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"Hymnen - electronic music" sound projection

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no names. Numerous compositorial procedures of inter-modulation are employed in HYMNEN. For example, the rhythm of one anthem is modulated with the harmony of another, the result with the dynamic "envelope" of a third, that result in turn with the tonecolour constellation and with the melodic line of electronic sounds, and finally on the result of this a particular form of spatial movement is imprinted. Sometimes, parts of an anthem are fitted "raw", virtually unmodulated, into an environment of electronic sound events; sometimes modulations lead to the threshold of unrecognisability. In between there are many gradations, many levels of discernibility.

In addition to the national anthems, other "*objets trouvés*" are used: scraps of speech, crowd noises, recorded conversations, events from short-wave receivers, recordings of public events, demonstrations, the launching of a ship, a Chinese shop, a state reception, etc. The large dimensions of time, dynamics, harmony, tone-colour, spatial movement, total duration, and the open nature of the composition arose, during my work on it, from the universal character of the material on which it is based, and from the breadth and openness which I myself experienced in coming to grips with the project - namely, the union, the integration, of seemingly unrelated old and new phenomena.

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Credits 1967:

David C Johnson – Technical assistant, voice
Mesias Manguashca - voice
Werner Scholz – Technician
Jaap Spek - Principal recording technician and engineer
Karlheinz Stockhausen – Composer, voice

Credits 2015:

Sean Williams – Sound Projection
Kevin Hay – audio systems technician

CONCERTS

AT THE UNIVERSITY

SPRING—SUMMER 2015

Karlheinz Stockhausen **“Hymnen – Electronic Music”** **(1967)**

Friday 13 February 2015

7:00pm

Playfair Library

Regions I-II

Interval – 10 minutes

Regions III-IV

Sean Williams – Sound Projection

DIALOGUES FESTIVAL



The Leverhulme Trust



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

Original programme notes from the première in Cologne, 1967:

“For some years I had planned to compose a large work of electronic, vocal and instrumental music using the national anthems of all countries. In 1966 I began its realization in the Studio für Elektronische Musik of the WDR. The result so far has been four *Regions* with a total duration of approx. 113 minutes. Each Region has certain national anthems as *Centres*, to which anthems of other countries (with their characteristic head-motives) are related. The first Region has two Centres, the *Internationale* and the *Marseillaise*. From an international gibberish of short-wave transmitters, it evolves as a strict and directional form. I have dedicated the first Region to Pierre Boulez.

“Region I merges into Region II. The bridge is the penetrating "flood-sound" which hisses upwards from a low, distorted tone at the beginning of the *Marseillaise* and hovers over Region I until the end; now it stands quite alone for a long time and, after traversing nine sound-columns (with which Region II begins) plunges downwards and is recognizable as human cries, then transformed into the squawk of birds, the "boo-at boo-at" of marsh-ducks, human bawling, and finally into the deep, dark reminiscence of the *Marseillaise* at a pace eight times slower. The second Region has four further Centres: the national anthem of the Federal Republic of *West Germany*, a group of *African* anthems, mixed and alternating with the beginning of the *Soviet* anthem, and a subjective Centre which suddenly breaks in at the end of the continuous transition between the German and African anthems and - in the guise of a reflection on another German "anthem" of the past - reveals the whole compositorial procedure. This is the original recording of a moment during work in the studio where present, past and pluperfect become simultaneous (the last sentence: "*Wir konnten noch eine Dimension tiefer gehn ...* " "We could go yet one dimension deeper ..."). This Region is dedicated to Henri Pousseur.

“The third Region has three Centres. It begins with the slow (now unmixed) continuation of the *Soviet* anthem, the only one which is constructed exclusively of electronic sounds, with the largest harmonic and rhythmic expansion I have composed so far. The *American* anthem follows as the second Centre; it has the most colourful relationships - in fleeting collages and pluralistic mixtures - to all the other anthems. The last short-wave sound whizzes "in a few seconds across the ocean" and ends in the exalted Centre of the *Spanish* anthem. The third Region lasts approx. 24

minutes. It is dedicated to John Cage.

“The fourth Region has a double Centre: the *Swiss* anthem and an anthem which belongs to the utopian realm of *Hymunion in Harmondy* under *Pluramon*; this is the longest and most compelling of all. A quietly pulsating bass ostinato is fashioned from the closing chord of the *Swiss* anthem; above it gigantic blocks, surfaces and planes are concentrated, in whose clefts names - echoed and re-echoed - are called out. The fourth Region lasts approx. 32 ½ minutes and is dedicated to Luciano Berio.

“HYMNEN for radio, television, opera, ballet, recording, concert hall, church, the open air ... The work is composed in such a way that various screenplays or librettos for films, operas and ballets can be written to the music. The order of the characteristic sections and the total duration are variable. Depending on the dramatic requirements, Regions may be extended, added or omitted.”

Karlheinz Stockhausen, 1967

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(Supplementary commentary for the DGG record, August 1968)

National anthems are the most familiar music imaginable. Everyone knows his country's national anthem and perhaps one or two others, or at least the way they begin.

If one integrates familiar music into the composition of unfamiliar, new music, the listener can hear particularly clearly how it has been integrated: untransformed, more or less transformed, transposed, modulated, etc. The more self-evident the WHAT, the more attention one can pay to the HOW. National anthems, of course, are more than just that; they are "loaded" with time, with history - with past, present and future. They emphasize the subjectivity of peoples at a time in which universality is too much confused with uniformity. Subjectivity - and correlations between musical subjects - must also be distinguished from individualistic separation and isolation. The composition HYMNEN is not a collage.

A variety of correlations between different anthems have been composed, and between the anthems and new abstract sound-forms for which we have