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**STOCKHAUSEN OR THE METAMORPHOSES  
OF CREATIVE VITALITY**

*Determinism and indeterminism throughout his work*

**With an unpublished interview of  
Karlheinz Stockhausen (1969)**

*Translated from the French by  
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*to Karlheinz, to Suzanne, to Kathinka.*

*The following text was written in 1987 at the request of the magazine "Silence", which intended to publish a special issue devoted to Stockhausen in 1988 – a year during which Stockhausen was welcomed in Paris and featured in many concerts at the Festival d'Automne. For unknown reasons this text was not published and remained forgotten. What follows is the original text written in 1987, with just a few minor changes and clarifications.*

## **Stockhausen or the metamorphoses of creative vitality**

### *Determinism and indeterminism throughout his work*

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I can still vividly recall a time during my adolescence when the name Stockhausen brought forth a great amount of cliché-commentary, underscoring first and foremost the image of a super-theorist who conceived his music exclusively in relation to abstract criteria : an «engineer», as he was once qualified with a complicit smile by my seatmate during a concert at Darmstadt.

Today, from Tokyo to Paris, I hear with astonishment a series of equally systematic cliché-commentary, but whose contents seem to be saying the exact opposite. According to these comments, Stockhausen's work has apparently sunk into the irrational, propelled by an extremist metaphysical philosophy meant to «justify» an absence of theoretical research worthy of the illustrious years of Darmstadt. Moreover, his thinking has been altered by various dangerous and malevolent «Orientalist» influences, where all sense of Occidental constructivist rigor has been lost....

The professionals in the field of commentary truly suffer from memory lapses ! These two dialectically opposed images, separated by an interval of years, are a reflection, for my part, of the same intolerance, the same misunderstanding. They illustrate the same blindness towards the complex realities of music and reveal the same narrow limitation of critical criteria and scale of values. They demonstrate an incapacity to grasp the breadth of Stockhausen's creativity, one essential characteristic of which is, it seems to me, to act as a permanent mediator among all sorts of opposite poles. One of the major defining features of Stockhausen's work is to push the limits of all possible antagonisms as far as possible. The whole of his work can be seen in the framework of a true «dialectic of opposites» extended to all categories of musical composition : from his sound material to his staging to his choice of presentational form, etc.

It was indeed ludicrous, during «the glory days» of Darmstadt, to label Stockhausen with the reductive image of an abstract theorist, when, of all the notable figures who led the serial movement during the Fifties, Stockhausen was probably one of the most instinctive, and at the same time, one of the most ambitious on a theoretical level, precisely because his instinct and his imagination kept him from limiting himself to purely «classical» parameters. On the one hand, he was one of the least systematic, with regard to research and application of an abstract «unique total system» making use of nothing more than levels of musical grammar, vocabulary and syntax. On the other hand,

his efforts to spread serial thought to all of the different levels of high form were without precedent. Already at this time, Stockhausen's body of work shows itself to be rigorous in its formulation of guiding principles, but still very flexible, rich and open in its applications. His work is above all *imaginative*; and reference to certain unifying guiding principles while simultaneously extending them to their utmost in no way hinders the liberty of ideas.

The «**Klavierstücke I-IV**», which are among Stockhausen's most strongly-defined «serial» works, make use of great flexibility and demonstrate an example of the «malleability» in the structuring of material, a far cry from the «encompassing» serial systems developed at the same time.

While developing serial theories to their utmost expression, Stockhausen remained wary of the overly systematically narrow trends that constituted a major influence of the Darmstadt school: specifically the virtuosic juggling based on notes and durations.

### **Memory 1 :**

*San Francisco, 1967. A dinner party at the home of Darius Milhaud, with a few guests, among them Stockhausen. I expressed my weariness at always having to «dissect» – within the framework of my university teaching – dodecaphonic or serial works, rich in analytical potential, but whose endless «vivisection» had become an end in itself, a gratuitous act of virtuosity...*

*« You must stop ! », Stockhausen said. « All this analysis of Webern – who has been squeezed to death like a lemon ! – has been pushed to absurd lengths. A kind of general madness ; a bit like schizophrenia. It can be found in certain journals specializing in musical analysis ; it's becoming academic ! That's one of the reasons why I halted the magazine «Die Reihe» after a few issues... »*

And yet, Stockhausen is the author of numerous fundamental theoretical studies. But «theory» is not an end in itself. Its purpose must be to create works, which stem from IDEAS !

\*

If the image, yesterday, of pure theorist was absurd and misconstrued, the image of the «Guru» inspired by mysticism, still quite widespread today, is equally absurd and unfounded.

A work such as «**Inori**», for example, fell victim to this climate of confusion, even hostility. Audiences were hypnotized by words, attitudes, general exterior meanings : and this created the equivalent of a curtain draped around the work, veiling what should have been the broadest and most appropriate interpretation of the work. Some of the contents and symbols acted as masks, preventing comprehension of the extent to which the work is actually balanced, meticulous, globally organized and rigorously structured.

The problem stems as well from the fact that «**Inori**» is built on a totally original, unique form that many have difficulties grasping as a «form» because such a form is built on an idea of construction, of development and time, very different from usual models. So, instead of understanding the work, it is considered fashionable, for certain narrow-minded sorts, to scoff at its mysticism...

In the work of Stockhausen, each composition invents its own structure. Each work is a «revealed form» , a specific order which is dis-covered, extracted from the flood of disorder. Every work is the original and unique fruit (always questioned) of a general anti-entropic force.

Comparisons attempting to cross-reference works from different eras (according to the general repertoire of Stockhausen's works) reveal that it is practically impossible to establish direct formal relationships among his works. Between «**Gruppen**» and «**Inori**», for example, there is no connection (no obvious connection) between systems, structures, or methods, not to mention the very different aesthetic. The same applies to two works such as «**Zeitmasse**» and «**Stimmung**». It is possible, however, to find formal relationships (around the same problematic) between «**Gruppen**» and «**Zeitmasse**» on the one hand and between «**Inori**» and «**Stimmung**» on the other. Thus, there are affinities among groups of works, families of compositions. However, Stockhausen's «periods» are much more numerous and shorter than Picasso's periods, for example. Despite the absence of an established and repetitive «system» at first sight, there is, nonetheless, a form of thinking that almost always aims to structure the whole of the parameters around specific and meticulously finetuned relationships. It is less a question of a unique «language» of reference (in a codified and narrow sense) than it is a question of «general mindframe» allowing arrangement of Occidental sound material.

## Memory 2 :

*Basel, 1963, after a year of study with Boulez. We were all immersed in the application of diverse methods for creating serial permutations, extended mainly by pitch and duration. These techniques (though worthwhile) tended to occupy an important place in our minds and were fast becoming an end in themselves...*

*Within three days – the only course I was able to attend – Stockhausen completely overturned our mental landscape ! Not only through the depth of his research on the evolving history of the use of all sound parameters, his investigations on form, etc... ; but especially through the perspective that he helped us gain on the «series», which had become for us the omnipresent mask ; whereas, according to him, it represented no more than a simple method of dealing with proportions....*

*- Stockhausen : « It's like Le Corbusier's Modulor : nothing more ! We work with materials which are measured by this proportion, chosen beforehand. It's like a simple ruler, a «tape measure». Except that the use of these measures alone does not suffice in itself to make the composition... ».*

*All was said in very few words, and the «relativity» of serial methods thus clearly exposed. So much ink had flowed on the subject of «serialism» ! It was finally nothing more than a «modulor» which in itself did not «make the composition»... A good lesson for the up and coming academicisms already on their way...*

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In tracking the progression of Stockhausen's works, one can see that, above and beyond the profusion of inventions, the technical and aesthetic metamorphoses, the multitude of created musical situations and issues, there exists a progressive and evolving logic from work to work, not unlike a never-ending spiral.

I have already emphasized the presence of a dialectical approach that defines this constant evolving. However, it should also be emphasized that this approach is an OPEN dialectical approach.

I wish to clarify that the parallel so often established between the two leaders of the serial movement of the Fifties, that is, Boulez and Stockhausen, appears, if not exaggerated, at least, inaccurate.

Boulez, from his first works, has very often followed an aesthetic and approach that relied on elimination, distancing and rejection, even condemnation of many things - with the purpose to forever deepen and refine a specifically defined territory. This does not rule out a strong dialectical reasoning or an evolving approach. However, his is of a closed-minded sort, based on the value of perfectionism. Such closed-mindedness is then justified by the incessant pursuit of this perfection and refinement.

Stockhausen's aesthetic and spiritual approach is, on the contrary, based on a total OPENNESS, constantly seeking enrichment, not only through the discovery and exploitation of new territories, but also through absorbing, assimilating and integrating multiple surrounding fields : without rejection or elimination, untouched by CENSORSHIP. Stockhausen not only represents a structured approach, a taste for adventure and exploration, stimulation of the imagination, but also the *liberty* of creative expression – all of which run counter to certain received ideas.

### **Memory 3 :**

*Still in Basel, the same course..*

- Stockhausen : « ... *I don't understand why it should be forbidden to use glissés or clusters ...* » (*allusion to exclusions of these materials decreed by Boulez*). « *Why qualify them as «trivial»? Why should I impose on myself the rejection of material if I feel, while composing, that I need them ?...* »

Admittedly, use of such «glibly packaged» material has been overdone, as Boulez has said, and rightly so ! But censorship of any kind is dangerous.

During our courses in Basel, we, as students, witnessed a near visceral rejection by Boulez of one of the sounds in Stockhausen's «**Kontakte**»: the notorious and famous «glissando» which marks a sudden break in the course of the work, starting very quickly in the upper registers, then descending through various stages towards the lower registers, allowing the listener to discover the impulses that comprise it, and opening the work up towards new horizons of sounds and form. As the composer Konrad Boehmer, head of the Sound Institute in the Hague, says : « ... If Boulez *detests* this sound, then, that must mean it's good !... »

Of course, there are a few of us who agree with Boulez ; moral «filtering» principles (intellectual, aesthetic) that practice rejection or elimination during the composing process are indeed powerful tools that can carry a composer towards a higher level of perfection.

But an approach that always eliminates or rejects will lead to its own form of self-paralysis. And sooner or later, the fatal moment occurs where this very paralysis seeks to impose its will and have its own laws reign over the rest of the world. That's when new academicisms settle in. And, in order to maintain these new layers of power, influence must be exerted on decision-makers to ensure a hegemony over the media and political and professional opinion. It becomes necessary to establish and maintain an apparatus to frame and monitor output until, ultimately, a true «nomenclatura» governs. The result weighs upon its milieu, on society-at-large, and behaves more and more like an ideological police force.

Thus is the way of totalitarianism ...

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Stockhausen's «dialectic approach» is the mastering and putting into play of oppositional forces found in all the parameters applicable in music.

For example, in the domain of complexity of texture or sound material (density, thickness, etc...), some works call for great masses of material (at times with a statistical character) : such is the case for «**Gruppen**» or «**Carré**». But works relying on a great simplicity of material can be found as well : «**Stimmung**», or the «**Indianerlieder**» («**Am Himmel wandre ich...**») are examples.

Opposites of this type are commonplace throughout Stockhausen's body of work, as if the composer wished to «extend» his powers over all areas of sound, far beyond the usual «average» limits.

Thus, for example, we find opposition between pure frequency and complex noise (between periodicity and non-periodicity) applied to the sound material of certain works : from the sinusoidal sound, the basic material used to achieve the complex frequencies found in «**Elektronische Studien I et II**», to the generator of very complex sounds, performed live, by the large tam-tam in «**Mikrophonie I**».

One should also note the dialectic between «abstract» compositions, such as the «**Klavierstücke**», «**Gruppen**», «**Zeitmasse**», etc..., that is, compositions that take «musical sound» (in the traditional sense) as the basis for organized thought and compositions using, on the contrary, very «concrete» situations («actions»), such as «**Herbstmusik**», or «**Alphabet für Liège**», for example.

Between these two poles, an interplay of various tensions is developed in works that integrate and manipulate certain elements that are «given», others that are «found», etc... : as in «**Hymnen**», «**Prozession**», «**Kurzwellen**», etc...

However, one of the opposite dualities that seems to me to occupy the largest place throughout the first half (approximately) of Stockhausen's work (and which extends itself as well to one of the major concerns of today's music) is the pair of criteria represented by *determinism* and *indeterminism*, which serves as the ongoing thread running through a succession of works, from the numbers 1, 2, 3, - representing the most «determined» in the concept and achievement of the composition, its notation and execution - («**Kontra-punkte**», «**Klavierstücke I-IV**», «**Elektronische Studien I et II**») to the numbers 26 and 33 – the least «determined» on all levels : composition, execution, etc... - («**Aus den sieben tagen**», «**Für Kommenden Zeiten**»).

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As previously mentioned, Stockhausen had never really produced a «total» serial work- in the sense of the centralist and codifying spirit that at times risks leaning towards totalitarianism -, and that he had managed to escape the general tendency of the Fifties towards the organization of a «closed» system of permutations, whose unfolding – if not to say complete exhaustion ! – became the single most important reason for the work.

But his efforts in the development of the serial theory were very intense, extending far beyond classical parameters, going as far as the varied application of serial concepts to levels of organization of form and to all the criteria that give the work its dynamics, construction, etc...

In addition, he shared the concerns of his peers with regard to the accuracy of notation, pushing the writing of irrational values and intensities to a degree never before attained.

The «**Klavierstücke I-IV**» constitute the most famous and controversial example with their subdivisions of irrational lengths on several levels and their blocks of simultaneous attack notes, with subtle variations of intensity of notes played by the same hand.

Stockhausen even surpassed others through exploration of new domains of very finely controlled frequencies (micro-frequencies, or untempered frequencies), intensities and lengths, thanks to the use of electronic studio means («**Studie I**» and «**Studie II**»).

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Once this extreme point of compositional *determinism* in all its aspects is reached, another phenomenon occurs, one of dialectical reversal, which has already been amply discussed. Let us remember for a moment that for works calling on conventional instruments, the musician is eventually confronted by certain limits which appear practically insurmountable (limits of mental or physical stamina or limits of the instrument's capacity); however, electronic works, conceived and constructed in a studio, which, thanks to new technological tools, allow for a richness and natural complexity of sound, tone, and transformational models, are ill-suited to an approach demanding absolute control over all the internal components (not only with the tools as they existed during the Fifties, but even with today's tools, in spite of the power of computers).

Consequently, a «switchover» from an ultra-determinism would have been hard to avoid, even if this change seemed to stem from an argument about randomness inspired by Cage. This debate, in any case, was undeniably part of the contradictory logic that nourished the development of an aesthetic movement and musical theory such as serialism, itself profoundly influenced by determinism.

Nevertheless, it is curious to note that it is in part after working in a studio environment that Stockhausen launches the trend revalidating performers, their flexibility and the margin of the unknown that accompanies them in their performances ; this will add an unquantifiable factor to composition (see certain indications in the musical score of «*Zeitmasse*» for example), which will lead, by progressive steps, to the «nearly blank page» of the late Sixties.

#### **Memory 4 :**

*1972, Cologne, at the WDR.*

- Stockhausen : « ...*Now that you are going to work in the studio, you'll see very quickly how necessary improvisation is. To prepare layers of material, transform sounds, re-create them, etc...., The number of operations and parameters that come into play are enormous. And it's impossible to systematically control every detail... You'll notice that, once you go back to working with an orchestra, your orchestra will feel the effects... » (\*)*

(\*) *Proofreading note.* I have quoted from memory, the word for word is probably not completely accurate. But I am sure I haven't altered the meaning.

I would soon experience the wisdom of these words, which so faithfully reflected the interaction between electro-acoustic music and instrumental music in the mind of Stockhausen. But it was an interaction referring not so much to research on technological interfaces, as to the realm of a theoretical search in its broadest sense. This is one of the reasons, among others, why Stockhausen remains THE greatest electronic composer of our time – for, while taking his exploration of new means farther than anyone else, he continued to live and conceive like a composer in the largest sense of the word. He did not deem it useful to lock himself up inside a studio for the purpose of founding a school which would exploit his recipes, or dogma.

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The first step in this journey towards indeterminism (or rather, in the beginning, towards a lesser degree of absolute determinism) will center on an exploration of «tempo» in the largest sense (general «coordination» of a work) : that is, the diverse methods applied to control the «flow» of various parts with regard to how polyphony unfolds, how different groupings fit together, etc... - superimposition of different metronomic tempi, breaks between common synchronization among instrumentalists, qualitative notations of speed (as fast as possible, as slow as possible, etc...). Such examples can be found mainly in «**Gruppen**» and «**Zeitmasse**».

The next step is the opening up of the overall shape of the works : the famous «random» forms. The name is ill-advised. It would be better to use a term such as «mobile forms» (akin to Calder's mobiles), since all the elements that constitute this form are very precisely composed ; only their linking, their connections, their diverse interlacing are subjected to principles of variability.

Belonging to this group of works are principally : «**Klavierstück XI**», «**Zyklus**» and «**Refrain**»

The fact that this brilliant exploration of «mobile forms» has not led to a radical movement pushing contemporary composition in this same direction has sparked surprise in some circles, as if the «breaking up» of the traditional notion of form, in the late Fifties, marked an irreversible historical mutation.

Viewing the events in this light is not completely wrong, but it reflects a very idealistic position. These types of forms act on parameters whose full perception pre-supposes the listener's correct knowledge-memory of a work. A person who is not familiar with Boulez' «**Constellation-Miroir**» or Stockhausen's «**Klavierstück XI**» will have considerable difficulty in grasping the variations or important modifications of the work's syntax and its unfolding, decided by the performer during the execution of the work.

Only a memorized knowledge of the complete musical score would allow a listener to fully grasp, during a performance, the decisions of changes, metamorphoses and branching off that a given performer makes. If memory fails him, the listener can consider the performance as representing a fixed state, decided once and for all by the composer – which is not completely false, but limiting.

It is, therefore, a form which is quite unsuitable for the SOCIAL situation of contemporary music, which everyone knows is already precarious – seldom performed, insufficiently heard, often not sought out, sometimes rejected... In addition, it is a form which fits poorly within the limitations of a record : a vehicle today of great importance, unless one were to record a number of successive versions for a listener wishing to listen to a whole series...

Mobile forms are very difficult forms. They are very elevated from a musical, aesthetic and formal point of view, but largely inaccessible to the consumer culture and pre-formatting that have conditioned our society. Nevertheless, I can imagine that these formal conceptions might one day be given new life, in the context of computer music, once this domain reaches a degree of greater maturity, a level of technical development which is more complex, more understood and much more accessible and democratized.

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In this long journey towards indeterminism, a number of factors are influential. In my mind, three among them appear to play an important role : 1) statistical perception ; 2) the absence of notation in electronic studio practices ; 3) the lengthening of works towards larger, formal proportions.

#### 1 – Statistical perception.

Stockhausen helped me understand this phenomenon when I was still a young student...

## Memory 5 :

*Darmstadt, a beautiful afternoon. Our group was gathered around Stockhausen, at the foot of a tree.*

- Stockhausen : "... Take the example of a tree. When we are right nearby, we see the branches, stems, leaves, veins in the leaves.

*With a bit of distance, we can see a few branches grouped together, with, around them, various groupings of leaves. But we can no longer see the stems, nor the veins in the leaves.*

*With greater distance, we start to see the overall shape of the tree and its various masses, but certain branches disappear.*

*With even greater distance, the tree appears in all the totality of its contours, with a texture more or less dense within its contours, but undecipherable in any detail.*

*With yet another degree of distance, the very contours of the tree recede and melt into the mass of a group of trees, a forest, etc... »*

This simple and clear image, which speaks to the imagination, helps to understand the idea, better than any abstract analysis. And that is the miracle of Stockhausen, one that I have always observed at every lecture, in every conversation.

Traces of this awareness of the statistical perception of elements can be found in numerous orchestral, choral and electronic works («**Gruppen**», «**Carré**», «**Momente**», «**Hymnen**», etc...).

This phenomenon, by its very nature, can push compositional development towards varying degrees of indeterminism of detail. It's a bit like Heisenberg's famous law of uncertainty which governs the relationship between waves and particles. The easier it is to determine the global form of the wave (or «wave of probability»), the harder it is to determine the position of a specific particle with any accuracy. And its corollary : the more precisely a particle is located in an observation, the more uncertain the form of the wave will be.

2 – The problem posed by impossibilities of notation, a problem that is constantly encountered in the processes of electro-acoustic studio work, has undoubtedly been more influential on all recent music than is generally believed. It forces the composer to function in a different way, to accept that he no longer «writes» per se, but that instead, he «acts» on sounds in a practical manner, directly, through transformational processes that bring about a whole field of random events.

## Memory 6 :

*The first time I visited Stockhausen in his studio, in Cologne, I immediately noticed his extreme care in noting down all of the operational indications in his big book.*

*« ... Nowadays, I write everything down, » he told me. « In the beginning, I didn't do it, and that's how «Gesang» was in part lost ... » (\*)*.

(\*) *Proofreading note.* This situation has recently been transcended by the publication of the "**Gesang der Jünglinge**" notebooks (Stockhausen editions, Kürten).

Thanks to assiduous notations, and in spite of the great challenge to «write» certain processes – in one way or another – , the musical scores for «**Kontakte**» and «**Telemusik**» got published. Some of the technicians debate about the absolute exactness of their notations, but the works remain unique and remarkable accomplishments and they allow for very good conservation of all the operations achieved in the studio, invaluable for future generations.

«**Gesang des Jünglinge**», this magnificent masterpiece, today considered historically significant, and which constituted one of the powerful moments of my adolescence, but has not «aged» a single sound in several decades, has remained difficult to transmit to analytical levels due to an absence of notations.

This phenomenon always astonishes the lay person. How is it possible «to lose» a work (from an analytical point of view) that one can completely and perfectly listen to ?

*- Stockhausen : « ... I tried, a long time after finishing, to reconstitute the operations in order to keep a musical «score», but I can no longer remember how certain sounds were produced, and some of the processes are impossible to reproduce, given their complexity... ».*

Today's information technology people will say : « no problem, give us the tape and we'll have the computer analyze it ». But if the computer can analyze the tape, it will be able to analyze ONLY the tape and nothing more, just as our ears hear only the final «result». The computer will not divulge any of the work's inner manufacturing secrets...

### 3 – Lengthening of works.

This is a fundamental question, which touches on the roots of culture (illustrated by certain parts of the interview to follow).

Stockhausen was the first of his generation to sense that Webern's aesthetic legacy was too narrow, and that a form of «mannerism» would soon appear...

From the «**Kontra-Punkte**» and up to the «**Gruppen**», a considerable distancing from a post-weberian aesthetic is already underway, however, it is much more pronounced in Stockhausen's case than in the case of his peers. But, in my opinion, the work that dramatically breaks away from this aesthetic is «**Carré**» : a fantastic work, unique for the times through its particular poetic quality, greatly differing from «**Gruppen**». Suddenly, the proportions and time dynamics are completely modified. To my mind, «**Carré**» is the first manifestation of a specific thread in Stockhausen's work, one which will later lead to «**Inori**», for example, and certain intense and exalting moments found in «**Licht**».

The need for music that called forth new categories of time duration, that is, lengthened time durations, can be considered first of all a reaction to a «sporadic», rapid and nervous musical form, one that «chats» unrelentingly and accumulates quantities of notes : an aesthetic that deeply marked the post-war years, and continues, even today, to be considered by many as THE criterion of all «modernity» !...

Moreover, the influence of certain environments on our perception of various phenomena should not be overlooked. In the case of «**Carré**», Stockhausen is clear in his comments : he conceived the first sketches of his work during the course of lengthy air travel, by observing the slow transformation of landscapes, clouds and vast spaces. It would be interesting to analyze in detail the role played by contemporary environments on the sensitivity of composers. Because the experience of flying is more than just watching clouds transform (this slowness is already evoked in Debussy's magnificent and famous orchestral work : «**Nuages**»). It is also this deep low-pitched sound of dully rumbling engines, uninterrupted for hours ; this «ground» noise with a slowly evolving harmonic spectrum that some composers tend to bring out when it occurs (by chance or by instinct) in the circuits of electronic studios.

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We are touching upon a realm that seems most important in Stockhausen's work, and which returns regularly, under different guises : nature as inspiration. I remember that during the same visit to the studios in Cologne – mentioned above – Stockhausen played for me the now famous great sound in descending glissé, both rapid and infinite, of the «**Région IV**» of «**Hymnen**», as he was working on it at the time. He explained to me the link he was making between this sound and the sight of the Upper Falls in Yosemite Valley, California :

- Stockhausen : « ... *At first, you see these great masses of water descending vertically towards you. But after some time, the perception reverses itself and it appears to be the different strata of the rock face that are rising very quickly... »*

Contact with nature, with its cosmic forces, triggers a broadening of sound consciousness; it provokes bold gestures which are still manifested – in another way – in «**Sternklang**», for example.

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Noteworthy in all this progression is the presence – at times unconscious, but nonetheless real – of the great classical forms of music from other civilizations, particularly Asia. These musical forms become inscribed little by little in the memories of those musicians who listen to them. Our collective memory is constantly broadening, and most particularly for those who are attached to discovering and listening to music from other cultures.

When we were students, Boulez would say : « ... The beginning of «**Carré**» comes from Tibetan monks... ». And indeed, the slow, low-pitched glissés of men's voices of this beginning are strongly reminiscent of the general typology (acoustic and formal) of Tibetan monk chants. However, the passage is short-lived, and the resemblance is probably accidental.

Nevertheless, these musical forms (when one is sensitive to them – and Stockhausen is very interested in all art forms emanating from Asia) penetrate and transform our consciousness, sometimes without our realizing it. Certain sound or visual «gestures» become «archetypes» that gradually integrate into a universal cultural heritage.

«**Refrain**» presents a curious example of these cultural transubstantiations. In spite of its originality, this piece – exceptional in its contemplative poetic quality – might owe something to Cage (lengths, time – numerous rests on resonant sounds, a relative notation excluding any reference to an exact beat) and possibly to Messiaen as well (from the point of view of timbre : piano, vibraphone, celesta).

But isn't this double echo itself the reflection of a more distant echo, originating in Indonesia ? Didn't Cage favor certain tone and time-related archetypes after exposure to Gamelan music ? As for Messiaen, didn't he clearly identify the regular use – in the «**Trois Petites Liturgies de la Présence Divine**» – of the same metallophone ensemble as springing from Javanese or Balinese inspiration ?

Therefore, if it is true – as Robin Maconie writes in his book on Stockhausen - that «**Refrain**» does not hark back to an Asian «model», it is undeniable that this work receives indirect reflections of its sources.

This is further underscored by the evolution of the work's interpretation, dramatically and boldly transformed by Stockhausen himself in 1968 (\*). With the help of amplification, certain sounds resonate for a much longer time, to the point of considerably lengthening the overall duration of the work.

(\*) Concerts performed at the Théâtre de l'Atelier, in Paris, with Diego Masson's «Musique Vivante» Ensemble.

As for vocal articulations (phonemes incorporated into instrumental attacks), they are not unlike vocal techniques (shouts and calls) used by percussionists in Japanese «Nô» theater.

Even if these references find themselves «diffracted» within the logic of a composition, they are still present, and prove that the broadening of qualities and proportions in Occidental music, as expressed by some of its greatest composers, is a historical process that advances hand in hand with the gradual opening up to other cultures.

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Lastly, another motivation for this aesthetic transformation of time-related concepts is the need to find, through sound, a road towards inner concentration.

In contrast to the bursting, exploding music, spurred on by a time dynamic of ever-accelerating, rushing forces, there lies another type of music, one that is slow-moving, that seeks momentary immobility and the perception of being «in» the moment. It is not the stasis which comes from being dazzled at the weberian «ephemeral moment», but on the contrary, it is a stasis that settles in through a continuity, so that one may enter «the inside» of a sound, commit to it and «travel» through its acoustic development.

This aesthetic change, this development, is manifest starting with works such as «**Carré**», and occurs in conjunction with the development of the «Momentform».

The *aesthetic* problem with music from the most recent half-century has not often been explored and remains somewhat taboo.

Accordingly, it is worth mentioning that if Stockhausen appeared as the historical heir of the great dodecaphonists from Vienna's second school – from his frontline position at the Darmstadt school in the Fifties –, his attachment to this line from an *aesthetic* point of view is more tenuous, that is, as the heir to German or Viennese expressionism. I have never heard any of Stockhausen's works attempting to directly or exclusively express the strife and struggle of the world. True, there are unusually violent and intense passages in a work such as «**Gruppen**» that recall certain tensions of the expressionist aesthetic. In «**Momente**», or even in «**Licht**», there are tensions and choral accents that are not foreign to the expressionist aesthetic. But if one were to look for a filiation from an aesthetic point of view, I would say that, beyond differences in language, his music is closer to Messiaen's aesthetic... from which he is rather the direct heir – along with Boulez – through the famous «Mode de valeurs et d'intensités».

To go back to material and its influence on composition, the following remark is revealing of the aesthetic transformation in Stockhausen's work that took place during the Sixties.

### **Memory 7 :**

*Tokyo, 1977. Stockhausen had come for the creation of «Hikari» at the National Theater of Japan. At the time, I was working in the N.H.K. electronic studio for the production of my work «Gaku-no-Michi», and in the course of the evening, our conversation naturally turned to «Telemusik», which had been created in the same studio eleven years prior.*

*Stockhausen : « ... For «Télemusik», I had very good materials that were chosen with a great deal of care. I had the use of multi-tracks which allowed for very delicate intermodulations. But I should have used them longer : I cut them off too soon ! At the time, there was that whole aesthetic which valued very short lengths, very «tight» moments...*

At the time, I was thoroughly surprised by this criticism about such a delicate and subtle work, which had opened the way for techniques found in «**Hymnen**». But today, I better understand what Stockhausen was trying to express, having since largely «discovered» myself through a distancing from an aesthetic of nervous brevity, one that was starting to resemble a nervous tic... and which still has a hold on many followers of modern music today.

It is the *nature* itself of electro-acoustic materials – often very rich and complex – that requires the use of new and vaster proportions in order to ensure proper perception, an «implementation» allowing these specific new properties room to breathe.

The example of «**Etude II**» (or «*Etude aux sept sons*»), music on tape produced by Boulez in 1952, is illustrative of the problem. This experimental work is almost the contemporary of «*Premier Livre*» from «**Structures**» for two pianos : a striking and particularly tight work in the development of Boulez' approach, which comes soon after the extraordinary and liberating proliferation of «**Deuxième Sonate**» for piano, and slightly precedes the very incisive and personal poetics that characterize the masterpiece «**Le marteau sans maître**». In the very short «**Etude II**», the aesthetic of brevity and conceptual, executed virtuosity are ever-present. But the sounds and materials don't have a chance to breathe. They are instead constricted within a grid of abstract lengths, in which they are stifled. The material *rebels* against thought.

It would be interesting to compare it to the «**Etude**» of concrete music (also called «*Etude aux mille collants*»), created by Stockhausen in the same year (1952) and in the same studio. Of course, in this piece, Stockhausen respects the same aesthetic and theoretical criteria that exerted a forceful influence on his whole generation. But in this very astonishing short piece, he doesn't hesitate, for example, to make use of a repetitive phenomenon, even a rather provocative, intense, aggressive type of repetition. (\*)

(\*) *Proofreading note*. Listening today to this work of many years ago, one cannot help but see the veiled silhouette, like a far off «premonition», of some of today's techno music ...

Clearly, problems concerning the relationship between materials, aesthetics and theoretical conception are fundamentally important in musical orientations of today.

A comparison between two works such as «**Zyklus**» and «**Mikrophonie I**» might elicit similar comments. The splendid success of the overall conception, general organization and production of «**Zyklus**» still do not always allow for the percussions to truly express their life and demonstrate all of their rich potential. On this matter, a work such as «**Mikrophonie I**» opens up surprising vistas and breaks down all barriers. The rich, but single, source for the whole work (the large tam-tam) is allowed ample time to «share» its multiple metamorphoses of tones, attacks and resonances. Once again, with such a work, Stockhausen has shown himself to be a frontrunner, the boldest of all.

Throughout his work, Stockhausen's dialectical personality is expressed by this double thrust, one rotating, the other ascending. On the one hand, he is truly audacious in his conceptual work and he knows how to impose a (sometimes «abstract») form of thinking on musical material. And on the other hand, he possesses a very open sensitivity that studies material, listens to sounds created in the studio, analyzes their hidden pulsations, all to extract new meaning, go a step further and push the material forward.

Stockhausen's double success in the two worlds of instrumental and vocal music – sound material that is already laden with history and acquired habits – as in the new realm of exploration of electro-acoustic technologies (a unique case in our times), can be understood by the presence of this dialectic that is constantly criss-crossing and circulating between two poles : from conception to material and from material to conception. Although ostensibly contradictory, these two poles are, in fact, complementary.

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At this point, it would be appropriate to look at a new phase in Stockhausen's development, illustrated by a group of works which, in particular, includes : «**Plus-Minus**», «**Prozession**», «**Kurzwellen**», «**Spiral**», «**Pole**» and «**Expo**».

Although there are marked differences among them, these works have a complete symbolic notation method in common, which relies heavily on the use of plus and minus signs (« + » and « - » ) to the point where parts of the score make exclusive use of these two signs. These symbols are meant to indicate (in reference to very precise instructions) «degrees of transformations» to be developed in one direction or another, around one or several parameters, using materials that might be : a) quotations borrowed from Stockhausen's «written» works ; b) fragments from short-wave radio programs, captured by chance ; c) edited extracts from works of ... Beethoven (for a special

creation of «**Kurzwellen**»), etc... As the pages for the musical score are loose, it is not difficult to conclude that determinism (that is, «composition» in the sense given to it by traditional European writing) stands completely and utterly challenged. In a way, «**Stimmung**» and «**Sternklang**» are directly related to this group of works.

The work becomes an extremely open «process». Each performance is a unique and specific experience, practically impossible to duplicate. The composition, in all of its details, essentially relies on the performing musicians and their mutual interactions «guided» by the composer through transformational networks of pre-figured elements, which affect the performers as a form of «directional energy».

This is the stage in Stockhausen's development that provoked tensions and dissent; visible cracks started to appear, in varying circumstances, in the ranks of European music.

On the one hand, certain performers whose critical ideology took refuge in a sort of «libertarian anarchism» considered Stockhausen's processes still too selective, overly «composed», too «restrictive» !

On the other hand, certain composers whose argumentation fell into a conservatism of «written music once and for all» considered that daring to tamper with «writing» represented a challenge to the whole of musical institutions ! It is true that, even today, harmony, counterpoint and fugue classes are all defined under the umbrella term of «writing classes». This label, in the world of music, has become a symbol and sacred value of an entire civilization. And civilization is indeed the operative word, with its science, practitioners, followers, pedagogy, but also with its commercial channels. It is a musical civilization that belongs to the «Gutenberg Galaxy» and which, nowadays, is violently challenged by powerful developments in new technologies.

It was indeed difficult for certain European mindsets (especially for the logical rationalism that is part of French tradition) to accept principles of such a radical departure, as they questioned methods that had been perfected and passed down for centuries in the realms of production, conception, execution, communication, etc. of musical creations – all these things that mold creativity into strongly standardized forms that we call «musical compositions».

Stockhausen found himself criticized for being overly open to certain «American» ideas embodied by John Cage as well as metaphysical considerations leaning towards Orientalism : criticisms that persist to this day in the form of journalistic clichés and hasty judgments made without concrete observation of the works themselves.

Yet, Stockhausen deserves praise for being one of a small handful of prominent Europeans who did not treat Cage's work and philosophy in a superficial manner (in spite of his strong reservations and criticism), and to have refrained from viewing the United States with a cultural bias of superiority.

Responsibly approaching the work of another composer whose spirit has developed on another continent and deriving something of substance for one's own exploration does not in any way constitute submission to a sphere of «influence». Between Cage and Stockhausen, their differences are greater than their similarities.

Confusion only increased when the term «collective improvisations» was used at the time of Stockhausen's least determined works. Unscrupulous and confused observers spoke of them interchangeably without discernment, mixing classical music from India, African folklore, free jazz, Cage's actions and «situational creations», Zen philosophy, and Stockhausen's works ...

Let's be serious ! Let us carefully observe their music and their works ! If Stockhausen was perhaps stimulated by the exploration he made after exposure to Cage's work, the goals and final conclusions of each composer have differed radically, and they are rooted in historical and cultural soils that are very distant from one other.

Cage's processes in large part call upon highly random mechanisms, in order to SMASH all causality among sounds. Stockhausen's processes, on the contrary, seek to create relationships, directions, LINKS between materials, sound figures, objects, etc...

This means that, in spite of a semblance of similarity (very extensive performer participation within the process of creation and invention, graphic and symbolic notations referring to very generalized, globalized «actions», etc.), the respective «natures» of these processes, their materializations and philosophies are near opposites. Cage seeks to disengage sound from any influential or cultural process, in order to attain a kind of perceptual purity of the sound object, such as it IS in essence (hence, the exploration, among other interests, of Zen philosophy). It is undoubtedly one of the most radical undertakings in the history of Western music insofar as it concerns the destructuring of music of an entire civilization : an undertaking that some find respectable whereas others criticize and question. Whatever the qualitative judgments, this endeavor is not the fruit of historical chance. It was made possible only during an era such as we are now living, where we are confronted by powerful technological disruptions, bringing about confusion and shifting values.

Stockhausen, on the contrary, seeks to bring about perceptible *formative processes* from surrounding chaos (a chaos he is very familiar with, that he frequents, and that he is *aware* of).

One could say, to clarify, that these two choices, as they attempt to relate to the cosmos, are very distant from each other : Cage's choice could be qualified as «entropy» whereas Stockhausen's would represent «anti-entropy».

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Moreover, if Stockhausen himself used the word «improvisation» for specific works, it is appropriate to differentiate what he does with other improvised music : those emanating from the great non-European traditions (India or Iran, for example) or even «free jazz».

In traditional Indian and Iranian music, and more generally in all of Asia, musicians invent a spontaneous music within a framework that is comprised of numerous rules derived from extremely sophisticated musical theories whose codes require years of intensive training to learn.

«Free jazz» is a highly anarchical music, based on a harmonic-rhythmic substratum of varying degrees of simplicity, and whose dynamic is frequently induced by competition in virtuosity among instrumentalists – each musician, during his soli, attempting to play faster, louder, more complicated and more unexpected music than the others.

All of these types of music, all of these «improvisations» are different, even if what they have in common (each one with its own specific features) is the use of oral transmission modes challenging Occidental traditions.

This is the key phenomenon that disconcerts values and critical criteria the most, by upsetting common practices of learned music in the Western world – written music for which the concert has become the only setting, like a place of worship devoted to fixed and familiar museum objects.

The new oral trend in modern music – and particularly in Stockhausen's work during this crucial time of the Sixties and Seventies - appears to me as one of the consequences of this technological evolution that forces composers to «distance» themselves from writing processes, as practiced in Occidental traditions

Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that Stockhausen's move towards a radical oral trend at a given point in his musical development never meant an ABANDON of his faculties as a composer !

## Memory 8 :

*1967. A Sunday in San Francisco. Around the table : Luciano Berio, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Mary Bauermeister. I listen, intimidated, to my elders.*

*Berio explains a particularly typical phenomenon of America in the Sixties :*

- Berio : « ... Here, everything is extreme. On the one hand, there are students who embrace John Cage and his ideas and reject any composition that is structured or organized, etc... And then, there are other students who are attached to certain analytical theoretical journals, featuring people like Milton Babbitt, for example, and who continue to develop extremely meticulous compositions, written from very abstract codes ... dominated by the number twelve... »

- Stockhausen : « Yes, that's the case : there's nothing in-between, nothing balanced by complexity or intertwining. It's a reign of extremes : everything is either one or the other ! No mediation. Cage and Babbitt should think about working together ! ... » (\*)

(\*) *Proofreading note.* . Stockhausen will forgive me for repeating this comment, which was said without any aggressivity, merely as a joke. But these words are revealing of a conception of music that has been greatly marked by dialectical considerations, in essence a European perspective, one that I share. Moreover, it is good that the world has people like Cage and Babbitt. Cage has been an example of generosity, tolerance and openness. As for Babbitt, I recall attending a lecture in San Francisco in which he sparkled with intelligence, knowledge, quick-wittedness and intellectual agility. He spoke the way his music sounds.

## Memory 9 :

*Still in California, same time. We were coming back from Stockhausen's lecture at the University of California, Davis, in the company of Larry Austin and a few others.*

- Larry Austin : « ...It seems to me that the composer – even the idea of «composer» as a social role – is disappearing, and that in the future it should no longer exist. A composer ? I don't know what that means anymore !...

*Stockhausen sent me a look of consternation and answered: - « ... It's true that compositional criteria and the operative role of the composer as such are changing, this is obvious... but composers «disappearing»? ... If a composer can no longer leave a trace of what he has felt, thought, imagined, experienced, conceived with sounds, in order to transmit them to others? This would be a serious impoverishment, a great loss for humanity! ... »*

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With «**Aus den Sieben Tagen**» (1968), and also «**Für Kommende Zeiten**» (1968-70), we arrive at the final stage of this long progression towards the greatest degree of compositional *indeterminism*. It is a singularly unique approach among the composers of our time. At ground zero, the journey has reached its outer boundaries, its ultimate limits, before crossing over into the complete disappearance of the symbolic signs of music. A language – consisting of «text», «words», and «poetry» – replaces another, a language of symbols for musical actions, whether they be precisely detailed or globally generalized, derived from traditional notation or entirely invented.

This is the period of «intuitive music». Performers are encouraged to play (improvise) from texts that are meant to elicit a particularly inventive state within them, a state which will help them discover ideas and sequences of ideas and will «orient» them towards desired results suggested by the composer (or even at times going beyond what can be foreseen); the results are necessarily very open-ended, given the nature of the process.

I have been told that the composer has «abdicated» his role. This interpretation seems to come from a very narrow-minded perspective. These very subtle texts are most frequently «functional» (in the broad sense of the term), and quite restrictive for the performer who is trying to approach it as closely as possible.

It seems to me that Stockhausen is trying, through these scores, to go to the actual root of the creative process: the place where the first mental image of the IDEA FOR A WORK is produced – which, at this stage, is always rich with immense potential and promise.

We too often forget how the long and laborious process of writing and detailed composing of a work, originating from ideas alone, is an approach that gradually ABOLISHES all the many possibilities of the «root-ideas». Attempting to communicate directly with performers (through the mind, «mentally», in some way) by delivering to them a message whose import is substantially rich and leaves intact the infinite possibilities of potential creativity, seems to me a perfectly LOGICAL endeavor, far removed from the mystic and Orientalist irrationality that has often been attributed to it.

It is possible that our civilization – even our human «species» – has not evolved enough to fully succeed in this undertaking. Between the composer's imagined work and the real work, once it is laid out in its detailed concrete form, the QUALITATIVE leap is immense. How many composers throughout history (see Beethoven's writings) have found, in this difficult dialectic between the «imaginary» and the «real» (a dialectic that may be «impossible»...), the permanent source for their creative surge towards new works. This piece, this musical object once finished and in form, can never be the exact reflection of the original aspirations that fueled it, and rightly so because the imaginary world, by its very *nature*, is elusive.

For a composer to communicate a concept to performers in *such a direct way* presupposes a particular receptivity on the part of the musicians, meaning that they must be somehow «prepared». The very generalized and undetailed form of communication sought by these scores must be accompanied by an acquired experience, a common knowledge. The «unsaid» must be compensated by the «we know», that is, by the *oral tradition of knowledge*.

Intuitive music is high risk. It was originally meant for musicians who were part of Stockhausen's entourage from 1968 to 1970, and who could establish a close relationship with him and his music.

One could imagine the extra communication difficulties that musicians from other traditions and other places might encounter, although, in principle, these scores are meant to be potential generators of forms, processes and musical ideas lying outside of any stylistic references – Stockhausen's or any others... In this spirit, I dream of hearing what might be invented from works such as «**Aus den Sieben Tagen**» by an Indian musician like my friend, Sarangi player Pandit Ram Narayan, for example. What would come out of it, if not Indian music ? ...

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This point in Stockhausen's work is a *limit-point*, a point beyond which it seems difficult to continue. But Stockhausen will overcome this situation through an amazing transmutation. The limits of intuitive indeterminism now reached, he will turn his attention to limits of another nature : the performer's limits once more. However, this time Stockhausen will address the performer in his/her capacities to transcend the boundaries of speed, duration, intensity, frequency, etc... imposed by the tool being used. «**Spiral**» re-introduces the signs from «**Prozession**», «**Kurzwellen**», etc... but this time, adds greater complexity, specifically the famous «spiral sign» which indicates : repeat the preceding event several times, by transposing it each time in all of its dimensions, transcending its pre-established limits by your own virtuosity and the known capacities of your instrument or voice.

Was Stockhausen completely satisfied by this period ? His return to works that were highly structured and written down to the last detail, starting from «**Mantra**» and continuing through the immense project of «**Licht**», suggests that he wasn't. No authentic artist, no creator worthy of this name, can ever be truly «satisfied».

### **Memory 10 :**

*During the dinner already mentioned, in Tokyo, 1977 :*

- Stockhausen : « ... Now, I write everything down! Because there were times, during the Expo in Osaka, when all the intense work that I had been doing with the musicians, all the efforts made to communicate with them, to conjure up the desired state of consciousness, etc... all of this work could be destroyed by the most trivial things – somebody hadn't slept well, somebody else hadn't digested properly, yet another had problems with his wife, or all sorts of things of this nature... And in this case, everything could collapse... So now, I write everything down ! ».

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At a crucial point of this article about the development of determinism and indeterminism in Stockhausen's exceptional career (categories that I find complementary, not contradictory in the *unity* of his work, and at this specific time when Stockhausen's work is often misunderstood in musical circles), I thought it wise to insert excerpts of an interview I conducted with him, that took place precisely at that time.

In 1969, I was contacted by my friend Jacques Rivette and «**Cahiers du Cinéma**» with an idea to publish a special issue on «music and cinema». Stockhausen was in Paris for his concerts and I remembered that in San Francisco, shortly before, he had spoken to me about his interest in viewing «**Blow Up**», the film directed by Antonioni. As I, myself, was fascinated by Antonioni's construction of time, I asked him if he would consent to an interview for «Cahiers», which he granted.

Unfortunately, the project for the special issue didn't materialize and the interview was never published. We spoke little about cinema, and a great deal about music. Those present included : Karlheinz Stockhausen, Mary Bauermeister, Jacques Rivette, Jacques Aumont, and myself. What follows are various excerpts from this long interview, which testify to this specific moment in Stockhausen's development, the moment when the degree of indeterminism was at its height.

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**EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW IN PARIS IN 1969**  
**FOR THE « CAHIERS DU CINEMA »**

JCE (Jean-Claude Eloy) : ... «**Aus den sieben Tagen**» is dated May 1968. Is there any connection to the events of social unrest from that time period...?

KS (Karlheinz Stockhausen) : No, it's just accidental! At the beginning of May 1968, I had just come back from a tour, and I locked myself up at home following a very serious event in my life. I lived completely alone for seven days, separated from everyone I knew. I cut off the telephone, I stopped eating, stopped sleeping... and I started to have some completely «hyper-normal» – I might say – experiences : experiences that I had never had before. After the fourth day, I started to write these texts and a lot of other poems as well.

JCE : This type of evolution brings up many questions. Musicians who are attached to a purely written musical tradition wonder «what's next»? They feel as if the culminating point of an ongoing process has been reached. My impression very simply is that afterwards, we go back to written music, then we come back again to «non-written» music, and so on, like a kind of pendulum...

KS : Yes, that's exactly the problem. We've almost reached point zero. A few words printed on paper giving birth to music played by a group of musicians who work together in the spirit «summoned» by one of these texts.

Afterwards, I wrote «**Spiral**». It doesn't mean «a spiral»; the translation should instead be «spiraling»...

JCE : ... It introduces the idea of action...

KS : ... That's right; a «spiraling action». In this composition, the musician (singer or instrumentalist) plays in connection with a short-wave radio, like in «**Kurzwellen**», the last piece written before the texts of «**Aus den sieben Tagen**»... This proves that, somehow, I cannot stay in a state of «no longer saying anything». I re-use the symbols from «**Kurzwellen**» and «**Prozession**». But I add on new signs that I couldn't have imagined before «**Aus den sieben Tagen**». For example, on top of certain transposition signs that consist of other superimposed «+» (that are meant to apply to all four parameters of an event), I add on an arrow pointing upwards or downwards that means : «keep transposing the preceding event by repeating it, with, each time transposing in all four parameters, until you reach the limits of your technical and instrumental possibilities and then go past these limits». Another sign says : «Repeat the preceding event several times. And each time, try to condense all the parameters as much as possible : rhythmic intervals, dynamics, pitch, segments, etc...». We reach a sort of «meta» situation ; a «meta-musical» process. And when performers work from these symbols, their intuition guides them towards completely unexpected things !...

JCE : ... It forces them to reveal themselves ...

KS : ... They begin to look for incredible things ! For example, when they transpose into the upper registers and reach the limit, then they try to transpose by using their hands, their eyes, or walking up a staircase, etc... in order to EXALT this process of transposition. Or with intensity or length, they invent all sorts of things to go beyond what would be permissible intensity, length, etc... Those are the results of personal experiences I had when I was talking about «**Aus den sieben Tagen**». Because, as it happened, these experiences taught me to surpass the limits I thought I had for my body, my brain, my imagination ; and now those limits will continue to expand.

JCE : You have always looked for that, even in your former written works : to extend to the utmost and surpass extremes in every parameter. This is a profound tendency in your personality...

KS : ... And also extend the limits of our consciousness , of the consciousness of what we call music.

JCE : With regard to extending time, length, connections between segments, events, scales of proportion, etc... you have spoken in various circumstances of Japanese Nô Theater, which offers the experience of several octaves below normal...

KS : ... average European time...

JCE : ... It slows you down, it leads you to lower registers ...

KS : ... Yes ! Because length, duration, the proportions of European time are determined by our traffic, our speed of thought, our actions with the instruments we have built, etc... That is, by daily activity in our technical European world.

In Japan, people sometimes function with much slower speeds. They move their bodies, they think, they speak, they have tea, they make love, etc... with completely different time durations ! In Japan, I realized that life can either happen at one extreme of the spectrum, very speedily, or at the other, extremely slowly, and that we are rather mediocre when it comes to our own range of temporal fields.

And the same holds true for intensity, or for the degree of timbre (the color) for every event in life. We suddenly catch a glimpse of thousands of cherry flowers, white, completely white, in the temple gardens ! And for a few days, we become cherry trees ourselves... Or we see five hundred people in a Nô theater, watching with exceptional concentration an actor coming from stage left, and who takes thirty minutes or more to come near the center of the stage ! And every foot movement, every eye gesture or finger twitch is a part of this polyphonic composition of the body. The left hand either with or against the right hand, and opposing the right foot. Left foot in opposition with the head, the lips. And the sounds produced by the voice, the sounds coming from contact with the rugs, or wool soles on the wooden stage. All that in relation to the percussionists' shouts and attacks in the background, sounds produced by the rustling of clothes...

For example, friends in Japan have told me that it is an extremely disquieting event when a woman arrives in a bedroom and very consciously makes the brushing and rustling sounds with her clothing, while very slowly approaching a man from behind... There are «sss», «fffff», and «schfff» sounds, etc... which are more provocative than touching the skin !... They have studied all this with incredible finesse. And that influenced me and made me think.

JCE : What strikes me at times as well in Nô theater are the changes in relationships among events, the proportions. When you're completely plunged into this slow intense sense of time, if the main actor makes just one quick gesture, very brief, short, incisive, it provokes a huge effect, very violent, increased tenfold by the contrast. The force of an accent is completely relative.

KS : That's what I was saying : they are either extremely quick or extremely slow. Take, for example, «Sumo» wrestlers. They analyze and stare at each other for several minutes. And then suddenly, we hardly know how, one of them is on the floor !...

JCE : There is something similar in calligraphy or painting. A meditation, a preparation, an expectation of the event, then suddenly a burst...

MB (Mary Bauermeister) : At the foot of a very tall Buddha, fourteen meters high (Kamakura), someone had placed a little statuette of a Buddha of only three centimeters! I thought I was dreaming ! 14 meters, 3 centimeters. What an admirable sense of proportion ! And nobody took this statuette...

JR (Jacques Rivette) : What you were saying before about the two extremes of speed in Japan corresponds rather well to two tendencies in today's cinema, not yet developed, but still rather clear at this time. On the one hand, there are films that reduce everything to a single very slow action. For example, I saw an American film that consisted of just one static shot ; the camera moves across a façade, a window, for half an hour. And this forward tracking is preceded by half an hour of a static shot from the first image. And, on the other hand, there are extremely fast-moving films, where everything is just about «image-edited», at a 24<sup>th</sup> of a second...

KS : ... However, I haven't yet seen a film that can UNIFY these two aspects, and not just these two aspects, but also everything that is found between these extremes.

There are also two extremes that can be found in painting today : those I would call «specialists of style». Not only blue periods, pink periods, etc... But straight out fixations on a shape or object that last «for a lifetime». Like Albers, for example, who always paints rectangles. Or even Yves Klein, with his blue monochrome works ...

JR : ... But Klein is more than that...

KS : ... You mean, at the end of his oeuvre, with his golds, on fire. But still, it's the «extract» that is systematically explored to its ultimate, instead of the universal. It's this «Albersism» that reigns everywhere. And, in my opinion, today we should be pursuing a universal spirit that would attempt the miraculous process of unifying all different aspects. To grow spiritually, surpass our limitations. Learn how to live one day with an extremely slow, phlegmatic person and another day with an extremely quick and nervous person. Living

together with both – without going crazy! - ; there's the real problem... To overcome the unilateral. Become a sea - «the» sea – in which all different characters can revolve !

JCE : You will soon be leaving on a trip to India, I believe. What is your goal ; what expectations do you have ?

KS : For a number of years, I have been developing (without always realizing it myself) a very personal yoga. I work so much... I always need to cope with my fatigue and be in good health, etc... And, more and more, I am interested in penetrating my consciousness as deeply as possible within my body ; and also to «plug into» other beings (not just human beings...). I would like now to develop a discipline ; refine my technique (somewhat dilettante) and in all possible directions. I'm not looking for a special yoga, but I'd like to choose someone who has lived with Aurobindo, for example.

JCE : So for essentially spiritual and practical reasons...

KS : Yes, nothing more ! I'm going to cut off all lines of communication, the same as I did for «**Aus den sieben Tagen**». That's when I discovered the profound need to learn a technique, to get in contact with my intuition more consciously. Not to always be on the receiving end when it comes and goes or catches me off guard suddenly in the car when I'm in no position to take notes. I'd like for intuition to come along whenever I call for it. I know from my intuitive experiences (what I mean when I say personal yoga), if not to say super-mental (I'd like to reach a super-mental consciousness one day) – I know that at every instant the cosmos has something to communicate. It always has something new to say.

That's why I have a problem with cinema. I go see a film every time Mary tells me it's important to go. I've seen quite a few Westerns. Every once in a while, experimental films. But I have a big problem with the following phenomenon : my conscious mind keeps reminding me (when I'm watching the film) that the time that is being presented to me in the present is actually a time in the past. Everything has already been recorded and it's really just a «pre-packaged event». Everything that is going on in the movie theater, at that particular time, is not in the present moment ! And it's a very serious problem for me, currently, because it's exactly the same situation as when one of my pre-determined musical scores is being played, for example, «**Kreuzspiel**», or «**Kontra-Punkte**», or even «**Gruppen**». Of course, the execution of the piece produces phenomena that have life unto themselves in the moment, through the «radiated energy» of the conductor and the players. But if the work is recorded, we are in the same situation as with film. When I watch a film, intuition cannot come into play at that time ; it has no vehicle for giving «feedback».

And intuition is for me today an absolute essential. Because of that, I think that cinema belongs to the past, to determinism.

JA (Jacques Aumont) : Finding the random part in cinema, that's not easy to do !

JCE : Jacques Rivette directed a film called «**l'Amour fou**», which uses a special technique. Instead of writing a screenplay with precise dialog, like in traditional cinema, he created a sort of tightly-drawn background with an outline for events, psychological and dramatic content, etc...but without any written dialog. Then he placed his actors «into the situation»...

JR : ...We worked together on these situations, and I filmed their improvisations ; obviously discussing things with them, and re-filming, etc...

JCE : So there was a «capturing» of spontaneous activity, a form of «semi-guided random»...

JR : ...But at the end of it all, it is set ; it's re-projected ; it no longer evolves !

KS : I think that true cinematographic processes will come along when corresponding technical processes are developed : electronic cameras that work in the moment, in real time, and which can immediately project something that is taken in a real scene that is ALIVE. I mean people who act directly, like stage actors, or people in real life, and machines that instantly transform these images – more slowly or more quickly, superimposed or re-projected from the immediate past, and so on... Exactly like I did in «Solo», a piece in which the technical installation made it possible to re-hear the «past moments» of a musician while he was playing ; and to have him interact with himself, to transform these moments, etc...

For example, I can very well imagine a man who is speaking and then, suddenly, we view the same man on the screen filmed from another angle, blown up tenfold ; suddenly, the man stops talking, but on the screen he continues and he, the man, is very amazed : then the screen goes empty. After a silence, we hear coming from the screen a sentence that was pronounced a few minutes prior... Time is completely muddled : we no longer know exactly where we are in time. We «travel» within the time in the work. The technical means that allow for such a thing will soon be available. But for the time being, they're still very, very expensive !

JCE : While we're waiting and hoping for these new technical means to become available, aren't there any past or recent films that have interested you for their construction, shape, or subject matter and meaning they offer ?

KS : In «**Blow Up**» directed by Antonioni, there's this long sequence involving the photo development, through successive enlargements until something that we have already sensed is found.

We do the same thing in an electro-acoustic studio. With an «acoustic magnifying glass» - you might say - , we enlarge a micro-sound, and then we enlarge it over and over again. Whether it be visual or sound-based, the spirit is the same. And that particular aspect captured my interest.

JCE : The soundtrack in «**Blow Up**» also demonstrates a whole construction between times of near complete silence, like this scene you just mentioned – with only the sounds of the photographs being handled - , as opposed to the violent sound from the «**Rock**» scene, or sequences of rustling – wind and leaves – in the scenes from the park.

KS : Yes. And he attempted to do the same thing in this whole construction between the real and the surreal ; it comes and goes, this ambiguity between what is imaginary and what is reality.

It's a very legitimate way, today, to establish unity between logical and highly illogical situations, and it goes much farther than a simple collage of various fragments from our minds ; this is what we call realism and surrealism.

That is what I do in music when I work with various sound objects. For example, old established pieces like national anthems. Or with fragments of words, names or poems, like in «**Stimmung**». And these sounds are placed within abstract phenomena, which don't have a special «name» ; they are phenomena that surpass everyday reality.

That reminds me of the Warhol films that young people like so much. In his films, time is slowed down to real time in such a way that the «story» we have come to expect in cinema no longer exists. It's eliminated for the benefit of real time. The camera shoots without cutting anything off, it's as if someone were viewing something in real time. And that is very new and runs counter to the cinema that has always tried to recreate an artificial time, chronometrically accelerated and condensed. Traditional cinema has made «art» – as in music – in the sense of «artifice» : the word says it all. Everything that is

considered secondary is dropped in favor of accelerated, unnatural and highly filtered situations. And I think that, not only should we be developing these transitions between real time and artificial time, but we should take it even farther, that is, DECELERATE time, slow it down to make it even SLOWER THAN REAL TIME.

JCE : To balance things out ? To change awareness ? ...

KS : ... To enter into a magical world ! A time that goes beyond our physical world and life as we know it. Because spiritual life has more than ONE time plane : it includes ALL time planes. A time for a microbe, a stone, a star. That is the true mental revolution of today. To go beyond our mental, bodily and sensual circuitry. Our bodies and brains and perceptions are made up of electric circuits which have specific time definitions. And now we are trying to go beyond these definitions towards the quicker or the slower, body movements and memory speeds, etc...

That's why I'm particularly fond of an idea like «fiction-art», for example. Because, up to now, in artistic and intellectual circles, science fiction writers have never been taken seriously. I think that, on the contrary, we should be assimilating on a very elevated plane the level of consciousness that has been put forward in these publications, because it is certainly a forerunner of what is appearing in the realm of human intuition.

Once we accept the idea that man is not a closed system, but still an evolving system, we can no longer accept pre-established limits, and what I said about time applies as well to all parameters of behavior : society, morality, etc...

And this leads us to a very interesting situation. Because we have always thought that subjectivity is a thing of the past, belonging to the nineteenth century. And I'm realizing now that after this period of twentieth century objectivity, this stage of materialism, the next step will be towards a new subjectivity. Not subjectivity in the sense of a closed individualism. But rather in accepting the fact that there are certain people who act as a kind of «mouthpiece», like small «fountains» through which a cosmic spirit travels. And this is the form of subjectivity that can CARRY us further.

An intuitive system is a system which is based on Unity, and not on Multiplicity. We engage every undertaking through EXPERIENCE, and not through analytical thinking. An intuitive existence is always an existence in unity. And one brings this unifying experience into all the layers of consciousness, the subconscious, and finally unconsciousness. That is, the idea of a historical and evolutionary concept is turned upside down. Evolution is not the principle which

«pushes» existence towards higher levels of consciousness, but existence is instead drawn forward, as if inhaled.

JCE : This image reminds me of what is described about certain Paths in Buddhism, Hinduism, or even Sufism. Even in Buddhism, there are other more immediate Paths, «Direct Paths» which are like sudden flashes of understanding, that Rimbaud's «Illuminations» didn't deny....

I recall a sudden «awakening» that I had in New York after seeing an exhibition of «Pop Art» that used many functional objects from everyday life. The fact of being forced to «locate» them in an «artistic» situation led me to TRULY look at them with new awareness when I encountered them afterwards in the street, in cafés, in the subway, etc... Everything around me became «Art» ! I «discovered» these objects that had always been considered commonplace.

KS : That's right. And that's why this whole «do it yourself» art, or the art of playing with things (we touch something, we plug it in and it starts to move as if animated, etc...) ; all this art is highly didactic. Like art that's been acquired in school, in the authentic sense of «learning», helping people to go towards a state where everything becomes conscious. There is no waste. Everything is assimilated by consciousness. Everything becomes «art».

JR : It's a little like what we were saying before about Warhol...

KS : These are works, films, meant for the masses, which still need to make the step from a pre-conscious state to a conscious state.

For example, looking at a person in the mirror, a person we are accustomed to seeing everyday, and looking with a fresh eye. Or observing your wife's mouth with heightened awareness, as she sleeps, and for two hours, etc... These films, these works, are useful in this sense...

JR : ... They help us make the next step...

KS : Yes ! That's why I'm not at all «against» such works because there are several billion of us on this earth and it is really difficult to raise the general level of consciousness and if we don't, we will have misunderstandings everywhere ! Because it's the preconscious states that bring on disaster, human catastrophes and wars, etc... the risks increasing with the explosion of pre-conscious people.

JR : But we work in fields that are still reaching too few people...

KS : No, that's not true ! «Too few people», what does that mean ? In Germany, in July 1944, there was this rebellion against Hitler, which didn't work. So, three thousand people were killed in reprisal, within two weeks. Three thousand among the most intelligent and cultivated – clergymen, professors, artists, etc...

JR : ... That's what we call the elite ...

KS : ... The REST of the elite who weren't soldiers or in a concentration camp ! And in Germany today, these three thousand people are missing !

I don't believe in big numbers. A single mayor in a town can create a center for personal development that can change many things. A single person can modify and transform a whole country even ! That's why some political leaders, or revolutionaries or military figures, strong, courageous, violent, can possibly save a human group or transform state structures. But on an elevated plane, if they are spiritually «backward», they can bring about great harm ! They can even slow down the evolutionary process.

I believe in people like Aurobindo. I believe in people like Buddha. Or like Christ. But people like that, how many exist today ? ... there are not enough leaders who go beyond basic needs. A lot of them are mediocre. And mediocre people like to choose people who are like them ; people who don't go very far, who don't want to shake up anything, or who represent physical security.

We are less in need of big numbers than just a few who are willing to go farther. Even if there is not a great following. Because, little by little, consciousness broadens. It's the principle of evolution. And today, the population explosion is happening at the base. Don't misunderstand me : I am not criticizing. I'm speaking very dispassionately, as if I were describing a natural phenomenon.

But I see this development which is going from the most unconscious level to this massive explosion of pre-conscious beings. I'm not saying that I think I'm outside of all this and on the cutting edge... There are people who have gone very far, much farther ahead ! And for me, they are the lights to follow. Once this state of being is understood, we'll be composing another type of music ! We will no longer create music that seeks to SERVE what has been established ! ... Because, what should be served, is this cosmic force, whose fundamental LAW is to ILLUMINATE matter, and to illuminate unconscious beings.

JR : But in this case, your actions are like a medium's ! ...

KS : Exactly ! We are all mediums ! We are «incorporations», of little fragments of the psyche, of the larger cosmic psyche. And it's a whole ! Why are we speaking together, the five of us ? To summon up what can go farther than what any of us can do separately. Otherwise, it would be meaningless to speak together !

Aurobindo's life struck me deeply for that. He overturned all the principles of the old Indian yoga masters. All of these yoga were channels to reach Nirvana ; to «push» consciousness to rise above the masses and reach the pinnacle. Once they've reached the spiritual Himalayas, they are no longer cold nor hot, they no longer have a single desire, they no longer have anything... But they can no longer be in contact with others. They are ISOLATED ! Aurobindo understood that attaining this completely metaphysical Nirvana alone, cut off from mundane life, did not serve anyone. So he completely overturned this principle and said : « We should start high up and then bring these experiences to others. We must COME BACK, and not just leave ». This is the great problem : the circle...

JR ... No, the «spiral»...

KS ... A spiral, exactly !

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It is difficult to continue commenting beyond this interview without undertaking developments that would require a whole book. I have neglected to quote numerous major works that come before and after this period.

But this interview from which I have transcribed the essential parts seems to me to constitute a particularly revealing testimony to Stockhausen's state of mind, at a time when he had reached a full level of maturity in his life, and a time when he had attained one of the extreme points of the developmental process which has been the main theme of this article : the process which very rigorously extends itself, stage by stage, from the most objective, the most constructivist, to the most subjective, or most indetermined.

One can also note, in this interview, to what extent the «new subjectivity» that Stockhausen refers to is far removed from the floating mysticism that he has been accused of. Far from being this resignation of the mind that he has been criticized for, it is, on the contrary, a *mind on alert*, the conscious mind – ever more conscious ! – that drives this approach.

This strength, this continually progressing spiritual vitality that re-activates the sources of cosmic energy (origins for us all) thus becomes a powerful motor for discovery. This period is embedded within a particular exceptional group of works, for which recent music has yet to truly assimilate its influence : «**Stimmung**», «**Sternklang**», «**Inori**», as well as «**Mantra**», «**Trans**», and a few others.

The first three works mentioned were particularly misunderstood in France, specifically by a large part of the holders of the so-called avant-garde Institution. Some points :

- 1) The sudden and radical fixation on the heights of pitches.
- 2) The complete overturning of the conventional hierarchy in sound parameters.
- 3) The invention of totally original forms, that no longer owe anything to the hierarchical forms of development and construction from classical and romantic Occidental traditions (but are forms which throw out bridges to forms and musical constructions from other civilizations, without explicitly referring to them).
- 4) The total ousting of «conversational chat» and «note overuse», which has become the tic of a whole part of the contemporary music establishment.
- 5) The questioning of the «functionality» of a work as source for concert entertainment.

All of the above collided with our venerated advocates of «writing» («learned writing», needless to say), a science whose value nobody – and least of all Stockhausen ! – ever denied : we need only recall «**Kontra-punkte**», «**Zeitmasse**», «**Gruppen**», the «**Kavierstücke**». But it is a science which, we should recognize, has become, today as yesterday, the benchmark for the whole of the official pedantic establishment : in France, Germany and elsewhere... just as it acted as the pedantic science at the academic Conservatory of my childhood...

We would search in vain for an analysis of «**Stimmung**» in our «theoretical» journals. Yet this work is much more than a simple vocal meditation, as some people wish to see. It is a balanced and «structured» work (to use the keyword in the jargon of French modernity), built at its foundation on a very subtle system of material interferences. However, our university analysts only have eyes for (and, I daresay, ears for – but do they really have a listening faculty ? ...) music whose pages are blackened by notes and complicated rhythms. They confuse matter with thought. Complication and complexity. Quantity and quality. Stockhausen was right to attack these particular forms of «objectivism» (such as the exaggerated emphasis on writing and analysis). It is too often behind these forms that the learned guardians of conservatism hide.

In any case, Stockhausen drew a tremendous élan from this militant, conscious, open and truly «experiential» spiritualism (experiential in the sense of life, mind and body «experiences», etc...), an élan which carries his great projects forward, such as the seven-day opera on which he is constantly working at the moment (\*).

(\*) Proofreading note : *Let's keep in mind that this article was written in 1987. Today, the challenge of this large project has been realized : "Licht" is finished. This is an immense lesson for the music world, and for the representatives of official modernity, who, for more than twenty years, have expressed their skepticism and sarcasm.*

\*

It should be noted that never again did Stockhausen return to the «experience of limits» that he explored during the late Sixties. Like a man who recognized successively all of the boundaries of possibilities within reach, and who today occupies the totality of his sphere ; his work, ever since, has extended and deepened around a median force direction, wherein a balance between objectivism and subjectivism has been reached. Where writing (once again very present) mingles with intuition. Where the determined and indetermined intertwine ; as in the subtle metamorphoses of «Yin» and «Yang». But never did he return to these two extremes which consisted of a nearly exclusive *determinism* in the early Fifties and an equally exclusive *indeterminism* of the late Sixties.

Stockhausen's work, one of the richest and most beautiful of our times, continues to develop in front of our very eyes, like the continuity of a great river : magnificent, wide, opening up as a delta and carrying us towards the light... «**Licht**»...

- «... *Mmn-nyo-rai-myô-shoku ...*» ; «... *The Buddha of wisdom in the splendor of a thousand colors ...*», sings a Tendai Japanese monk.

After so many metamorphoses, after his astonishing contradictory and extreme transformations, Stockhausen's work has reached the experience of totality, expressed by Buddha in his famous prediction of the park of gazelles : « ... *There are two extremes of which the religious person need be wary. One of them is a life completely given over to sensuality and pleasures ; such a life is vile, vulgar and vain. The other consists of a life of mortification ; this is difficult and vain. The Tathägata has avoided these two extremes and, in so doing, has found the Middle Path which leads to perceptiveness, wisdom, tranquility and knowledge...* ».

Jean-Claude Eloy  
November 3, 1987

*Translated from the French by Meredith Escudier*

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*hors territoires*

Jean-Claude Eloy is a French composer, born in 1938. He studied at the Paris National Superior Conservatory of Music, where he won First Prizes in Piano, Chamber Music, Counterpoint, Ondes Martenot, and studied composition with Darius Milhaud. He attended summer courses at Darmstadt (Pousseur, Scherchen, Messiaen, Boulez, Stockhausen) and was a student in composition in Pierre Boulez' master class at the Music Academy in Basel (1961-1963).

Works by Jean-Claude Eloy have been performed all over the world. They have been conducted by Pierre Boulez, Ernest Bour, Michael Guilen, Bruno Maderna, Diego Masson, Michel Tabachnik, Arthur Weisberg and others ... He has lived in the United States (professor at the University of California, Berkeley, in the sixties), Germany (invited by the WDR studios in Cologne, the Technische Universität in Berlin, guest artist at the Berliner Künstlerprogramm), Holland, Japan (where he collaborated with NHK and the National Theater of Japan, among other activities). He participates regularly in numerous international festivals, principally in Europe, but also in Asia, the United States, Canada and Latin America as sound-projectionist for his electro-acoustic works and with the soloists closely associated with his compositions : Fatima Miranda (vocalist), Yumi Nara (soprano), Michael Ranta (percussionist), Junko Ueda (Shômyô singer and Satsuma-Biwa player), Kôshin Ebihara and Kôjun Arai (Buddhist monk singers), Mayumi Miyata (Shô player), etc....

*« ... A solitary composer who has managed one of the most significant syntheses of 20<sup>th</sup> century music (between electronic and acoustic music, but also between Western and non-European traditions), Eloy tackles and convincingly solves an essential problem of our time : the relationship to the other, to the stranger, to what is different, not so much as an object of curiosity, admiration or submission, but as a vitalizing source of creative inspiration ».*

«The New Grove Dictionary of Music », 1998, Dr. Ivanka Stoïanova

(translated by Meredith Escudier)