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"Kontakte" with piano and percussion

Citation for published version:

Williams, S, Stockhausen, K, Currie, C & Hodges, N, "Kontakte" with piano and percussion, 2013, Performance.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publisher Rights Statement:

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Stockhausen's Kontakte

Wednesday 27 November 2013

Old Fruitmarket, Glasgow

Programme Notes

The two pieces you hear tonight are closely linked chronologically (*Kontakte* was written 1959-60, while *Klavierstück X* was completed in 1961) as well as aesthetically. The hours spent in the studio studying the nature of electronic sound in minute detail – as he did in preparation for the creation of *Kontakte* – conditioned his thinking and the way he imagined acoustic sound. Also, both works reflect Stockhausen's 'moment' aesthetic – so that although the music happens sequentially in time – how else - we should listen to individual moments in their own right.

Stockhausen wrote 19 *Klavierstücke* over the course of around 50 years, beginning in the early 50s. Unlike some of his other series, they were all written with different circumstances and performers in mind. As a group this gives them an informality and almost a biographical quality as you follow his evolution over that half century.

As so often, Stockhausen sets apparently arbitrary parameters to create a unique world for the piece. The number 7 is critical. 13 different musical elements are graded into 7-part scales and manipulated accordingly. At its simplest this applies to loudness (*ppp*, *pp*, *p*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*, *fff*), and, at its most complex, it extends to the degree of order and disorder at any given moment. Playing in this world of possibilities, Stockhausen creates a landscape with great chasms of silence and moments of dumbfounding density. The demands of the piece are so forbidding that few pianists undertake it at all – arguably, a fully accurate rendition of the notation is impossible - so human 'error' is effectively written into the concept.

Kontakte has to be one of the most economical and suggestive of Stockhausen's titles. It sends the listener seeking the points of connection and contact - between live and electronic music, between timbre and processes, audible contact and theoretical contact (e.g. through the manipulation of series); points of contact along continuums that Stockhausen discovered in the studio – stretching, modulating and editing sound to manipulate it in ways unimaginable before the invention of magnetic tape. The innate theatricality of the work is generated by the spectacle of two superb live musicians sparring and interacting with invisible counterparts.

Karlheinz Stockhausen
(1928 - 2007)

Klavierstücke X

Kontakte

Nicolas Hodges, piano

Colin Currie, percussion

Sean Williams,
Sound Projection

The performance will last one hour with no interval.

N.B. SILENCE in both *Kontakte* and *Klavierstück X* is as vital as sound.

Please contribute to the performance in the best way by remaining as silent as possible – and hold a moment of silence at the close of each piece before applause.

Please note that the programme and the names of participating artists were correct at the time of going to press, but may be subject to change.

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Nicolas Hodges

An active repertoire that encompasses such composers as Beethoven, Berg, Brahms, Debussy, Schubert and Stravinsky reinforces pianist Nicolas Hodges' special prowess in contemporary music. As a concerto soloist, Hodges' past and imminent engagements include performances with US orchestras such as the Boston Symphony, Chicago Symphony, and New York Philharmonic amongst others; with European orchestras such as the Berliner Philharmoniker, BBC Symphony, Chamber Orchestra of Europe, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, and further afield with Tokyo Philharmonic and Melbourne Symphony. Among the distinguished conductors with whom Hodges has collaborated are Thomas Adès, Marin Alsop, Daniel Barenboim, Jukka-Pekka Saraste and Leonard Slatkin. In recent seasons, Hodges has become especially closely associated with the piano concertos of Elliott Carter (in 2004), Beat Furrer and Thomas Adès, with Hodges giving the premiere of the British Composer's *In Seven Days* in London in 2008. Other recent premieres include concerti written especially for Hodges by Hugues Dufourt, Rebecca Saunders, and Miroslav Srnka. As a recitalist, he has performed at such venues as Carnegie Hall (New York) and Wigmore Hall and his festival appearances have included the BBC Proms, Cologne's Acht Brücken, Lucerne Festival, New York's Mostly Mozart, Paris' Festival d'Automne, Salzburg Festival and Tanglewood. In chamber music Nicolas collaborates regularly with the Arditto Quartet, Adrian Brendel, Colin Currie, Anssi Karttunen and as a member of the Trio Accanto. Nicolas Hodges' discography includes solo and concertante works by Adès, Birtwistle, Carter, Ferneyhough, Furrer and Rolf Riehm. Future CD releases include discs of Brian Ferneyhough on Neos, Walter Zimmermann on Mode and Harrison Birtwistle on Metronome.

Colin Currie

Recognised for his "athletic percussionism, compulsive showmanship and deep musicality" (Guardian), Colin Currie is a solo and chamber artist at the peak of his powers. Championing new music at the highest level, Currie is the soloist of choice for many of today's foremost composers and he performs regularly with the world's leading orchestras and conductors. From his earliest years Currie forged a pioneering path in creating new music for percussion. He was awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society Young Artist Award in 2000, and a Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award in 2005. Currie has premiered works by composers such as Einojuhani Rautavaara, Jennifer Higdon, Kalevi Aho, Kurt Schwertsik, Simon Holt, Alexander Goehr, Dave Maric, Julia Wolfe and Nico Muhly. He recently premiered a new work from Elliott Carter: a double concerto performed with Pierre-Laurent Aimard and commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, Aldeburgh Festival and Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France. Upcoming commissions include new works by Steve Reich, James MacMillan, Louis Andriessen, Andrew Norman and Anna Clyne. Currie is Artist in Residence at London's Southbank Centre, a role which allows him to develop relationships with artists and ensembles, as well as take part in collaborative and educational projects. Highlights of Currie's 13-14 season include two world premieres of works by Louis Andriessen and by Andrew Norman, as well as debuts with the Cleveland Orchestra, São Paulo Symphony, and Nagoya Philharmonic, and returns to Bergen Philharmonic, BBC Scottish Symphony, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, MDR Leipzig, Houston Symphony, Toronto Symphony and Cincinnati Symphony among others. The Colin Currie Group continues to receive critical acclaim for its performances of Steve Reich's iconic work *Drumming* and this season The Group extends its repertoire to Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians*. Currie regularly collaborates in recital and chamber music with a number of major artists including Nicholas Hodges, Håkan Hardenberger and the Pavel Haas Quartet.

Sean Williams

Sean Williams performs live electronics and sound projection with *Grey Area* and the *Monosynth Orchestra* playing original compositions, improvisations and existing pieces by Stockhausen, Wolff, Subotnik, Ono and others. He has performed with Stephen Deazley's *Music at the Brewhouse* and the *Red Note Ensemble*. His performances are intimately connected with his research into the practice of early electronic music and media and its connection to the body, and often feature period instruments in contemporary contexts. Sound art pieces have included installations for *Lyrebird* at the Threshold art space in Perth, *Dialogues Festival*, Edinburgh, and at ZKM in Karlsruhe. His new realisation of Stockhausen's *Studie II* was premiered in Edinburgh in November 2013, and he has contributed chapters on both Stockhausen's and King Tubby's electronic music performance practice to *Material Culture and Electronic Sound (Artefacts: Studies in the History of Science and Technology)*, and *The Art of Record Production*, both published in 2013. He is from Dorking.

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