

**Threnody 2 for Strings, Clarinet and Timpani** (originally titled 'Steve Biko in Heaven') (opus 39) is dedicated to the memory of Steve Biko and was written in 1981 as a protest piece for orchestra. This was a somewhat daring innovation at the time, since the then government and indeed South African orchestral managements frowned on music with any provocative content. Not surprisingly, the piece was banned at the SABC from 1987 until 1993.

The clarinet is the protagonist in the piece and is used in all of its registers, especially the high register. The obbligato timpani sometimes conspires with it, at other times with the strings, so providing a unifying mould which draws the variegated strands together. The musical materials are threefold: a 12-note row, of which the first four notes E, B flat, D, F sharp are of particular importance; the anthem 'Nkosi sikelel' i Afrika' ('God Bless Africa') -distorted initially on solo violin, but later triumphant on clarinet; and a brief, repeated tonal theme in B major played by the upper strings.

The timpani establish a 'mood of violence' at the outset. This gives way to the strings, which play chords to the rhythm of the name 'Steve Biko'. The 12-note material is in a state of constant flux and variation, with fragments of 'Nkosi sikelel' i Afrika' interpolated. About two-thirds into the piece -the golden section- chords consisting of the notes E, B flat, D and F sharp scream out five times with increasing intensity. The music winds down -the agony of the hero is at an end. Slowly a quieter, more transfigured mood establishes itself, as the orchestra unites to play what was to become the South African national anthem, before the B major theme is introduced as its natural continuation.

This was the first use of 'Nkosi sikelel' i Afrika' in a piece of 'serious' music.

The antiphonal placing of clarinet and timpani on either side of the strings increases the work's dramatic impact in live performance.

Threnody 2 has been performed many times, including a performance at the Edinburgh International Festival and Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Glasgow, in 1998.

To the Memory of Steve Biko

# THRENODY 2

OPUS 39

for strings, clarinet and timpani

JOHN SIMON

STEVE BIKO IN HEAVEN

**Largo**  
♩ = 46

Clarinet in B $\flat$

Timpani  
*pp* *p* *cresc. mp* *p* *f* *p* *ff* *poco dim.*

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello  
*p* *3 cresc.*

Contrabass  
*pp* *p* *3 cresc.*

**5** *molto drammatico*

Cl.

Timp.  
*sf* *f* *ff*

Vln. I  
*div.* *ff*

Vln. II  
*div.* *ff*

Vla.  
*div.* *ff*

Vc.  
*div.* *ff*

Cb.  
*non div.* *ff* *p pesante*

Steve Biko

tranquillo

Cl. *ff con minacce* *fff* *p espress.* 5

Timp. *mf* *ff*

Vln. I *f* unis. *mf espress.*

Vln. II *f* unis. *p* *p*

Vla. *f* unis. *p* *p*

Vc. unis. *f* *p* *p*

Cb. *p* *p*

**A** accel. agitato

**A tempo**  
molto drammatico

Cl. *ff energico* *f* *p* *p*

Timp. *f* *pp < f*

**A** accel.

**A tempo**

Vln. I *f energico* *f* *ff* div. *ff*

Vln. II *f energico* *f* *ff* div. *ff*

Vla. *f* unis. *p* *ff* Steve Bi -

Vc. *f* *p* *ff* div.

Cb. *f* non div. *p pesante* *sub. ff*

misterioso

13

Cl. *espress.* *p* *p*

Timp. *tr* *ffp* *mf*

Vln. I unis. pizz. *f* solo arco *p*

Vln. II unis. *p* *pp*

Vla. *ko* unis. *sfp marcato* *pp*

Vc. *pp senza espress.* *div.* *pp*

Cb. *pp senza espress.* *pp* *sf*

**B** più  $\text{♩} = 72$

17

Cl.

Timp. *f* *p* *tr*

Vln. I **B** più  $\text{♩} = 72$  tutti pizz. *ff con forza* arco *sub. dim. molto* *div.*

Vln. II pizz. *ff con forza* arco *sub. dim. molto* *div.*

Vla. pizz. *ff con forza* arco *sub. dim. molto* *div.*

Vc. unis. *ff*

Cb. unis. *ff*

**C** Tempo 1  
♩=46

Cl. *ff* *sf* *p*  
*arrogantemente*

Timp. *sf* *f* *pp*

Vln. I *mp* *triste*  
2 solisti

Vln. II

Vla. *mp* *semplice*  
2 solisti  
*molto dim.*

Vc. *mp* *semplice*  
2 solisti  
*molto dim.*

Cb.



*molto drammatico*  
*campana in aria!*

Cl. *p* *espress. colla parte*  
*ff* *3* *3* *3* *dim.*

Timp. *ff*

Vln. I *tutti div.* *ff*

Vln. II *tutti div.* *ff*

Vla. *tutti div.* *ff*  
Steve Bi - ko

Vc. *tutti div.* *ff*

Cb. *non div.* *ff*

**D**

Cl. *tranquillo*

Timp. *f*

Vln. I *mf espress.* *pp*

Vln. II *ff* *mf* *ff* *mf* *ff*

Vla. *ff* *ff* *ff* *pp*

Vc. *f* *f* *f* *fp* *pp*

Cb. *f* *f* *f* *fp* *pp*

*div.* *tutti arco* *1/2 arco 1/2 col legno* *tutti arco* *1/2 arco 1/2 col legno* *tutti arco* *1/2 arco 1/2 col legno*

*3*



**E**

Cl. *pp con molto espress.* *sff > p*

Timp.

Vln. I *ppp* *p* *unis.*

Vln. II *pp* *1/2* *poco cresc.*

Vla. *1/2* *poco cresc.*

Vc. *1/2* *poco cresc.*

Cb. *1/2* *poco cresc.*

Musical score for measures 35-38. The score includes parts for Clarinet (Cl.), Timpani (Timp.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.).

- Cl.:** Starts at measure 35 with a *pp* dynamic. Features a triplet of eighth notes in measure 37 and a fermata in measure 38. A dynamic marking **F** is placed above the staff.
- Timp.:** Features a triplet of eighth notes in measure 37 and a fermata in measure 38. Dynamics include *pp*, *p*, and *f*. A dynamic marking **F** is placed above the staff.
- Vln. I & II:** Both parts have a *tutti pizz.* marking in measure 36. Vln. I has a *ff arco* marking in measure 38. Vln. II has a *ff arco* marking in measure 38. Both have a *div.* marking in measure 38.
- Vla.:** Has a *tutti pizz.* marking in measure 36 and a *ff* marking in measure 38.
- Vc. & Cb.:** Both have a *ff* marking in measure 38.

Musical score for measures 39-42. The score includes parts for Clarinet (Cl.), Timpani (Timp.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.).

- Cl.:** Starts at measure 39 with a *mf colla parte* marking. Features a triplet of eighth notes in measure 40 and a *ff* marking in measure 41.
- Timp.:** Features a triplet of eighth notes in measure 40 and a *f* marking in measure 41.
- Vln. I:** Starts at measure 39 with a *solo* marking and a *ff appassionato unis.* marking. Features a triplet of eighth notes in measure 40 and a *ff* marking in measure 41.
- Vln. II:** Has a *sffp unis.* marking in measure 39 and a *f* marking in measure 41.
- Vla.:** Has a *sffp* marking in measure 39 and a *f* marking in measure 41.
- Vc. & Cb.:** Both have a *sffp* marking in measure 39 and a *f* marking in measure 41.

poco tranquillo

poco a poco più appassionato

campana in aria!

42

Cl. *p espress.* *ff* *sub.fff*

Timp. *ff*

Vln. I *fff* pizz. arco sul G *f* *ff*

Vln. II pizz. *p* arco *mp* sul G *f* *ff*

Vla. unis. pizz. *p* arco *poco cresc. mp* sul C *f* *ff*

Vc. pizz. arco *mp* *f* *ff*

Cb. pizz. arco *mp* *f* *ff*



**G**

poco accel.  
appassionato

46

Cl. *sub. dim.* *3* *fff*

Timp. *poco dim.*

Vln. I *ff* *con forza*

Vln. II *ff*

Vla. *ff*

Vc. *ff*

Cb. *ff*





Più  
♩=72

57

Cl. *sf* 3 3 3 3

Timp. *mf* *ff*

Vln. I *sf* *sf* *sf* *dim.* 3 *p* *cresc.* *tutti (nat.)* *div.*

Vln. II *sf* *sf* *sf* *dim.* 3 *p* *cresc.* *tutti (nat.)*

Vla. *sf* *sf* *sf* *dim.* 3 *p* *cresc.* *tutti (nat.)*

Vc. *mf* *arco* *dim.* *p* *cresc.* *tutti* *div.*

Cb. *mf* 1/2 *p* *cresc.* *tutti div. pizz.* *unis. arco*

I

60 *appassionato* *campana in aria!*

Cl. *ff* *ff* 3 3 3 *arrogantemente*

Timp. *p*

Vln. I *ff con forza* *non div.* *div.*

Vln. II *ff con forza* *non div.* *div.*

Vla. *ff con forza* *non div.* *div.*

Vc. *ff con forza* *non div.* *non div.* *p*

Cb. *ff con forza* *non div.* *non div.* *p*

rit.

A tempo

64

Cl. *p* molto tranquillo *ff* con tutta forza

Timp. *ff* *p* *ff*

Vln. I unis. *ff* *ff*

Vln. II unis. *ff* *ff*

Vla. unis. *ff* *ff*

Vc. non div. *ff* *ff*

Cb. non div. *ff* *ff*

div. rit. A tempo

67

Cl. *p* più tranquillo *ff* *p* misterioso

Timp. *pp* *f* *ff* *p*

Vln. I *ff* *p*

Vln. II *ff* *p*

Vla. *ff* *p*

Vc. *p* non div. *ff* *p marcato*

Cb. *p* *p pesante* *ff* *p marcato*

Tempo 1  $\text{♩} = 46$  molto drammatico

Tempo 1  $\text{♩} = 46$

Steve Bi - ko





87

Cl. *pp* *p* solo

Timp. *tr* *ppp*

Vln. I *sf*

Vln. II *sf*

Vla. *div.* *p* *mf* *mf* *unis. pizz.*

Vc. *tutti (con sord.) div.* *p* *mf* *3* *3* *mf*

Cb. *con sord.* *p* *pp*



91

Cl. *p* solo

Timp. *mf* *pp*

Vln. I *div.* *p*

Vln. II *tutti* *pp*

Vla. *arco* *pp*

Vc. *mf* *distinto* *pizz.* *p* *div. unis.*

Cb. *pizz.* *p*

**M**

**M**

**N** con movimento  
♩=56

95

Cl.

Timp. *(tr)*

Vln. I *pp* **N** *poco a poco senza sord.* *unis.*   
*p* *poco a poco senza sord.* *f*

Vln. II   
*sfp* *poco a poco senza sord.* *f*

Vla.   
*sfp* *poco a poco senza sord.* *f*

Vc. *div. unis.*   
*sfp* *poco a poco senza sord.* *cresc.* *f*

Cb.   
*sfp* *cresc.* *f*



99

Cl.   
*f* *p*

Timp.   
*pp*

Vln. I *tutti senza sord.*   
*p*

Vln. II *tutti senza sord.*   
*p*

Vla. *tutti senza sord.*   
*p* *div.*

Vc. *tutti senza sord.* *arco*   
*p* *pizz.*

Cb. *tutti senza sord.* *arco*   
*p* *pizz.*

*f* *p*

rit. Tempo 1  $\text{♩} = 46$

103

Cl. *f*

Timp. *pp*

Vln. I *f* *pp*

Vln. II *f* *pp*

Vla. unis. *f* *pp*

Vc. *f* arco *pp*

Cb. *f* arco *pp*

*f* *f* *pp*

molto rit.

108

Cl. *p* *espress.* *sf* *sf* *p* *distinto e tranquillo*

Timp. *p* *pp* *molto rit.*

Vln. I pizz. *sf*

Vln. II pizz. *sf*

Vla. pizz. *sf* *sf*

Vc. pizz. *sf* *sf* *pp*

Cb. non div. pizz. *sf* *sf* *pp*

9'09"