## Two "Mistakes" in Stravinsky's Introitus

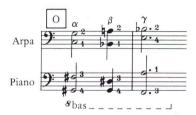
During the 1950s and 60s, Stravinsky learned, mastered, and significantly transformed a musical language that was, for him, entirely new—the language of twelve-tone serialism. As the abundant compositional sketches from this period in the Paul Sacher Foundation make clear, this process was not always an easy one for Stravinsky. Indeed, the sketches show him groping for solutions to basic compositional problems, including particularly the problem of creating meaningful vertical harmonies from the essentially linear nature of the twelve-tone system.

One of Stravinsky's series-charts for *Introitus*, a requiem written in 1965 to the memory of T.S. Eliot, is shown at the bottom of this page. The prime ordering of the series is written across the top row of the chart and surrounded with a box drawn in red pencil. The series is divided into its three tetrachords, labelled with the Greek letters alpha, beta, and gamma. On the second, third, and fourth lines of the chart, each tetrachord is systematically rotated and then transposed so that its first note is always the same. The diagonal lines trace the rotations. Within each of the twelve tetrachords on the chart, one note is circled in red pencil. For the alpha and beta tetrachords, the circled notes follow the main diagonal. For the gamma tetrachord, the circled notes were apparently chosen on a more *ad hoc* basis. As we shall see, Stravinsky planned to use these circled notes to make chords.

*Introitus* begins with three chords in harp and piano. Stravinsky's manuscript, shown in the middle of the facing page, describes their



compositional derivation. All three chords come from the O-chart. The first chord comes from the alpha tetrachord and its rotations, the second from beta, and the third from gamma. The numbers written beside the chord identify the line of the chart from which a circled note should be drawn. The first of the two mistakes referred to in the title of this article concerns the alto note in the third chord. According to Stravinsky's own analytical indications, scrupulously followed with regard to the other eleven notes in the passage, it should be C, not E. When moving from the treble clefs of the row chart to the bass clefs of the manuscript, Stravinsky apparently made a simple mistake in transcription. Stravinsky's own analytical indications make clear his real intention and, when the same chords return in measure 33, the correct note is present. Furthermore, the correct note would create a chordtype that occurs throughout the work, most conspicuously as its final chord. The wrong note, in contrast, creates a chord-type that is rarely if ever heard again in the piece.



On the other hand, Stravinsky did write that "incorrect" E and presumably heard, and liked, what he had written. He even included the "wrong" note in his own recording of the piece. The C is clearly indicated by Stravinsky's analytical markings and makes more musical sense, but the E was written by him and recorded by him. This mistake thus seems unresolvable.

The second mistake occurs in the series-chart itself, and is thus paradoxically deeper but less serious than the first one. The second line of the gamma tetrachord should be A-A#-F#-C rather than A-G#-E-A# as Stravinsky has written. After the initial note A, he apparently went down a semitone to G# instead of up to A# as the structure of the tetrachord dictates. The cause can only be simple carelessness. The circled note in this tetrachord should be C, but if that note replaced A# in the third chord of the actual music, the result would be either an F-major triad (if the first mistake were also corrected) or an F-major seventh chord (if it were not). Given the harmonic vocabulary of the rest of the piece, one can assume that neither of these results would have seemed desirable to Stravinsky. Furthermore, correcting the row-chart would affect not only the third chord, but much of the

rest of the piece. The rotation of the gamma tetrachord is incorrect from a systematic point of view, but from a musical point of view must be considered simply a creative decision.

Neither of the two mistakes discussed in this article admits an unambiguous solution, although if I were performing the piece, I would be strongly tempted to change the alto note of the third chord to C. At the same time, they tell us a good deal about Stravinsky's compositional process during this period. They reveal, above all, the tentative and experimental nature of Stravinsky's work within the twelvetone system. In each new work, he struggled anew to find secure precompositional bases and musically satisfying realizations. Mistakes creep in, but they are overshadowed by the strangely moving spectacle of a great master at the height of his compositional powers grappling, as if for the first time, with the basic materials of his art.