

New Music Concerts



1978-79 Season
program



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Stockhausen Concert - Jan. 21st

CANCELLED

For the first time in its 8-year history, NEW MUSIC CONCERTS is obliged to cancel its program on January 21st due to the recently-announced unavailability of its guest composer/conductor KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN. This concert, which was to have featured recent Stockhausen compositions, was dependent on the presence of the composer.

SUBSCRIBERS will be offered a replacement concert to take place on MARCH 16th, 8:30 p.m., at the Ryerson Theatre, 43 Gerrard Street East. This concert will commemorate the 70th birthday of OLIVIER MESSIAEN. Further details will be announced shortly.

SINGLE TICKET HOLDERS may exchange tickets for another concert in our series, or request a refund.

Tonight's Guest Artists

ALFONS and ALOYS KONTARSKY

As early as 1950, when they were still students, the brothers Alfons and Aloys Kontarsky began participating in the International Festival for New Music at Darmstadt, which became a centre for avant-garde music following World War Two, with composers such as Stockhausen, Boulez, Nono, Berio, Pousseur, and Kagel in attendance. Since 1962 the Kontarskys have been on the faculty, leading the piano seminars for the Festival, and have performed many world premieres of new works, some of which have been composed especially for them. They also teach at the State Academy of Music in Cologne, where both live with their families. Their repertoire covers the entire range of original four-handed music for one and two pianos, and they have recorded many works from Mozart to Pousseur.

Program

IN COOPERATION WITH THE GOETHE INSTITUTE OF TORONTO

Saturday, January 13, 1979

8:30 p.m.

Walter Hall, Edward Johnson Building

MANTRA (1970) ----- Karlheinz Stockhausen(Germany)

Aloys and Alfons Kontarsky - duo pianists

Hans Peter Haller - electronics

Program Notes

Karlheinz Stockhausen (b. 1928): Mantra

Mantra: A sacred text or passage, esp. one from the Vedas used as a prayer or incantation.

--Shorter Oxford Dictionary.

Mantra was composed in Osaka, Japan, in 1970, and premiered that same year by Alfons and Aloys Kontarsky, who have also recorded it. The basic melodic formula of the piece was noted down by the composer over a year previously on the back of an envelope during an auto trip in the Eastern U.S. At Expo 70, Stockhausen was leading daily performances of his Stimmung, and in his morning composition hours on Mantra he says he wanted to make a completely notated and determined work, in contrast to the more improvisatory nature of Stimmung. Thus Mantra may be viewed as a very large-scaled example of return to the total-serialization of much of his music of the 1950s.

The following account is adapted and condensed from the discussion of Mantra found in Jonathan Cott's 'Stockhausen: Conversations with the Composer' (New York, 1973). The words are therefore largely Stockhausen's own.

The work's basic 'mantra' or melody-formula, of thirteen notes, is reproduced here in the composer's script. As seen in the upper part, the 13th note is identical with the first; the lower part consists of the same melody mirrored.

Mantra is written for two pianos, shortwave radio or tape of shortwave sounds, ring modulators, woodblocks, and antique cymbals. The woodblocks and cymbals have formal purposes: on each pianist's music stand is a wooden plate with thirteen antique cymbals, fastened down with screws, which he hits with beaters. Each of the mantra's thirteen notes is matched by a cymbal corresponding in pitch. Each cymbal sound occurring once in the piece indicates the large sections. The woodblocks have the function of marking and emphasizing certain accents.

The mantra-formula is repeated all the time in different degrees of expansion and contraction. It's not varied, only expanded--expanded in duration and also in space, which means in its intervals. So the first major second can become a minor third or a major third or a fourth, etc.

The mantra has four segments or 'limbs', of differing lengths, containing four, two, four, and three notes respectively, followed each by pauses of three, two, one, and four time-units. All the intervals occur in the mantra. Each note in the mantra is not only of a different duration, but has a different form of articulation. The first note (A) is a periodic repetition, and later on in the piece, when this character becomes predominant for a whole section, then all these notes will have this kind of periodic repetition in different speeds. The second note (B)

has an accent at its end--very short and loud. The characteristic is that of an accent decay--the 32nd note. The third note (G#) is 'normal', with a duration of three. The fourth note (E) has a grace-note in

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front of the note, occurring twice before it's finally sustained. In the second 'limb', the notes F and D are repeated three times. This is actually the seed of a tremolo, sometimes resulting in a whole tremolo section. Then in the third 'limb' the first note (G) has an accentuated accent at the beginning: TATA. The next note (E Flat) is chromatically combined with the previous one--you have the intermediary notes between the previous one and itself. You'll see later that if, for example, the eighth note of the mantra is an octave's rather than a major third's distance from the previous note, then because it's expanded you'll get lots of notes connecting these two in one direction. The ninth note (D Flat) is played staccato. The tenth (C) is repeated once: its repetition has a different duration. And this note, irregularly repeated, is the smallest possible seed for Morse code rhythms. At a certain point in the composition, in fact, there's a moment when the performers actually use the realistic Morse signals of a shortwave radio in order to make the connections to this surreality and also to transcend the mantra and make it as general as possible. Then, with the fourth 'limb', we have the eleventh note (B Flat) which, just at the beginning, is the seed of a trill--the shortest possible trill. And later you'll hear sections where whole groups of mantras occurring with trills will result from this atom. The next note (G Flat) has a sforzato characteristic, meaning a forte-piano on the same note--loud-soft, it's the beginning of an echo, and all sorts of echo textures or echo structures can be derived from this single note. Finally, the thirteenth note (A) has together with the lower notes a real arpeggio. It's not a chromatic connection, as we had with the eighth note, but an arpeggio which leads to this note itself. As you see, it goes from the A Flat to the G#; the A which is next to the G# is already there and will continue to resonate. So every note has a different character; and these thirteen different characters occur in thirteen large sections of the piece as the predominant characteristics.

In all my previous pieces I've only used the chromatic scale. Whereas here in Mantra I'm working with thirteen different scales. Normally we have eighty-eight chromatic notes on the piano; that's what the first scale of Mantra is made up of. And in this scale the mantra always sounds the way I've just analyzed it with these thirteen different pitches. Now imagine that you have a piano on which every second note is missing; you'd then have a whole-tone scale. There would be only forty-four keys on the piano, and if you played this mantra, you'd have a major instead of a minor second; a tritone instead of a minor third; a major ninth instead of a fifth-- always a double of the interval. But the whole-tone scale doesn't really occur among the thirteen that I've

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① regelmäßige Repetition ② Akzent am Ende 10 ③ "normal" ④ Vorschlag-Gruppe um Zentralfon hervor ⑤ "Tremolo" ⑥ Akkord (betont)

LANGSAM

poco marcato

p *f* *mp* *p*

p *pp* *mf*

pp *poco sfz*

⑦ Akzent am Anfang ⑧ "chromatische" Verbindung ⑨ slaccato kann für unregelmäßige Repetition "morsen" ⑩ Kern für Triller ⑪ sfz (fp)-Einschwingung ⑫ Arpeggio-Verbindung

ff *mf* *f* *mp*

f *mf* *p* *sfz* *p*

Stockhausen

used. My second scale leaves out certain steps of the chromatic scale: the octave is no longer an octave--it's become a major ninth--the octave is stretched.

Since I'm working with these different scales, there are moments when what you hear sounds modal and you immediately have some Balinese music in the room--and also Missorgsky, Bartok, and Thelonius Monk. Because when I concentrate, for example, on the two notes of the tremolo, when they occur slowly enough, or add a certain speed together with a forte and with accents, then it does sound like certain parts of Bartok.

The mantra is not only expanded, but by means of the ring modulation it's also contracted, so that the whole mantra is sometimes enlarged by only a fourth or fifth when it would normally expand over a major ninth. This is different from John Cage's 'prepared piano' pieces. In Cage's works you're presented with a given timbre world through the preparation of the strings that give it a certain unique color. In order to make different sections or areas in a piece you automatically have to use other pitches; if you used the same ones you'd always have the same timbres. Ring modulation does the following: you feed any sound into a ring modulator along with a second sound; this too could be any sound, but I use sine waves--the purest sound. What then comes out of the ring modulator is the sum of the two frequencies and the difference of these frequencies--the original sounds are suppressed. What's interesting is that when I slide my sine wave very slowly upward or downward in a glissando, the original sound in the speaker begins to move away from the note that's being held on the piano, thereby producing beats and micro-intervals.

In Mantra, thirteen different notes for the thirteen sections of the piece are fed into the ring modulators, and these notes are the exact frequencies of the mantra itself. And they become the 'mirror frequencies' of

everything that's heard in this section, which is always the mantra with its expansions and contractions. This leads to a new concept of cadential harmony; when the first note of the mantra is played, the first note of the mantra is in the ring modulator, producing a complete consonance--the octave or the sound itself. If I now move a fifth away from it, you'll hear the second degree of consonance coming over the speakers. The major third produces a third degree of consonance, and, ultimately, the minor second or the major seventh produce the sharpest dissonances. A metal instrument sound emerges, and this is due to the fact that the 'difference' produces subharmonic spectra that are heard along with the harmonic spectra which are always the 'sums'. When I return to the thirteenth note at the conclusion of one mantric exposition, the extreme consonance always reoccurs: the intervals of the mantra itself are composed such that they move away from the central note, produce increasingly more deviations, micro-intervals, and noise components--and then return. So that each mantra, from the first to the thirteenth note, is like a cadence that opens and closes. In 'classical' music this process was realized by means of triads and harmonic relationships like sevenths or ninths. But here it happens through the mirror concept of the ring modulation.

One section near the end of the work goes by incredibly fast, and some people think of Liszt. But what you're hearing is an extreme concentration of the entire piece with all its notes. The whole piece is condensed to the fastest possible speed: all the differences of durations disappear while all the notes with all the intervallic expansions are compressed into two minutes.

The coda is like someone humming a melody which he's heard ages ago--just the notes without the initial characteristics that it once had, just the simple naked notes. There are bell-like sounds--arpeggios played on the highest octave of the piano. It sounds like a large bright bell, then the mantra

itself occurring in the very low octaves with its last characteristic--a broad arpeggio which suggests the throwing of the individual note somewhere--and then thrown back, like a farewell.

- notes edited by
John Beckwith

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*The unstruck drum of Eternity
sounds within me, yet my ear hears
it not.*

— Kabir

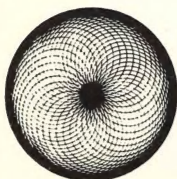
*There are so many things to be con-
sidered in a single note.*

— His Holiness Gyalwa Karmapa

*First you must make the music, and
then the music changes you.*

— Karlheinz Stockhausen

*Won't somebody tell me what
diddy-wah-diddy means?* — Trad.



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