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## PROPHECIES

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## PROPHECIES

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## Treatise

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Texas at Austin in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

The University of Texas at Austin
May 2007

Dedicated to the memory of Mohammed Mossadegh and all those who struggle for freedom.

## PROPHECIES

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Prophecies is a thirteen minute piece for full orchestra (3333 4331 timp perc(3) strings). It incorporates an Iranian melody, "Ey Iran," which can be considered the unofficial Iranian national anthem, and some of the melodic material in the rest of the work is derived from this melody that was written in 1946. The choice of this tune is related to some programmatic references to historical events surround the American sponsored coup in Iran in 1953. The overall form is a loose ternary, with substantial differences between the first and last sections. The title depicts the essence of the piece, which is that of a warning and call to action.

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## PROPHECIES

## I. Introduction

The idea for this piece came as a combination of my interest in twentieth century American history and my desire to write a new orchestra piece. The work is a confluence of musical creative endeavor and historical knowledge and learning, with the two feeding each other in a symbiotic relationship. The title draws from the ancient form of warning, the prophecy. The prophecy was, in some traditions, not just the absolute certainty of a future event (usually cataclysmic destruction of a city or people group), but was also a warning of what the future would hold if current practices were continued. In some examples, such as the Biblical prophet Jonah, a prophecy was delivered, but the foretold disaster was averted because the people of Nineveh heeded Jonah’s words. It is in the sense of an urgent call to action that I use this title for my piece.

## II. Historical Background

The historical sweep of $20^{\text {th }}$ century United States history bears many similarities to the great empires of the past. Writer and former CIA officer Chalmers Johnson, in his warning of possible outcomes for the American empire, states in Nemesis:

Successful imperialism requires that a domestic republic or a domestic democracy change into a domestic tyranny. That is what happened to the Roman Republic; that is what I fear is happening in the United States as the imperial presidency gathers strength at the expense of the constitutional balance of governmental powers and as militarism takes even deeper root in the society. ${ }^{1}$

[^0]He goes on to outline the choice of America to either share Rome's fate, which sacrificed democracy for empire, or to take the British path, which gave up empire and retained democracy at home after World War II. Even if one does not share Johnson’s views entirely, there are other accounts of American intervention that provide clear evidence of empire.

One particular author provided the historical knowledge for the inspiration for this piece. Historian and author Stephen Kinzer has recounted the first time that the United States overthrew an existing democracy with its new intelligence service, the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) which was formed from the wartime OSS (Office of Strategic Services). In his 2003 bestseller All the Shah’s Men, Kinzer relates how the Eisenhower administration, under the guise of fighting communism, staged a violent coup to depose the very popular and democratically elected prime minister of Iran, Mohammed Mossadegh ${ }^{2}$. Mossadegh had nationalized the oil industry, which previously had been run by the British at great profit. Mossadegh had a won an international showdown with the British (after speaking in dramatic fashion at the United Nations, he was voted TIME Magazine man of the year in 1951), and the British, failing to overthrow him on their own, enlisted American help. This was duly provided, though there was no evidence that Mossadegh had any links to communism (he was in fact stridently anticommunist), and the original CIA station chief in Iran resigned because he felt that the coup was not in the best interests of the United States. He was replaced by the station chief who did carry it out, one Kermit Roosevelt, grandson of Theodore Roosevelt.

[^1]After the coup that installed the Shah as dictator, this process was repeated in many countries throughout the world in subsequent years (Guatemala, Greece, and Chile to name a few) as American imperial power expanded. I share Kinzer's view of what the overall outcome of this operation was:

When we overthrew a democratic government in Iran 50 years ago, we sent a message, not only to Iran, but throughout the entire Middle East. That message was that the United States does not support democratic governments and the United States prefers strong-man rule that will guarantee us access to oil. And that pushed an entire generation of leaders in the Middle East away from democracy. ${ }^{3}$

Why does any of this matter? I firmly believe that such actions undercut the best ideals of America, and as a citizen of this country, I feel it is my duty to do whatever I can to reverse these trends. I can achieve this in direct ways through words spoken and written, and through less direct ways, such as writing music. It is with these thoughts in mind that I set out to compose Prophecies.

## III. Melodic and Motivic Material

A time honored way of linking a musical composition with a certain time and place is to draw on musical material of that time or place. In planning this piece, I decided to draw on a well known and respected Iranian melody that seemed to represent as closely as possible all that was lost in the coup of 1953. Until 1979, the national anthem of Iran was a song that was a tribute to the Pahlavi dynasty, which had ruled Iran in the early part of the twentieth century. It was not an anthem that elicited much

[^2]enthusiasm amongst the people of Iran. After the revolution of 1979 that overthrew the Shah, the new national anthem was an ode to the Islamic leaders and ideals that likewise failed to draw widespread support. However, the most popular anthem of Iran contained words that were more universal in their appeal written by Hossein Gol-e-Golab in 1946, with music composed by Ruhollah Khalegh. The name of this song is "Ey Iran." It was composed at a time when the British had ceded direct military control, and the Iranian elected parliament, the Majlis was establishing itself and limiting the power of Shah. It can perhaps be thought of as the unofficial anthem of Iran, as many Iranians identify with it more so than with either of the two official national anthems.

This melody is simple in construction, and makes use of the Phrygian mode. I choose the first eight bars as material to draw from:

## EXAMPLE 1



The fragment in the second bar (without the C5 passing tones) and the downbeat of the third measure became an important motive (X) for this piece:

## EXAMPLE 2



This motive is chiefly important for its contour, which I use many times and in many ways. It appears at the beginning of the second main section of the piece stated clearly first in the horns and trumpets:

## EXAMPLE 3



The full brass section plus violins state this again in mm. 33-35 and again in mm. 49-51, here a half step higher starting on F-sharp. A counter melody appears beneath it both of these times in the horns. This contains a retrograde of the motive X:

## EXAMPLE 4



The motive begins to undergo transformation as we come to a new section at m. 99, which is a fugato passage in the winds. The oboe has the first statement of this twisting melody:

## EXAMPLE 5

mm. 90-92 oboe 1


There are other uses of the fragment from "Ey Iran," using it with the passing tones:

## EXAMPLE 6

mm. 166-167


This idea is quite important, both as a prominent melodic idea here and elsewhere in this section, where the horns, trumpets, and first violins exchange this figure several times. The first violins and horns end the first big section with the music from ex. 6 in quarter notes, leading to a climatic arrival in measure 177. The flutes provide continuity into the new section diminishing this figure by stating it in sixteenth notes, then to eighth notes:

EXAMPLE 7
mm. 179-181


All three bassoons echo this idea in mm. 182-183, and the first oboe develops it into a solo figure in mm 183-185, as does the first flute in mm. 194-195.

The motive of $X$ is clearly heard in the muted violins in mm. 200-203. Here, it serves as the beginning of a minor preview of the main melody of the piece. This isn't heard in its full form until close to the end, it will be discussed below. In mm. 200-203, the higher notes ( $2^{\text {nd }}$ and $4^{\text {th }}$ notes of the prime of X ) have been raised by a half step, so that the contour is the same, but the intervals have been expanded:

EXAMPLE 8


The flutes and clarinets accompany this string passage with material similar to that shown in example 7, providing a light accompaniment to the strings.

The arrival of the most intimate part of the piece in measure 242 utilizes the inversion of the motive, with a four part canon for a string quartet of the four principals of the first and second violins, violas, and cellos:

## EXAMPLE 9



The melody of "Ey Iran" arrives in full form at measure 306, played by the first clarinet (see example 1). After a full statement, the first oboe plays it an octave higher beginning in measure 316. There are fragments of X hovering around this colorful section, for example the solo violin plays a transition between the clarinet statement and oboe statement with this figure:

EXAMPLE 10


As this section winds down and prepares for the return of the opening section to begin the second A of the ternary, a twisting, chromatic version of "Ey Iran" appears, accompanied by the hollow sound of violas and cellos without vibrato.

EXAMPLE 11


As the first violins are playing ex. 11, a new theme is introduced in the bassoons first in fragments, then it is fully stated, though somewhat disguised as it is played in parallel minor triads:

EXAMPLE 12


The descent into darkness here (both of the chromatic version of the "Ey Iran" tune followed by this minor triadic version of America's national anthem) appropriately leads into the return of the opening section, with its dark colors and use of the low tessitura of the instruments. The bass clarinet continues playing fragments of the 'Star Spangled Banner' as well as "Ey Iran," while the rest of the material proceeds on as in the beginning, with everything being raised a half step.

Compared to the beginning, the same point of arrival leading into the next section this time is different, instead of the horns and trumpets playing motive X , the strings play an augmented version of it in their high registers, followed by its inversion. This is happening while the trumpets descend with a staccato line passed off to the trombones at measure 385. At the arrival at measure 390, the winds take over with a frantic passage which has many examples of X in diminution:

## EXAMPLE 13



This section, highlighting the woodwinds, leads into a reiteration of the aleatoric bars from earlier in the piece (mm. 62, 70, and 78), though this time, instead of a single measure that is held for a certain amount of time, the percussion section, then the winds,
start such unmeasured figures which are played over the timpani, strings, and brass which are in measured time. The aleatoric percussion music features the rhythm and contour of the first two bars of "Ey Iran," though it is played on the temple blocks without any reference to pitch:

## EXAMPLE 14



When the winds begin their replaying of the aleatoric bar of m. 62 in mm. 402-403, the only difference here in mm. 402-403 is the first clarinet, which is marked forte to stand out from the rest, and it is playing the only figure that was not in m . 62, a diminution of the first four bars of 'Ey Iran:'

EXAMPLE 15
mm. 402-403 'Ey Iran,' diminution of first two bars


The aleatoric parts all end with the arrival at measure 413, and the trombones soon play the most prominent part which is an inversion of X :

## EXAMPLE 16

Trombone 1-2


The trumpets take over with the full statement of a melodic outgrowth of $X$, beginning in the bright key of D major (see ex. 8 for the beginning of the minor version of this theme):

## EXAMPLE 17



It is in the next few bars, the possibility of reconciliation after conflict is hinted at, where these ideas are brought together, the violins taking over the major statement of X , the oboes and bassoons playing a version of "Ey Iran" in major, and the trombones echoing a version of the Star Spangled Banner:

## EXAMPLE 18



Leading into the coda, the strings play (and the brass echo), a statement of X in parallel triads, major on the first note, minor on the two higher notes:

EXAMPLE 19

Violin 1-2
mm. 438-439 X, parallel triads, last interval raised


This is immediately followed by diminution where the last interval is lowered by a half step, and this accompanies the brass which are now playing what the strings did in mm. 438-439:

## EXAMPLE 20



The coda contains similar types of statements and modifications of X, though perhaps what is more valuable to mention is the use here of an idea from the very opening section of the piece, stated first in the bass clarinet:

## EXAMPLE 21



This idea is most important in the opening section (mm. 1-28) and when the opening section is reprised (mm. 356-377), though in that section it begins to merge with fragments of the 'Star Spangled Banner.' The relationship of this material to X can be seen, particularly after statements of X where the last interval has been expanded by a half step and is now a tri-tone (see example 19 and 20).

Overall, the ' X ' motive is the most important melodic idea of the materials used, giving unity at several levels. As a fragment of the "Ey Iran" melody, it serves to link the various sections of the piece. The juxtaposition of "Ey Iran" in different musical settings is meant to musically depict a conflict, one where different outcomes are possible.

## IV. Harmonic Language

Several different types of harmonic languages are used in Prophecies. The idea of parallel triads as a different way of stating motives is common in the opening section, as well as other parts of the piece. Compare mm. 15-16 with mm. 6-7 (see example 21)

EXAMPLE 22

Bassoon 1,2,3


The clarinets and English Horn also use this harmonic and textural idea in mm. 17-22.

In measure 62, the aleatoric elements (all high ranges) play from six pitch classes (E, F, G-sharp, A, B, and C), whereas in the next aleatoric bar (all low ranges), all instruments play from the opposite pitch class set from the previous one (E-flat, F-sharp, G, B-flat, D-flat, D). In both cases, the cellos are holding the lowest sounding note, and they bridge these aleatoric bars with ascending and descending passages, respectively. The third aleatoric bar, measure 78, contains all twelve pitch classes.

The idea of cluster appears in several sections, notably in mm. 82-89, where the brass instruments all cluster in half steps to create a sharp, dense sound punctuated with timpani and drums. The winds take the cluster idea further in mm. 106-107:

EXAMPLE 23


The cluster technique reappears several times, particularly in the winds in the coda.

There is also the use of pan diatonicism, in the section that uses the principal string players from mm. 242 to 273 . This harmonic device is also used in the section where 'Ey Iran' appears in full in the clarinet and oboe, using pan diatonicism of E Phrygian. Polytonality appears in several places, for example in mm. 224-229, with stacked triads, alternating in the strings and the brass:

EXAMPLE 24


This type of chord is also used to conclude the piece, where an E major triad in first inversion is stacked on top of a root position F minor triad (voiced so the G-sharp/A-flat is in the middle), and the final chord resolves to the open fifth of E and B, where the third is omitted, but still in the ear from previous bar where it exists in conflict as the third of a major and minor triad simultaneously:

## EXAMPLE 25



Major-minor tonality also makes several appearances, particularly in the section beginning in mm. 422, though the strings play passage work alongside this which clashes with the key (and then in a progression of distantly related major triads) in the brass and winds. There are other places where minor triads are used, as in the low brass D minor chord in measure 81 (compare to where it is major in measure 413), but they are coloristic and non-functional.

## V. Form and Texture

Prophecies has an overall arch shape which can be loosely described as ternary. The first section, marked 'Foreboding,' goes from measure 1-28, makes extensive use of the low instruments, the auxiliary wind instruments (English horn and bass clarinet), bassoons, low brass, and double basses, cellos, and violas. The timpani provides constant eighth notes to give the section tension and kinetic energy, and the percussion section adds a tremolo on a large tam-tam and scrapes on a small tam-tam at key places. The texture gradually thickens and builds, the violins enter and the there is an arrival on the downbeat of measure 29, which begins the next section.

This part introduces the main idea X discussed at length above in the trumpets and horns, and features stormy runs, passage work, and brass glissandi that create a wild and alarming sound world. It passes through the aleatoric bars before arriving at the part marked "Jagged," in measure 90. The twisting and tortured lines in the fugato passage suggest pain and discomfort, and the shrill, cluster technique used in the upper winds (see example 23) leads into a march like passage, given the descriptive word "Relentless." This section, in 5/4 meter, features two rhythmic modulations, in which the former sixteenth note becomes the new eighth note of a group of triplet eighth notes. The music builds up much energy leading to the start of the middle section (of the overall large ternary of the piece) in measure 177. The texture thins out, chord crescendos and decresendos overlap in the strings and brass, before we arrive at the "Tranquil" music, for the string principals in measure 242. A flute solo leads to a darkening of the music, into the section marked "Mystical," where the "Ey Iran" tune is played in its original form by the clarinet, then by the oboe. A wash of color in E Phyrigian leads to the dark statements of "Ey Iran" in the first violins (mm.341-348) and Star Spangled Banner in the bassoons (mm. 348-352).

Measure 356 marks the arrival of the A prime section (of the overall ternary), the definite point of demarcation from the opening of the piece is measure 378. The winds take over in measure 391 and this leads to the reprise of the aleatoric material starting in measure 399, which continues until the arrival of the low brass D major chord in measure 413. The music is marked "Triumphant;" beginning in measure 421, the brass melody being accompanied by the winds (diatonic to the key of the brass) and the strings (nondiatonic, clashing with the major chords). The strings take over from the brass in
measure 430, and the music accelerates into the coda, marked "Raging,' beginning measure 447. The coda contains large tutti passages, particularly at measure 462, and the last bars of the piece end in a triple forte climax.

## VI. Conclusion

Prophecies is violent and disturbing at times, but hopeful and uplifting as well. It is built and connected with melodies, harmonies, and textures that exist in these varying states, telling a dramatic story whose repercussions resonate today. Echoing an ancient tradition, it exists in the hope that the past may be remembered so that the future can be better.

## APPENDIX:

## FULL SCORE

## Prophecies



Jonathan Kolm

# INSTRUMENTATION 

3 Flutes
3 Oboes ( $3^{\text {rd }}$ oboe doubles English Horn)
3 Clarinets in B-flat ( $3^{\text {rd }}$ clarinet doubles Bass Clarinet)
3 Bassoons
4 Horns in F
3 Trumpets in C
2 Trombones
Bass Trombone
Tuba
Timpani (5 Drums)
Percussion (3 players)
Player 1: Large Tam-tam, Vibraphone, Crash Cymbals, Bass Drum, Temple Blocks
Player 2: Marimba, Xylophone,* Tom-toms, Suspended Cymbal, Tenor Drum, Chimes, Cowbell (positioned close to Marimba)
Player 3: Glockenspiel, Field Drum, Snare Drum,**
Wood Blocks, Tambourine, Small Tam-tam, Chinese Cymbal, Two Brake Drums, ${ }^{* * *}$ Clave (or High Woodblock)
Strings
*Players 1 and 2 share the Xylophone
**Players 2 and 3 share the Snare Drum
***Players 1 and 3 share the Brake Drums

## C SCORE

## Duration: 14'

Completed April, 2007
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B









E








G














































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X





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Kinzer, Stephen. All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley \& Sons, Inc, 2003).

## VITA

Jonathan Kolm was born in Lincoln, Nebraska on June 23, 1977, the son of Paul and Amy Kolm. After graduating Tallwood High School in Virginia Beach, VA in 1995, he attended Virginia Commonwealth University, where he earned at Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance in 1999 and a Master of Music in Composition in 2000. Compositional prizes include winning second place in the 2001 Percussive Arts Society Composition Competition, third place in the 2002 National Federation of Music Clubs Competition for Young Composers, as well as the 2002 Nancy and Russel Hatz Special Recognition Award. He won first prize in the 2006 Austin Peay State Young Composer's Contest, has had several world premiere performances by the highly regarded New York Virtuoso Singers under Harold Rosenbaum and has been commissioned by many artists, ensembles, and organizations. He has worked as a professional performer, copyist and arranger. He entered the Graduate School of The University of Texas at Austin in 2002.

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This treatise was typed by the author.


[^0]:    ${ }^{1}$ Chalmers Johnson, Nemesis, (New York: Henry Holt, 2006)

[^1]:    ${ }^{2}$ Stephen Kinzer, All the Shah's Men, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley \& Sons, Inc, 2003)

[^2]:    ${ }^{3}$ Amy Goodman: Interview with Stephen Kinzer, August 25 ${ }^{\text {th }}$, 2003 http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=03/08/25/1534210\#transcript accessed 4/6/07.

