2. “Ta-tam”

For SATB Chorus with optional soloists; or vocal quintet (SATBB)

Ernst Toch (1930)
Editor’s Note to Gesprochene Musik, 1. “O–a” and 2. “Ta–tam”

Christopher Caines

1. Use strict German pronunciation of all vowel and consonant sounds throughout, making special note of the umlauted vowels. (It is important to remember that German vowels are pure, like Italian vowels, not diphthongized, as in most English dialects.) The breve and macrons (˘ and ¯; short and long marks, respectively) are not to be interpreted as indications of light and heavy stress, as these symbols are used in prosody. Rather, they indicate German vowel quantity. For example, tü–ri–ti–ri and ü–o–ü should be pronounced with the u sound in the word foot; and the last syllable of ka–ra–ba–wâp sounds like “vup,” rhyming with the English word up. I leave it to each conductor or group or singers to decide how to pronounce vowels that have no length mark, and suggest that they should probably in general be pronounced short, except for i, which I think should always be long.

2. The composer’s manuscript metronome marking of quarter = 144 is clearly an artifact of the premiere, where the music was “performed” by a speeded–up recording. This would seem to be vocally impossible and should perhaps be interpreted to mean as fast as possible without sacrificing clarity of articulation.

3. Toch’s intention in bracketing this figure in the alto part in mm. 5–10 is not entirely clear. I believe the composer means that, since the alto part has the leading line here, for the sake of clarity the alto(s) should not sing the klapp klapp figure unless necessary for reinforcement. In performances by a chorus, the altos could also sing mm. 4–12 divisi.

4. Toch forgot to include the text underlay for these notes. It is clear that the tenor should sing –la on the downbeat of m. 28 (cf. m. 32). I think that it is most idiomatic and musical for the alto to sing –i on the downbeats of m. 28 and m. 32; however, Toch might have intended the alto to prolong the previous syllable across the barline in both cases, singing –u into m. 28 and –a into m. 32.

5. The [C] in m. 10 and the [S] in m. 25 appear to be courtesy markings. It is however possible that Toch forgot to add an [S] marking in m. 6 in the bass and/or a [C] marking in m. 21 or m. 23 in the soprano.