

San Francisco Tape Music Festival
Program Notes for Sunday, January 28, 2007

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Karlheinz Stockhausen :: HYMNEN ::
Regions I and II [57:52] :: Regions III and IV [56:07]

Short-wave. The aural window on the world. Babble and squeak. " get across the ocean in a few seconds". Cut the ether with the tuning dial and hit the edge of a station somewhere far, far away. A single speaking voice emerges. Or maybe it's a large choir voicing a robust melody. Perhaps it's the insatiable bleeping of a Morse code transmission, the actual message submerged in secret rhythms. At the edge the sound fizzes and swirls, then fades and tumbles back. Turn the dial. Slowly, precisely, deliberately. Searching for the don't-know-what. Hiss and crackle rub against high pitched drones that recall the burnished shriek of a jet engine. A voice reads a string of numbers, slowly and deliberately. Keep turning. Suddenly drums and trumpets and unison voices sing heartily, passionately, joyously - an anthem, a national anthem. It shifts and twists and begins to throb like a distant pulsar. Keep turning. Stations run together transforming noise, via melody, into speech then headlong into electro-gabble before swirling back again into noise.

This is the world of HYMNEN: short-wave scramble, voices, distant places and music. Recordings of familiar tunes, national anthems (in German: 'Hymnen'), are transformed as if filtered through a billion stars. Stockhausen writes, "Anthems, the national anthems, are the most popular music there is. They are sound signs, sound objects familiar to many people. Actually, everyone is familiar with two or three of these anthems, at least the beginnings of the melodies if not the texts. That is why I chose them as objects, which I can now manifoldly modulate and compose into an unknown world of electronic music."

In this unknown world, recognisable 'found object' sounds interject and interrupt the continuity: scraps of speech, sounds of crowds, recorded conversations with the composer, a croupier, a recording of the interior of a Chinese shop, the launching of a ship. These interjections add layers of mystery, intrigue and curiosity. Who are these people? What are these events? Why are they here?

At the surface of HYMNEN the sound world *feels* chaotic, fragmented and multi-faceted like a Cubist painting or collage. But Stockhausen is emphatic. "The composition of HYMNEN is not a collage. Many-sided interrelationships have been composed among the various anthems, as well as between these anthems and new abstract sound shapes, for which we have no names. Numerous compositional processes of intermodulation were employed in HYMNEN. For example, the rhythm of one anthem is modulated with the harmony of another; this result is modulated with the dynamic envelope of a third anthem; the result of this is in turn modulated with the timbral constellation and melodic contour of electronic sounds; finally such an event is given a specific spatial movement."

Intermodulation is a kind of superimposition process whereby a chosen characteristic of one musical artefact (eg. rhythm or harmony or dynamic) is directly mapped onto a different musical artefact. The outcome of these complex compositional processes is transformation, a kind of sonic metamorphosis leading the listener from the familiar into the unfamiliar. So, in HYMNEN, the everyday musical material of a national anthems mutates into previously unheard sonic landscapes, Stockhausen's 'unknown world'.

The work is divided into four 'Regions', with a total duration of around 113 minutes, and each Region features several 'centres' that focus on specific anthems.

Region I (27 minutes 38 seconds) begins with layers of short-wave 'scramble', introduces the croupier, travels through the Internationale and the Marseillaise via a meditative 'fugue' on the colour red and into a bridge and intermediary piece that links straight into Region II (30 minutes 4 seconds). Here great clangerous, metallic chords lead into an unknown landscape and 'marsh ducks quack the Marseillaise'. The first centre in this Region is the German national anthem chopped, shredded and then fabulously extended into a huge downward glissando that twists, turns and then slides upwards to a shimmering plateau. This material is followed by the first transition, one of the 'found object' sounds, the launching of a ship. At the second centre 'God Save The Queen' is only just recognisable like a familiar landscape viewed through a frosted window. This centre is followed by a multi-layered 'studio conversation', between Stockhausen and his assistant David Johnson. Time jumps and then folds in layers as they 'go one dimension deeper' to reveal some of the compositional procedures. The third centre is an African anthem whirled about in space and into the Russian anthem which is the only one that is entirely synthesized; all the other anthems in the piece began life as recordings.

The first centre of Region III (23 minutes 40 seconds) continues the Russian anthem with the harmonies and duration greatly expanded as if recorded onto elastic sheeting and stretched to capacity. The second centre is the American anthem which is processed "in fleeting collages and pluralistic mixtures." The anthems of Israel, Turkey and Ireland lead into a transition, through young voices singing *Glory, glory hallelujah* and back into short-wave which becomes a vehicle to "get across the ocean in a few seconds" to Spain which is the third centre. Glockenspiel tones, shifted way down in pitch, echo like ghostly ships bells across this landscape and 'announcements' of the Swiss anthem concludes this Region and begins the next.

Region IV (31 minutes 45 seconds) continues the Swiss anthem which is the 'First Empire' of the Region's double centre shared with 'an anthem of the utopian realm of *Hymunion in Harmondie under Pluramon*'. This is formed out of the final extended chord of the Swiss anthem. Surrounded by shimmering, descending glissandos it transforms into a pulsing abyss into which are shouted echoing names: Turid, Naçar, Iri, Maka. Suddenly the croupier appears again to announce "Messieurs, dames, rien ne va plus!" A solid metallic attack triggers an immense slide that glides down over the continued pulsations. This is an apocalyptic image reminiscent of Biblical paintings showing great fissures in the Earth with fire and brimstone and lost souls being devoured by demons. A slow, mournful, sine-wave melody emerges and the croupier makes his announcements again. The Region, and the piece, ends with 'the breathing of all mankind'.

This huge work is a supreme manifestation of humanity and culture, of unity and structure, of technology and vision. It's an unmistakable landmark, a beacon in the landscape of mid 60s culture and counter-culture. It echoes those times: the delirium and confusion. It speaks simultaneously of madness and civilisation, of confusion and clarity, of noise and music.

Stockhausen wrote: "What I am trying to do, as far as I am aware of it, is to produce models that herald the stage after destruction. I'm trying to go beyond collage, heterogeneity and pluralism, and to find unity; to produce music that brings us to the essential ONE. And that is going to be badly needed during the time of shocks and disasters that is going to come."

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http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/presenters/robert_worby.shtml

To date (2006), **Karlheinz Stockhausen** (b. August 22nd 1928 in Mödrath, near Cologne) has composed 319 works, published 10 volumes of *TEXTE zur MUSIK / TEXTS about MUSIC*, comprising sketches and explanations about his own works (Stockhausen-Verlag). His first 36 scores were published by Universal Edition in Vienna and, since its establishment in 1975, the Stockhausen-Verlag (51515 Kürten, Facs. 0049-2268-1813) has published all of his works. In 1991, the Stockhausen-Verlag began to release compact discs in the Stockhausen Complete Edition which comprises 125 compact discs to date, and all Stockhausen scores, books, videos and CDs may be ordered directly by mail order from them.

Since 1998, the *Stockhausen Courses Kürten* for composers interpreters, musicologists and auditors take place annually. In 1977, Stockhausen began to compose the music-scenic work *LICHT (LIGHT) The Seven Days of the Week*. *LICHT* with its Seven Days of the Week lasts about 29 hours of music: THURSDAY from *LICHT* 240 minutes; SATURDAY from *LICHT* 185 minutes; MONDAY from *LICHT*, 278 minutes; TUESDAY from *LICHT* 156 minutes; FRIDAY from *LICHT* 290 minutes; WEDNESDAY from *LICHT* 267 minutes; SUNDAY from *LICHT* 298 minutes. Following the world première on October 16th 2004 of *LICHT-BILDER (LIGHT PICTURES)*, the last scene Stockhausen composed of his work *LICHT (LIGHT)*, Stockhausen began the work *KLANG (SOUND)*, *The 24 Hours of the Day*.

Already the first compositions of "Point Music" such as *KREUZSPIEL (CROSS-PLAY)* in 1951, *SPIEL (PLAY)* for orchestra in 1952, and *KONTRA-PUNKTE (COUNTER-POINTS)* in 1952/53, brought Stockhausen international fame. Since then, his works have been opposed to the extreme by some and admired by others. Fundamental achievements in music since 1950 are indelibly imprinted through his compositions.

From the beginning until now, his work can be classified as "Spiritual Music"; this becomes more and more evident not only in the compositions with spiritual texts, but also in the other works via "Overtone Music", "Intuitive Music", "Mantric Music", reaching "Cosmic Music" in *STIMMUNG (TUNING)*, *AUS DEN SIEBEN TAGEN (FROM THE SEVEN DAYS)*, *MANTRA*, *STERNKLANG (STAR SOUND)*, *INORI*, *ATMEN GIBT DAS LEBEN (BREATHING GIVES LIFE)*, *SIRIUS*, *LICHT (LIGHT)*.

In a spherical auditorium conceived by the composer, most of Stockhausen's works composed until 1970 were performed at the Expo '70 world fair in Osaka, Japan: for 5 1/2 hours daily for 183 days by twenty instrumentalists and singers, thereby reaching an audience of over a million listeners.

Stockhausen is the perfect example of the composer who has participated at nearly all world premières and in innumerable exemplary performances and recordings of his works world-wide – as conductor, performer, musical director or sound projectionist.

In addition to numerous guest professorships in Switzerland, the United States, Finland, Holland, and Denmark, Stockhausen was appointed Professor for Composition at the State Conservatory in Cologne in 1971, in 1996 was awarded an honorary doctorate from the Free University in Berlin, and in 2004 received an honorary doctorate from the Queen's University in Belfast. He is a member of 12 international Academies for the Arts and Sciences, was named Honorary Citizen of Kürten in 1988, became *Commandeur dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*, received many gramophone prizes and, among other honours, the German Medal of Merit, 1st class, the Siemens Music Prize, the UNESCO Picasso Medal, the Order of Merit of the State of North Rhine Westfalia, 8 awards from the German Music Publisher's Society for his score publications, the Hamburg BACH Prize, the Cologne Culture Prize and, in 2001, the Polar Music Prize with the laudation: "Karlheinz Stockhausen is being awarded the Polar Music Prize for 2001 for a career as a composer that has been characterized by impeccable integrity and never-ceasing creativity, and for having stood at the forefront of musical development for fifty years." -- *Stockhausen-Verlag*