



Ildebrando Pizzetti - Per l'Edipo re di Sofocle, three symphonic interludes

Composer, musicologist and teacher, Ildebrando Pizzetti was one of the most authoritative representatives of the so-called 'Generation of the Eighties'. A passionate scholar of Gregorian chant and sixteenth-century polyphony as well as a learned humanist, the Parma composer devoted most of his creative efforts to the theater, drawing inspiration from classicism. The long relationship with the Greek tragedians is inaugurated by two early works: the *Overture for Oedipus in Colonus*, performed in 1901 on the occasion of the final essay at the Parma Conservatory, and the *Three Symphonic Preludes for Sophocles' Oedipus rex* by the actor Gustavo Salvini on the occasion of a staging of the Sophoclean tragedy at the Teatro Olimpia in Milan in 1904. Through a particularly suggestive orchestral writing, the Three Preludes are presented as exclusively lyrical moments capable of evoking the atmospheres of ineluctable fatality of the tragedy: gravity of the tragic presentiment of the Theban people, the anxiety of Oedipus pressed by the fate that little by little is approaching the discovery of the horrible truth, the sadness that weighs on his heart when he leaves Thebes when everything has already been accomplished.

Igor Stravinskij - Oedipus rex, oratory work in two acts

During the years he spent in France, the thought of composing a dramatic work on a tragic-inspired subject made its way into Stravinsky's mind. The Russian composer's predilection for Greek mythology had ancient roots and between the 1920s and 1930s it took shape in some famous works including *Oedipus Rex*, an opera-oratorio in two acts that made its debut at the Sarah Bernhardt Theater in Paris May 30, 1927. For a subject universally known as Sophocles' *Oedipus rex*, Stravinsky imagined a text in a particular language, which was both ritual and sublime; after long reflections he opted for Latin, which he defined as "an expressive medium that is not dead, but petrified and has become so monumental as to be immune from all risks of falling into vulgarity". The libretto of the *Oedipus* was entrusted to Jean Cocteau and then translated into Latin by Jean Daniélou. In it, the parts sung by the protagonists and the choir are interspersed with the interventions of a narrator who anticipates the events of the story by reciting in the language of the audience where the opera-oratorio is performed. From the very beginning Stravinsky decided to focus attention on the music rather than on the action and thus petrified the stage space by imposing on the characters the appearance of living statues capable of moving only their heads and arms. However, the true protagonist of *Oedipus* remains the fate that tragically governs the destiny of every man and that finds its musical expression in the symbolic use of particular rhythmic structures. In fact, the rigidity of the staging corresponds to the obsessive use of musical procedures such as the rhythmic ostinato, which reproduces the same metric formulas associated with particularly significant words throughout the opera.