mythology backdrop in *Cassandra's Dream Song*, one would first need to look at the bond between the flute and mythological themes throughout the years and how the two were often intertwined in the field of music composition.

Already during antiquity, the flute held a position of high esteem in religious practice and was generally regarded as a symbol of fertility and a means of connecting the divine and the mortal (Baines, 1991). As civilisation progressed and such notions largely eclipsed from everyday practice, the flute was still used in art imagery as something associated with mythical and mystic figures, as depicted on various works of art inspired by Greek and Roman mythology. This phenomenon was not limited in the field of paintings and drawings, but such was also the case with music. Particularly, a music era rich in mythological imagery concerning the flute was the Baroque period, with composers such as Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632-1687) and Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764) redefining the opera genre with libretti heavily influenced by Greek mythology, such as in Lully's *Alceste* (1674) and *Psyché* (1678) and Rameau's *Castor and Pollux* (1737) and *Dardanus* (1739), among others. Part of the instrumentation in the aforementioned operas is the flute, helping the mythological background come to life with its distinct timbre.

Regarding works more focused around the flute, the cantata *Pan et Syrinx* (1718) by Michel Pignolet de Montéclair (1667-1737) is noteworthy: its setting being the pursuit of nymph Syrinx by the half-man, half-goat deity Pan, it evokes the pastoral image of fauns and nymphs and is tragically resolved when Syrinx transforms into reeds in order to escape Pan. The flute's role in underlining the action is evident, since the

composer actually utilises techniques such as glissando in order to emphasise Pan's mourning.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the cantata *Pan et Sirinx* by Montéclair. The score is written for voice and flute. It consists of seven systems of staves. The first system shows the voice part with the lyrics "Il gemit, il se plaint; Ces roseaux luy re...". The second system continues with "pondent; Il les en... fle de ses sou...". The third system has "...purs Dieux! avec ses sou...". The fourth system has "...purs quels regrets se confondent! On dirait que si...". The fifth system has "...rinx veut flater ses de...sirs." The score includes various musical notations such as clefs, notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "Coulée." and "Fitez imperceptiblement du b. mol au ve Carre en enflant le Son de la voix."

Figure 1. Excerpt from the cantata *Pan et Sirinx* (1718/1981) by Montéclair.

The aforementioned glissando can be found in the flute solo in bar 7.

Another composer who ought to be mentioned is Jacques-Martin Hotteterre (1674-1763), a member of the French Royal Court hailing from a renowned family of instrument makers, who expressed interest in mythology while widely expanding the flute literature. That interest manifests in works such as *Première livre de Pieces pour la flûte-traversière* (1708/1715) and *Air et Brunettes* (c. 1715): in the first one, he names a suite movement *L' Atalante* – most probably with the Greek mythology character of the same name in mind – while in the latter the lyrics accompanying the short pieces often contain imagery of the bucolic life and also mention Bacchus, another name for the Greek god of wine and festivity Dionysus.

Lastly, leading the German music scene from Baroque to Classicism, Christoph Willibald von Ritter Gluck (1714-1787) brought a wind of change with his operas, where he also very often used mythological themes – a noteworthy example being *Orphée et Eurydice* (1774), which Gluck revised after its premiere in 1762 so as to create a version more agreeable to the French audience. Among other changes in the orchestration, a significant one was the addition of a flute solo, which remains as one of the most important excerpts from the orchestral repertoire for the flute.

Figure 2. Beginning of the flute solo *Scène des Champs-Élysées* in the French version of *Orphée et Eurydice* (1774/2005) by Gluck.

Although the classic and romantic eras were not short of flute works in general, it comes as no surprise that it was during the French impressionism era that a renewed interest towards mythological themes was sparked, and one specifically tied with the flute, on top of that. Surely, an art movement which favoured smaller forms and focused on different timbres so as to evoke vivid pictures, while at the same time drawing inspiration from the antiquity and its different musical landscape, was the perfect medium for composers to draw parallels with mythological themes from. Of those composers, Claude Debussy (1862-1918) belongs to the most important ones, as far as flute literature goes. Even when he was still a student at the Paris Conservatoire, he was inspired by other art forms that were heavily influenced by mythology – a notable example of such early endeavours being his attempt at a comédie lyrique based on Théodore de Banville's comédie héroïque *Diane au Bois* (1864), between 1881 and 1886. Although the work remained unpublished, it is a prime example of how the composer used a mythology canvas as he “first struggled intensively to reconcile the old and the new” (Briscoe, 1990, p. 132). One could say that such attempts paved the way for groundbreaking works like the symphonic poem *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894), based again on a work of literature – this time, on the poem *L'après-midi d'un faune* (1876) by Stéphane Mallarmé. The imagery in the piece is decidedly bucolic and evokes images and feelings pertaining to Greek mythology, with creatures such as nymphs and fauns taking central stage. All that is aided by the flute, which holds a pivotal role, playing the opening solo and contributing to the peculiar, for the time, sound colour and pastoral character. The significance of the flute in the instrumentation is, as a matter of fact, noted by Pierre Boulez, who partly attributed the revolutionary character of the piece to the “flute of the faun”, which “brought new breath to the art of music” (1991, pp. 259-277).



Figure 3. Beginning of the flute solo in *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894) by Debussy.

(Taffanel & Gaubert, 1923/1958, p. 198).

Another example of Debussy incorporating elements of Greek antiquity was his incidental music to Pierre Louÿs prose poems *Chansons de Bilitis* (1894), with an instrumentation of 2 flutes, 2 harps, celesta and narrator (1900-1901). Although the poems at hand later turned out to be a kind of pseudotranslation, despite being presented at first by Louÿs as his rendering of original poetry by historical figure Bilitis, Debussy's work still represents a re-imagining of Greek antiquity with the flute having a crucial role to setting the ambience. Last but not least, as far as Debussy's contribution to flute literature goes, his work *Syrinx ou La Flûte de Pan* (1913) constitutes the first significant solo flute piece after C. P. E. Bach's *Sonata in A minor Wq. 132* (c. 1747), as well as the first solo composition intended for the Boehm flute. Of course, the choice of the instrument in relation with the background of the work should not be overlooked; the piece was at first set to accompany the play *Psyché* (1913) by Gabriel Mourey, which incorporated the myth of Eros and Psyche, appearing in Greek art since the 4th century BC – as well as in other forms, such as Lully's aforementioned opera of the same name – and *Syrinx* once again deals with the story of Pan and Syrinx, a combination of tragedy with a pastoral scenery (Ljungar-Chapelon, 1913/1991).



Figure 4. Beginning of *Syrinx ou La Flûte de Pan* (1913/1991) by Debussy.

Through the presentation of the above works, it becomes apparent that Debussy helped propel new musical ideas with the deliberate choice of the flute as one his tools, while at the same time drawing his inspiration from literature works based on ancient mythology.

The position of the flute in illustrating such musical landscapes was corroborated by Maurice Ravel (1875-1937). More specifically, the flute holds much importance in the ballet *Daphnis et Chloé*, which premiered in 1912. The piece was based on the novel of the same title, written by Greek writer Longus in the beginning of 3rd Century AD, which describes the love between Daphnis and Chloé, a shepherd and shepherdess, and the trials they endure. Once again, Pan makes an appearance, along with nymphs, and plays a significant role in the lysis of the novel – specifically,

he saves Chloé after she has been abducted by pirates and helps her reunite with her lover Daphnis. Much of the music work's orchestration relies on the woodwinds, and specifically on the flutes – in fact, the quite famous flute solo gives a distinctive colour to the pastoral setting.

The image shows a page of musical notation for a flute solo. The tempo is marked 'Très lent' and the dynamics range from 'pp' (pianissimo) to 'f' (forte). The music consists of several lines of eighth-note patterns, often grouped in threes or sixes, with various articulations and dynamics. The score concludes with the instruction 'Retenu' and 'etc.'.

Figure 5. The flute solo in *Daphnis et Chloé* (1912) by Ravel.

(Taffanel & Gaubert, 1923/1958, p. 209).

Another example of a composer using the flute in a mythological setting during this time is French composer Albert Roussel (1869-1937). In more detail, in 1924 he created the four-piece set *Joueurs de flûte* for flute and piano. Each of the four pieces was written with a literary flutist in mind, and the first two show significant influence from the Greek and Roman literature; the first one, named *Pan*, draws inspiration from both Greek mythology and music – since the composer actually uses the Dorian mode, also found in Ancient Greek music – and the second one, named *Tityre*, incorporates a character from Latin poet Virgil’s work *Eclogues*; also known as *Bucolics*, once again it highlights the pastoral life, especially as far as *Tityre*, the shepherd in the first poem of the work, is concerned.

All in all, it becomes clear that throughout various music eras the flute has been used to great extent in order to demonstrate man’s connection with nature and deity against a mythological backdrop, both in orchestral and solo settings.

2. Cassandra as a Mythological Figure

So far, there has been talk of Greek and Roman mythology with regards to flute literature, on the grounds that such a mention is needed so as to appraise the relationship between the music and the inspiration material in *Cassandra's Dream Song*. However, that begs the question: who was Cassandra?

Cassandra makes an appearance in Homer's *Iliad* as one of the daughters of Priam and Hecuba, king and queen of Troy. Not much information is given about her then and Homer's focus is on her extraordinary beauty (Homer, 1954); however, later sources and Greek tragedies shed light on her character as a tragic figure (namely, Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, Euripides's *The Trojan Women* and Lykofron's *Alexandra*). According to Aeschylus, Apollo, the god of not only music and dance, but also prophecy, fell in love with her, and in order to reciprocate his love Cassandra asked for the gift of divination – when she received it, though, she went back on her word, and thus Apollo cursed her to never be believed by her peers (Aeschylus, 1954). When Troy fell, she was raped by Ajax the Lesser, a member of the Greek army, and then given to Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, as a spoil of war. That is also how she found her end, since after Agamemnon returned to his palace in Mycenae, he was killed by his wife Clytemnestra, who did not spare Cassandra either.

Cassandra's curse is present in all the aforementioned works, referred to in connection with her clairvoyance abilities: when Paris comes back to Troy after growing up, Cassandra foresees that he will bring about the fall of their kingdom but is not taken seriously – Lykofron even states that her own father has her imprisoned for a time because he could not bear to listen to her grim prophecies (Lykofron, 2004); in *The Trojan Women*, she foretells Odysseus's 10-year long journey home (Euripides,

2012), while Hecuba herself calls her daughter a “maenad”, a word closely connected with *manteia* (the Greek word for divination) that also roughly translates to “raving one” (Euripides, 2012, 308) and a Greek messenger remarks that her manic streak descends from Apollo (Euripides, 2012); in *Agamemnon*, she laments for her own death after arriving at Mycenae and even specifies the perpetrator (Aeschylus, 1954), but in vain.

Based on the above, it appears that Cassandra’s life was plagued by her “gift”, even before it was abruptly and violently cut, a fact which also led to her being an outcast, both in her own home and society as a whole. However, it is also important to note that she kept delivering her prophetic visions, despite the position she was put in because of that action. Whether that was also part of her curse, an innate want or a deliberate choice remains open for interpretation.

3. Brian Ferneyhough and New Complexity

After some important pieces of flute literature connected to Greek mythology were presented in the previous chapter, it is noteworthy mentioning that although the majority of those are dated after the Classicism era and in many cases helped pave the way towards a new musical landscape, they are still largely rooted in the classical tradition, especially as far as musical notation goes. That is not so much the case with later works, and specifically with *Cassandra's Dream Song*.

The piece was created in 1970 by Brian Ferneyhough (b. 1943), an English composer based at the time in mainland Europe. If one could classify him as belonging to one movement, that would be New Complexity – a movement based on the principles of which, as stated in *Grove Music Online*, composers “sought to achieve in their work a complex, multi-layered interplay of evolutionary processes occurring simultaneously within every dimension of the musical material” (Fox, 2001). Such a concept was not created in a vacuum, but rather falls in stride with the overflow of information at the present time and is meant to reflect the world moving forward at an extremely fast pace, along with channelling feelings of agitation and unease (Maxwell, 2013). Upon first glance at some of the works within the realms of New Complexity, one would think that the aforementioned complexity mostly entails intricacy in notation, resulting in pieces unrealistically difficult. However, despite the notation indeed playing a significant part in the New Complexity compositions, it is the thought process behind it that arouses great interest. The New Complexity composers wished to combine music with complicated concepts, resulting in an elevated difficulty in the compositions themselves. The extreme attention to detail, not only in rhythm and dynamics, but also in aspects such as pitch – with the frequent use of microtones – and timbre rendered the

New Complexity pieces almost unplayable to exactness, thus possibly negating their very purpose – or so one would think. In reality, that is precisely the effect the composers intended, or as Duncan (2010) states:

[...] the complexity these composers seek, in fact, resides in the interstices between the composer and score, score and performance, and performance and reception. Therefore, the resulting notation encapsulates these interstices, ‘complexifying’ the relationships between composer, score, performer and listener [...] (p. 137).

Consequently, it becomes apparent that the interpretation of the individual performer and how they approach the compositions exactly because of their convoluted appearance and the composers’ elevated demands are key elements to the outcome of the piece, and ones that the composers kept in mind while in the process of creating. That results in varied interpretations and, more than in other music movements, a diverse effect on the listener.

Such is the case with Ferneyhough: the complexity of his music “derives not from the informational density of the score [...] but rather from a coalescence of the dialogues between composer and score, score and performance, and performance and reception” (Duncan 2010, p. 138). Essentially, the complicated notation is not selected without reason, but serves as a means to an end, which involves the active immersion of the performer in the score and, more often than not, decision making concerning particularly demanding points in the piece. The points in question might vary, from the extended techniques instructed to be used in innovative ways to the rearrangement of passages as the interpreter sees fit. Ferneyhough, a pioneer of New Complexity, maintains that this style of composition is the natural evolution of music in the day of technology and abundant information:

Things in the present day world surely move rather quickly. It seems rather anomalous to expect our art to be easily understandable; I don't see music as providing a sort of breathing space between bouts of confrontation with the outside world! It is also not directly about offering privileged insights, but more about how to create one's own insights when immersed in the complex ambiguity of the art object [...] (Ferneyhough 1995, p. 373).

Ultimately, in spirit with the New Complexity movement, Ferneyhough's arduous notation is a conscious choice reflective of his creative vision and, specifically, one that proves physically and mentally taxing for the performer, thus having an effect on their interpretation. Of course, as with the rest of his compositions, that exact choice manifests in *Cassandra's Dream Song* and, eventually, affects the final product of the performance.

4. Cassandra's Dream Song

Nowadays, *Cassandra's Dream Song* has gained a place in the flute staple repertoire, although it took a few years after its completion to be premiered in 1974 due to it being "considered so formidable" (Waterman, 1994, p. 155). The same technical aspects, however, that made the piece look daunting at the time have contributed to its unique character, with the unusual structure and the intricate notation being the most prominent elements. Both these tie back to Ferneyhough's background and outlook regarding composition, better explained through the New Complexity movement.

One could say that Ferneyhough's creative vision and the affinity of the New Complexity composers, in general, for an elaborate framework appear early on in *Cassandra's Dream Song*, and that is in the choice of title for the piece. Although we can only make assumptions about the reasoning behind this choice, some light could be shed on the matter if one takes into account the importance of dreams in ancient Greek culture. Apart from the fact that theorists and philosophers alike were preoccupied with the character and potential meaning of dreams – namely, passages in Plato's *Republic* (2015) and Aristotle's *On Dreams* (1998) attest to this – dreams were also considered to be a means of communication between the divine and the mortal. That fact is also illuminated by references to a specific kind of divination called oneiromancy, which entailed visions brought about in dreams or the interpretations of symbols appearing in dreams. Mentions of oneiromancy can be found in various ancient cultures, among which the Mesopotamian and the Egyptian, as a pivotal part of their religious practice, but also in ancient Greek culture and mythology. In the *Iliad*, for example, Zeus sends a dream to Agamemnon (Homer, 1954) which later sets off a series of events extremely significant for the outcome of the war in Troy, and despite the fact that it does not

necessarily amount to a prophecy, it demonstrates a clear path of communication between gods and people. In conclusion, the significance of dreams in antiquity and their connection to the occult leads to the presumption that Cassandra could have had her prophetic prowess manifest as visions in her dreams; in that sense, *Cassandra's Dream Song* could be at least partly interpreted as a dream sequence, interspersed with real events, or as the culmination of the prophetic visions come to her while in a state of dreaming.

4.1. Structure

There has already been talk of the piece's atypical structure. More specifically, it consists of two music sheets, divided in sections; on Sheet One, the sections are numbered and on Sheet Two alphabetised. As Ferneyhough himself explains in the performing instructions of the piece:

The six numbered sections (1 – 6) on sheet one must be played in the given numerical order. The piece therefore invariably begins with 1.

In between each of these sections is interspersed one or other of the five sections (A – E) to be found on sheet two. These may be played in any order.

The piece thus ends with 6 on sheet one.

No section may be played more than once. (Ferneyhough, 1975)

As we can see, it is an alternation of fixed and variable material, determined in part by rules set by the composer, but also largely dependent on the performer's decision. Subsequently, the controlled freedom of the performer against a determinate backdrop provides the element of surprise without the performer feeling they are cast adrift in a

sea of uncertainty. In other words, this compositional choice “proves to be both an important structural element and a dramatic feature which adds an element of predictability that tends to balance the indeterminate aspects of the mobile scenario” (Ferneyhough & Boros, 1990, p. 40). The structure can be seen with more clarity in the graph below.

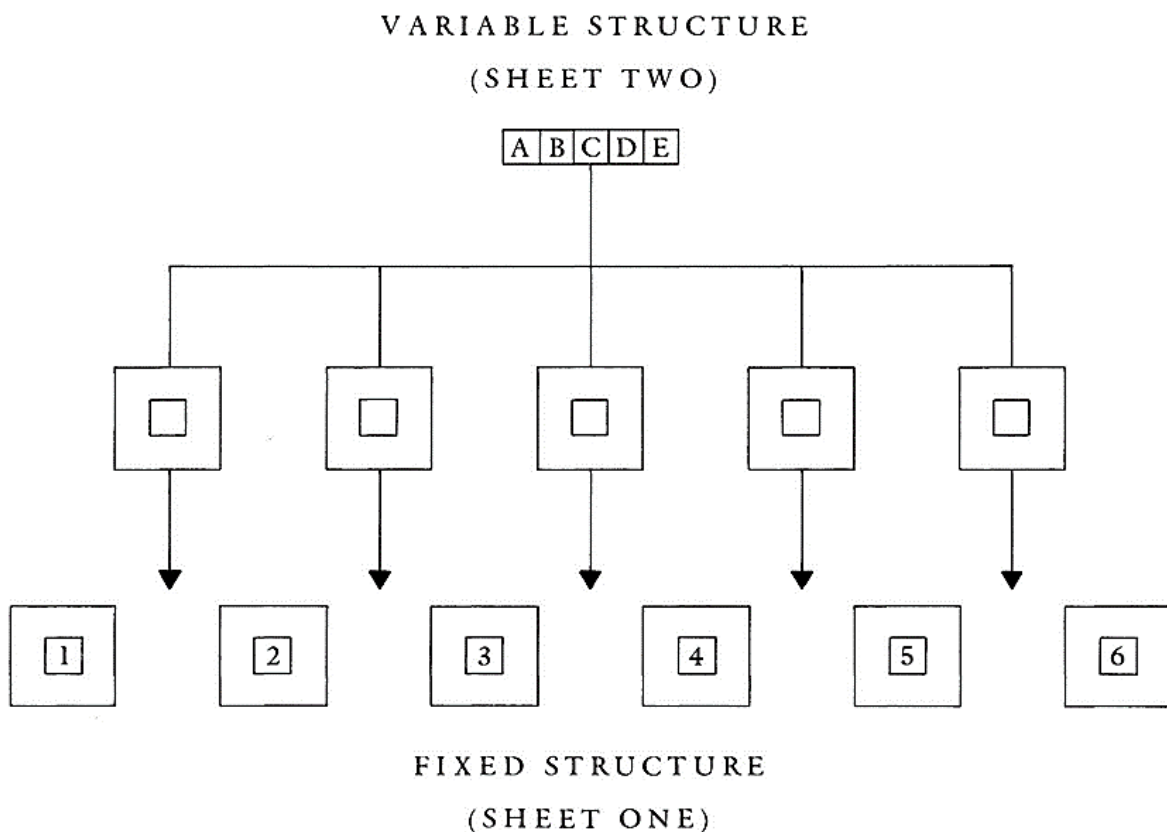


Figure 6. Graph of the structure in *Cassandra's Dream Song* (1970).

(Ferneyhough & Boros, 1990, p. 41).

The difference in structure is not the only one between the two sheets. As Ferneyhough himself has stated, “one could see the material on the first page as relating to the god Apollo, and the material on the second page as relating to Cassandra's prophecies” (Waterman, 1994, p. 156). Of course, in a piece where the performer is

called to actively participate starting from elements which are usually solely configured by the composer way before the composition reaches the point of being performed, such as its structure, it seems plausible that there can be additional interpretations of such facts, depending on the performer's initiative. Taking into account the mythology behind *Cassandra's Dream Song*, one could also assume that the first sheet symbolises Cassandra's entourage and their unyielding doubt towards her predictions about the future, whereas the interpolations of the second sheet's segments could be Cassandra's attempt at convincing them, while expressing her visions and, ultimately, herself.

The contrast of the sound quality between the two sheets corroborates that concept; the first sheet seems to circle around the fixed pitch A, progressively incorporating more and more notes as the piece goes, while on the second one a variety of other pitches is preferred. In a way, the fixed pitch could be interpreted as the established state of things, held up despite Cassandra's attempt to break in (Waterman, 1994). The fact that, at a glance, the second sheet appears to be rather more virtuosic and unrestrained than the first one strengthens that impression. Expanding on this view, while also keeping in mind the dipole of Apollo/Cassandra, one could even ascribe a masculine and feminine character to Sheet One and Sheet Two, respectively, although it would undoubtedly be hard to reach a clear consensus as to whether the aforementioned differences in sound quality could actually be interpreted as a distinction between masculine and feminine attributes.

4.2. Notation

Since there has already been mention of the heavy notation in Ferneyhough's works in general, and especially in *Cassandra's Dream Song*, it is time to look at some examples from the piece itself: namely, Sections 2 and B.

2

Figure 7. Section 2 of Sheet One from *Cassandra's Dream Song* (1970).

While examining Section 2, it appears to be dominated by the A natural, as mentioned of Sheet One in general – that does not mean, of course, that there is only one way to play it throughout. In the rest of the sheet as well, Ferneyhough utilises a variety of extended techniques, or just plain text indications, to give a different colour and character to it whenever he sees fit. At the same time, already from Section 2, we can see that the state of things is starting to crumble, based on the ever so slight harmonic modifications on A natural and the slow emergence of other notes, such as B

flat and F sharp – notes which, according to Waterman (1994), signal Cassandra’s desperate attempts to be heard and believed.

The musical score for Section B consists of four systems of music. The first system begins with a dynamic marking of *mf* and includes a 3:2 ratio. It features a series of notes with various articulations and dynamic changes, including *ff*, *mp*, *sfz*, and *mp*. The second system is heavily annotated with performance instructions such as 'libero', 'giusto', 'ppp', 'sfz', 'fff', 'ppp', 'mf', 'sfz', 'sub.', 'f', and 'ppp'. It includes detailed notes on articulation like 'Fla. (lips-tongue)', 'Fla. (throat)', 'Non Fla. (ppd vibr.)', and 'smore. (lips)'. The third system continues with dynamics like *p*, *sfz*, *fff*, *pp*, *ppp*, *fff!*, *ppp*, *ppp*, *ppp*, *ppp*, and *molto!*. It includes instructions like 'quasi legato', 'libero 6th', 'sub.', 'sub.', 'Trem. slow', 'gliss.', 'Trem. fast', and 'attacca'. The fourth system includes dynamics like *p*, *mfz*, *sfz*, *fz*, *pppp subito*, *ff*, *vibr. molto*, and *pp*. It also features 'giusto', 'Fla.', '5th', 'trem. slow', 'gliss.', 'vibr. molto', and 'tutta la forza'.

Figure 8. Section B of Sheet Two from *Cassandra's Dream Song* (1970).

In Section B, supposedly part of the symbolism for Cassandra's character and divinations, the A pitch is remarkably absent for the most part and instead the melody spans bigger intervals and requires a significant amount of *accelerando* and *rallentando* – the second indicated by the downward black arrow. Once again, it is clearly shown that Ferneyhough has set quite an elaborate framework for the material, with analytical notation and a lot of written directions. Those directions are not limited to the piece itself; there is a companion for the notation, where Ferneyhough explains what every symbol signifies, along with some clarification regarding rhythmical elements.

Nevertheless, one might wonder: since every aspect of the piece appears to be more or less spelled out by the composer, how does the performer's initiative, one of the supposed fundamentals of New Complexity, factor into that? Ferneyhough himself sheds light to that assumption in the remarks of *Cassandra's Dream Song*, asserting that he was interested in the “problems and possibilities inherent in the notation – realisation relationship” and that, conclusively, “it is the attempt to realise the written specifications in practice which is designed to produce the desired (but unnotatable) sound-quality” (1975, “Remarks”). He affirms the performer's goal should not be a “cultivated performance” (1975, “Remarks”), since he himself admits that not everything can be played in the exact way it was notated; still, though, the exact endeavour of the performer to follow the written instructions is the one that will bring about a genuine performance (Ferneyhough, 1975). Incorporating elements which might contradict each other and be rendered unrealisable in the process can hardly be seen as an oversight, but is rather another conscious choice made by the composer, as he also states in his *Collective Writings* (1995):

[...] the material has been intentionally so slanted as to present, at times, a literally ‘unplayable’ image. The boundary separating the playable from the unplayable has not been defined by resorting to pitches lying outside the range of the flute, or other, equally obvious subterfuges, but has been left undefined, depending for precise location on the specific abilities of the individual performer, whose interpretation endowment forms a relativizing ‘filter’ (p. 5).

It can be deduced, from the above quote, that in *Cassandra’s Dream Song* Ferneyhough does not impose boundaries for the sake of restricting a performer from realising his score fully; rather, he sets down a detailed frame and gives the piece over to each individual performer, so to speak, in order for them to bring it to life according to their own capabilities and artistic sensibility. He aims, after all, to a certain discourse between performer and piece, which will fill in the gaps between what is written and what will come out as a result (Ferneyhough, 1995). Therefore, it would seem that the high-density notation Ferneyhough employs actually contributes to the performer’s immersion in the piece, since the performer needs to carefully analyse all the elements which make up the piece and decide on the paths partly laid out by the composer (Ferneyhough & Boros, 1990). Not only that, but also the controlled environment of the piece and the demanding notation could be argued to bring about a different “dimension of freedom”, since the interpreter is driven to “trust their instinct” while navigating the score (Maxwell, 2013, p. 8), even leading to a form of a prepared improvisation, of sorts, as the performer determines how to deliver their performance. As a result, it turns out that instead of restrictive, the relationship arising between the composer and the performer takes a reciprocal character, since the performer can somehow offer something different through their own interpretation (Duncan, 2010).

It would prove helpful to look at certain examples showcasing the performer's need to decide on specific traits of the score's realisation.

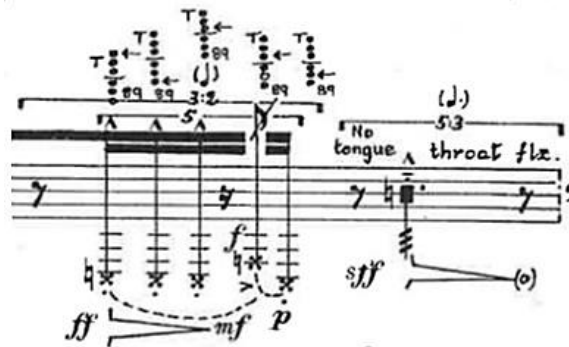


Figure 9. Excerpt from Section 4 of Sheet One from *Cassandra's Dream Song* (1970).

In this example from the end of Line 4, the performer has a series of key clicks to realise which are actually combined with tongue stops so as to sound below the range of normal flute playing – the composer also includes the fingerings required for each note. However, apart from the fact that key clicks sound relatively subdued in general, here they start from quite a high dynamic point and are supposed to reach a very low level, while at the same time the specific fingerings have the opposite effect, getting progressively louder instead. One could assume that the conflicting directions lead to the final gasping tone, where the performer exasperatedly exhales a considerable amount of air (Waterman, 1994).

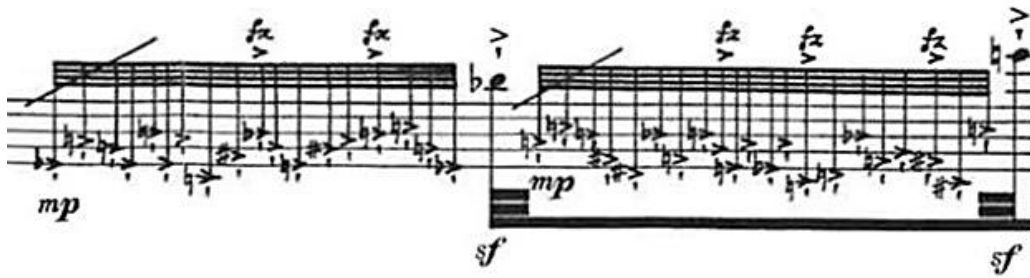


Figure 10. Excerpt from Section 5 of Sheet One from *Cassandra's Dream Song* (1970).

Another instance is this excerpt from Line 5, where the performer is supposed to use *quasi-pizzicato*, or as Ferneyhough describes it in the performing instructions “sharp (exaggerated) tongue action with no subsequent breath pressure” (1975, “Notation”). And yet, this specific technique usually requires a fairly big embouchure movement from the performer, a fact which comes at odds with the context of fast notes played *tempo di trillo*, as is indicated at the start of Line 5. As a result, the performer must compromise on either the speed or the clarity of the extended technique required.

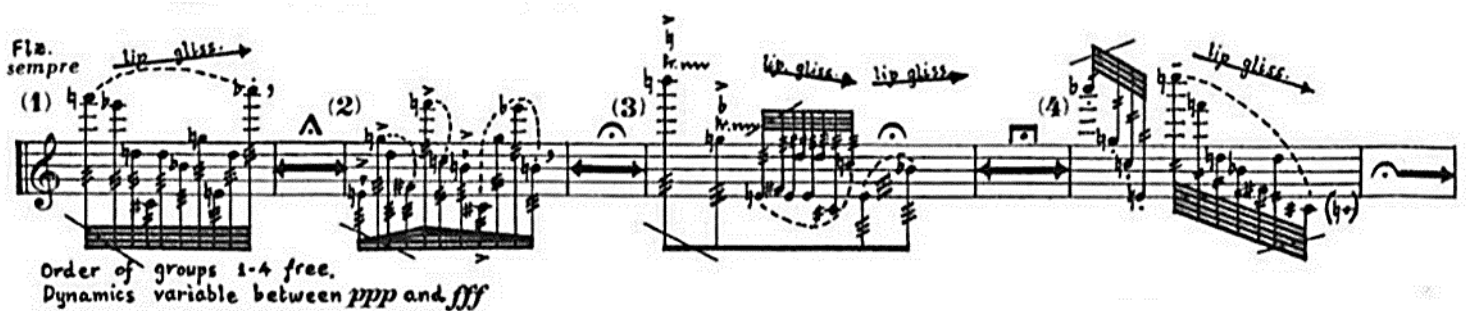


Figure 11. Section C of Sheet Two from *Cassandra's Dream Song* (1970).

This particular example, in which the entire Line C is shown, is a clear indication of the performer's role in bringing *Cassandra's Dream Song* together. The section in question consists of four segments that are supposed to be rearranged at the will of the performer; not only that, but it is also the dynamic of the groups that depends on the interpreter's decision. In a way, "this is a symbolic act reflecting Cassandra's (and the performer's) ability to change" (Waterman, 1994, p. 167).

This musical score for Line C is highly complex and features extensive performance markings. At the top, a large upward-pointing arrow is labeled 'molto agitato'. The score includes various dynamics such as *mf*, *ff*, *mp*, *p*, *f*, *fff*, *pp*, *ppp*, *pppp*, *sfz*, *sf*, *ffz*, and *fffz*. It also contains articulation and phrasing marks like *Flz.*, *tr*, *acc.*, *rit.*, and *rit.*. The notation includes numerous triplets, slurs, and other intricate musical notations.

Figure 12. Excerpt from Section 1 of Sheet One from *Cassandra's Dream Song* (1970).

This musical score for Line 3 includes specific performance instructions. At the top left, it says 'v.m!' and 'vibr.'. In the middle, there is a wavy line with the text 'fast, heavy vibr.'. To the right, it says 'No tongue'. At the bottom left, it reads 'pppp sempre'. Below that, it says 'sub. pp sempre' and 'sfz'. At the bottom right, it says 'trem. sing (as high as poss.)'. The notation includes various notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 13. Excerpt from Section 3 of Sheet One from *Cassandra's Dream Song* (1970).

Both the above examples, the first from Line 1 and the second from Line 3, once again demonstrate how certain elements are deliberately left up for interpretation at the performer's discretion. The upwards and downwards arrows signify an accelerando and

a *rallentando*, respectively, and how far the performer wants to take that is up to them; likewise, the “fast and heavy” vibrato notated in Line 3 depends on the interpreter’s choice, as well as the singing, written to be performed “as high as poss[ible]” (1975, “Notation”).

Another aspect which contributes to the performer’s immersion in the piece is Ferneyhough’s attitude towards rhythm. As he explains in the performing instructions, general guidelines such as the tempo markings should be followed and a performance of the piece should last between 8¹/₂ and a bit over 10 minutes, provided that the passages do not come out muddled (Ferneyhough, 1975). Notwithstanding those directions, the absence of a conventional time signature and measure separation throughout the piece means that Ferneyhough employs the contrast of different components so as to establish an underlying pulse, which will propel the interpretation forward in a more organic way. In that manner, even the duration of the rests is partly determined by the flow of the performance and the interpreter’s approach towards the various aspects of the piece which require a certain extent of decision making. The concept of energy expended throughout the piece is another part, since the inner rhythm of the performance is also shaped by the succession of fast and slow passages and the rests that provide a much needed change of pace. In the words of Ferneyhough himself, he opted for this method to “sensibilize the flutist to the nuances of energy expenditure and interpretative moment-to-moment detailing” (Ferneyhough & Boros, 1990, p. 15).

4.3. Personal Interpretation

After the previous remarks on notation and structure, it can be concluded that Cassandra's myth adds significant layers to the interpretation of *Cassandra's Dream Song* and can very well be incorporated in the performer's approach while tackling the piece. One question, however, remains: was that the composer's intention? Apart from his choice of name for the piece and his attributing the character of Apollo and Cassandra to Sheets One and Two respectively, later in his career Ferneyhough also expressed the view that the piece could be performed with Cassandra's circumstances in mind, and specifically her fruitless efforts of saving her city and compatriots, so as to reach a new depth in expression (Ljungar-Chapelon, 2013). However, since the process Ferneyhough has followed in *Cassandra's Dream Song* highlights the performer's role in determining the outcome of their performance, adding to the fact that a performer can never be entirely sure about the thoughts of a composer at the point of creating a musical work, one could say that interpreting *Cassandra's Dream Song* also heavily relies on the performer's thoughts and research. With all the above in mind, I will now present how I, as a flutist, was inspired from Cassandra's myth in my interpretation of *Cassandra's Dream Song* and how in my point of view certain characteristics of the piece connect to her story – namely, the key point to my approach is that a parallel can be drawn between Cassandra and the performer themselves.

First of all, I presume that the effort the performer is expected to put into deciphering the score and performing it adequately reflects Cassandra's human nature and struggles. Although Cassandra has been gifted – and at the same time cursed – by a god, she is still a member of society, striving for reconciliation between those two

characteristics that define her. Likewise, the performer's efforts within the boundaries of interpretation are a human trait, meant to connect them with Cassandra.

Additionally, the frustration that might arise in the process of understanding the piece echoes Cassandra's anguish in the midst of Trojan War and year-long siege. Just like the performer encounters various obstacles during the course of the piece, Cassandra and her compatriots face a terrible situation which can only plunge them further into despair, a state of mind which shines through the performance. As it is described as if through Cassandra's own voice in Christa Wolf's novel (1984):

That my limbs no longer moved of their own free will, that I had lost all desire to walk, breathe, sing. Everything required a long drawn-out act of decision. 'Get up!' I ordered myself. 'Now walk!' And what an effort everything was. (p. 100).

Still, Cassandra does not give up on her efforts, the same way that the performer will continue with the performance.

Another aspect of Cassandra's story that ties into the aforementioned frustration is the social struggle. In particular, Christa Wolf suggests that it was not so much a matter of divine prophecies that went unbelieved, but rather a combination of many factors: the intrigue and politics of the Trojan palace, the complicated interpersonal relations, as well as the position of women in society (Wolf, 1984). Under that light, the intersection of lines from Sheet Two could be seen as Cassandra's attempt at emancipation. In the end, one could say that Cassandra's disagreement with the state of things is what finally condemns her, and the performer in a way shoulders that burden during the interpretation.

The emotional conflict that the performer is supposed to channel through the piece is also enhanced by the tension between the conventional way of flute playing

and the extended techniques included. Apart from the unique characteristics of the piece previously discussed, it is worth mentioning that a large part of *Cassandra's Dream Song* is devoted to “standard” flute playing; as a matter of fact, 48% of all notes have no instruction concerning unusual interpretative methods, while the remaining 52% contain some kind of extended technique (Pálsdóttir, 2017). Those two kinds of playing, found in almost perfect proportion throughout the piece, can be perceived as two distinctive characters clashing with one another, thus projecting the image of Cassandra's clash with her contemporaries. In the same way, the need to change between the different ways of playing keeps the performer on their feet and adds on to the strenuous interpretation.

The ordering of the sections in Sheet Two is an additional aspect which, depending on the interpreter's preference, can be construed in different ways with Cassandra's myth in mind. According to Ferneyhough's instructions during a masterclass at the Royal Northern College of Music (February 28th, 2011), the interpolation of the lines into Sheet One would ideally be done on an improvisational basis and not decided beforehand (Ljungar-Chapelon, 2013). In the context of the unpredictability of war and the uncertainty of Cassandra's future, that would naturally elevate the intensity of the performance and heighten the expressive strength of the performer. Of course, whether or not the composer's suggestion would take precedence over a predetermined order is up to the performer's judgement. However, even in case of the latter, tension can be amplified progressively depending on the order of the lines: for example, by arranging the sections while taking their length or their character into account – since some of the composer's indications on each include *poco cantabile*, *molto rigoroso* and *tutta la forza* – so as to build up anticipation or even in order to diffuse the tension at times.

Lastly, Cassandra's relentless efforts to have her voice heard despite her curse and her peers' incredulity falls in stride with the performer's desire to deliver a convincing performance. Throughout the piece, the performer is meant to make choices and tackle complex concepts, which might seem as daunting tasks. Additionally, the range of emotions the performer is expected to exhibit in order to signal Cassandra's progress is wide; from hope that the situation will be reversed, to despair because of the unbelievably divinations, and finally to doom, as Cassandra faces her death and, moments before it, sings her swan song: a "prophetic lament" in front of an "uncomprehending chorus" (Harris, 542). However, the key point in Cassandra's story is that, after all, she did not manage to persuade others of the imminent danger, nor evade her tragic end. Likewise, the performer might feel that their efforts will not be sufficiently communicated to the audience and, subsequently, that the interpretation will not strike the chord they have intended it to. With this train of thought, it is imperative to remember that perseverance is a crucial part of Cassandra's character: in spite of the torment she suffers, she does not abandon the desire to be heard and believed. In the same way, the performer should persist in realising the interpretation they feel is right, since not only through that effort will the outcome the composer wished for be reached, but also will the performer's vision be realised, external factors notwithstanding. Besides, as Ferneyhough underlines, "a valid realisation will only result from a rigorous attempt to reproduce as many of the textural details as possible" (1975, "Remarks"). In addition, the effort itself put into navigating the score can undoubtedly draw the audience in with great success, especially if it is accompanied by the performer's enthusiasm when taking on the challenge of performing *Cassandra's Dream Song*, without being inhibited by the unusual character of the piece. In sum, taking a page out

of Cassandra's book and following her example of genuineness will result in a similarly genuine interpretation, which will in turn resonate with the audience.

Altogether, one can assume that Ferneyhough's incorporation of fairly demanding passages which he himself deemed to be almost unplayable, in the interest of enhancing the intensity of the resulting interpretation based on the performer's preparation of the piece and state of mind during the performance, reflects the view that the final score of *Cassandra's Dream Song* would be impossible to perform to technical perfection. It is exactly that impossibility factor that, after all, would reinforce an intensified expressive state on behalf of the interpreter, as it has already been discussed. However, despite the abundance of extended techniques and their challenging combinations throughout the piece, there is always the possibility that the performer would be able to tackle the piece in a calm and collected manner, therefore delivering even the most taxing passages with naturalness. Although such an approach would essentially be true to the letter of *Cassandra's Dream Song*, it would not properly express the spirit of it, since the ensuing performance could be perceived as less impactful, thus negating both the composer's intention and the emotional depth that Cassandra's myth provides to the piece. To summarise, the performer's feeling that they take on a daunting task by actualising *Cassandra's Dream Song* is indispensable to a powerful performance and should therefore be considered a tool to make use of instead of an obstacle to overcome.

5. Conclusions

It is a fact that Brian Ferneyhough gave significant clues as to how *Cassandra's Dream Song* is connected to Cassandra's myth. Despite that, there has been no considerable insight into his composition process during the piece, nor has he confirmed whether at the time of conception of *Cassandra's Dream Song* mythology was his sole source of inspiration. Furthermore, any form of social critique deriving from Cassandra's position in society as a woman's, as well as commentary concerning a feminist approach to *Cassandra's Dream Song*, should be regarded as a product of our time instead of the composer's aim during his compositional period. Nevertheless, the score undoubtedly becomes more powerful when viewed through a literary lens and can lead to an extraordinary performance. As a matter of fact, it could even be argued that without such a title and the literary associations that come with it – which can be considered as enriching the framework of the piece – the performer's internal conflict in regard to the complicated material at hand would be muted and the resulting interpretation would be lacking in emotional depth. All things considered, *Cassandra's Dream Song* provides an excellent opportunity for the performer to research and think critically, broaden their interpretative horizons and test the limits of their performing abilities. After all, it is not only what is written in the score that leads to a noteworthy interpretation, but also the performer's way of handling the available material and engaging with their instrument and audience.

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