

*You may forget*

*Let me tell you  
this: someone in  
some future time  
will think of us*

- Sappho, *Fragment 60*

The title of Iannis Xenakis's first work for solo percussion takes its name from an ancient Greek spelling of the name of Sappho, the famed poetess of antiquity whose work survives into the 21<sup>st</sup> century mostly as small fragments, some as short as one or two words. The score is presented on a sheet of graph paper covered in dots, void of any metrical markings, and punctuated with often vast swathes of silence. Xenakis's intention seems to be an evaluation of time on the part of both the performer and the listener: the performer must delineate patterns for the sake of memory and expression, imposing their own metric guard-rails in order to embody the piece. The listener in turn is left only with the experience the performer gives them. This leads to a natural discrepancy between these agents' two experiences of time.

Xenakis's music is typically ferocious and unrelenting, which at first glance seems to make Sappho and her sensual, lyrical poetry an unlikely source of inspiration. Yet, within Sappho's poetry there is intense need for love, beauty, and transcending, be it over grief from a broken heart or from the existential condition of mortality. All of these desires are interpreted by the brutal sound world of Xenakis's musical language, and spread across a score that seems to defy memory even as it triggers it. What the listener is left with is a visceral response, but one that seems to hint that this is only part of what it could be or once was, the rest fading into forgetting.