

KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN

WORLD MUSIC

Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928-2007) was born in Mödrath, Germany. He studied at the Cologne University of Music and the University of Cologne from 1947 to 1951. In 1953 he began working at the Cologne studio of the Westdeutscher Rundfunk, where he produced the first compositions of purely electronic music. By the 1960s he was one of the most widely known composers in the world. He also founded and directed the Cologne Courses for New Music from 1963 to 1968, and he was a visiting professor at the University of Pennsylvania in 1965 and the University of California, Davis in 1966. In 1971 he became a professor at the Cologne University of Music, where he remained until 1977. In addition to his compositions, he also published numerous articles on electronic music. The following excerpt is from an essay published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in 1973 and included in the collection *Texte zur Musik: 1970-1977* (1978). The first English translation was published in *The World of Music* in 1979, and this revised translation by Bernhard Radloff was published in the fall 1989 issue.

WHY SHOULD THE PRESERVATION of the greatest number of musical forms from all cultures be supported? To have the recordings and tapes lie around in archives, or now and then to make use of them in historical broadcasts, films, and books? For these things too, certainly, since even such information, seemingly so conservative and reactionary, secretly transforms our lives. But this isn't enough. What is decisive is that the creative elements in each culture outgrow the limits of their own tradition to develop all those aspects in themselves which come alive for the first time when they look into the mirror of another culture.

When a European is deeply moved by a particular piece of East Indian music he discovers the East Indian in himself; likewise, when a Japanese is affected by a work of European music he discovers the European in him, in

fact, the European of that specific instant which brought this work into being. In the lure of the exotic the serpent's tooth always lies concealed to rob one of one's sheltering paradise of self-assurance. It comes as a great shock when in one's harmless curiosity about a strange culture one is so moved by some event that one falls head over heels in love. One cannot take the music, a temple ceremony, a dance, away with one. Either one stays there, or one goes "home," and longing sweeps over one at the most unexpected moments. . . .

These are discoveries of a deeper self, where everything slumbers which has ever been and ever will be for infinite time to come. When once this abyss has been intimated, longing never ceases to awaken *the whole*, to make the multiplicity of being come alive and to experience it.

Then no musical transcription, no matter how carefully made, no film or sound recording will suffice any longer. They have the pallid feebleness of postcards. And one knows that what one loves is condemned to die. All the stronger is the longing to unite oneself with the source from whence the form one loves has also arisen.

From time to time European history has given birth to universalists, also in the arts. Yet given the limited perspective of one culture and even that of a particular region within it, the aspiration to acquire a personal style, to express oneself and perhaps the vital consciousness of one's group, remained predominant. But when for the first time an earthling can literally encompass the globe and become conscious of the simultaneity of all levels of culture, the fantastic variety of musical expression and ceremony, then musical specialization is fundamentally undermined. Despite the danger of not yet being able to master the complete range of human vibrations and of playing out of tune from time to time, the most creative spirits will henceforth attempt to play in all registers. Consequently, at this stage of development, what will be decisive is who even has the potential of playing all "registers": who has the most differentiated and varied instrumentarium and also the most open system, thus to allow the creation of new structures which unite a great number of aspects, i.e., stylistic qualities.

The preservation of the greatest possible number of musical forms of all cultures—even of dead forms which crystallize in the process of conservation—is so uncommonly necessary because the instrumentarium and processes of composition, of European music for example, have generalized themselves to the extent that any given sound or sound constellation can be

produced by live-electronic equipment. And herein naturally lies the great danger of moving through all registers and thus of losing the power which was once grounded in the tremendous concentration and one-sidedness of particular musical cultures and in particular forms in these cultures. When one is able to produce only quite specified tones on a highly limited instrument, this limitation serves as guarantee that one will make very original music sharply distinct from music one could produce on other instruments with quite different possibilities; a live-electronic instrument of universal application, with which one could theoretically do everything, rather deadens than animates the spirit. For it has always been an unwritten law that the master realizes himself through the limitations within which he works. Every kind of strict channelling leads to an acceleration and intensification of the stream. And therefore the greatest possible number of *crystallized objects* drawn from the musical cultures of the world must be available for the *orientation* of the artist. Not to imitate them—but to be able to become conscious of the specific rhythmic relations in each individual form, and to keep it available as one of a set of possible resources when one wants to compose a work.

It is no accident that the planetary process of integration which is happening with such great acceleration in the second half of this century, in music as in all other fields, runs parallel to the first attempts of humanity to leave the earth. One may anticipate that in the instant in which contact with previously unknown alien life in the universe is established, planetary society on earth will have largely integrated itself. . . .

Out of the first phase of the intermingling and integration of all music cultures on earth, a second phase will arise. Just as a spiral reaches the same point in the course of its turns—only one step higher—so the present trend toward uniformity will pass over into a countermovement. This means that after an effort of strict conservation activity in particular cultural realms will again be directed toward the development of unique and original forms. This contribution to the harmony of all cultures will even give rise to a new, artful folklore—realized, perhaps, with live-electronic instruments and God alone knows what other technical equipment (in this connection “artful” for once really means “made with art”).

Such individual styles, consciously formed and shaped out of the junction of the most remarkable mutual influences of all historical and freely invented possibilities, will expand the world of musical forms and rites in

an entirely new way. In selected compositions of the past ten years (for example, my own work, *Telemusik*, *Hymnen*, *Kurzwellen*, *Spiral*, *Mantra*, *Stimmung*, etc.) one has an intimation of what manner of symbiotic forms these will be.

Interesting in this respect is the reaction of several contemporary Japanese composers to a work like *Telemusik*, which I composed on commission from the NHK-Studio (Tokyo) in Japan in 1966. This work integrates different Japanese musical styles, as well of elements of folklore from many other societies, into one unified work of concrete and electronic music. In fact, several works were composed in Japan in connection with the performance of *Telemusik*, and composers who had hitherto solely imitated or reworked so-called avant-garde European music of the fifties now combined European and Japanese instruments and attempted to create a stylistic symbiosis of modern European and ancient Japanese music.

For someone who is interested not only in the culture of the somewhat narrow region in which he lives and moves, but who has also discovered the planetary being in himself; someone whose culture is that of the entire earth, and in whom a sense of responsibility for the future of humanity has awakened; for such as these, a concern for the music of other cultures will be no hobby, but rather a condition necessary to understanding other people better, thus to awaken the *whole* of one's being, and to "cultivate" it.

Music is the medium which touches man most deeply and which can bring the rarest resonances in him into harmony. Our Central European culture has need of a general musical sensitization—now more than ever. The full significance of this will only be recognized in several centuries, when the crisis of the "religion of science" is on the wane and a time has come in which the musical in humanity—the resonance of all rhythms in mankind and their harmonization through music—echoes through all culture.

For a long time to come those of musical imagination will have to accommodate themselves to being truly "in the underground"; they keep alive the lifegiving currents under the surface.