

FREITAG (FRIDAY) – The World Theatre of Karlheinz Stockhausen

(Transcription of the spoken text in the WDR film about **FREITAG aus LICHT** produced in 1996.)

1st film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: Light is God's power, God's energy, God's electricity. What applies to the entire cosmos is what forms music so that one day it will mean something to all people.

There are certain forms about which I as a musician only have a slight notion: how a galaxy is constructed or a solar system, with all these unbelievably inventive, wonderful proportions of rotation speeds, of relationships, masses, differences in matter, etc. As a musician, one doesn't even get close to such fantastic concepts, but rather one has small models that are a bit similar to the large model of the universe, or our solar system or, for example, a certain fauna in a region of the planet. As a musician, one does this with air vibrations; so I am just a craftsman who works on forming air vibrations.

Before LICHT, I spent three years composing SIRIUS. The contents of SIRIUS are the year, the twelve months of the year with the twelve signs of the Zodiac, the four seasons; and after SIRIUS I wanted to compose the week and create a work for each weekday.

2nd film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: During this work, I had the idea not just to compose one part, but rather a large work with the seven days of the week: I named the first work "JAHRESLAUF aus LICHT" (COURSE OF THE YEARS from LIGHT), that is, "HIKARI" (that was the title chosen by the Japanese, followed by the subtitle "JAHRESLAUF").

I constantly inwardly hear music, also strange music, and I often don't even know how to produce it. There are many things that one hears inwardly without knowing how one could use it. Then I think I cannot realise that with a horn or a bassoon or with a loudspeaker, because it is something completely different; one doesn't know how. And then what is strange is translated, so to speak, translated back, simplified, in order to be realisable with the means of the time in which I live, and with classical instruments. I even help introduce new sound sources into music that have not yet been used for that purpose.

3rd film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: But rather while working, one constantly discovers new things, and that is then the impetus for future experiments.

4th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: This way, the LICHT cycle developed very gradually: **DONNERSTAG (THURSDAY) aus LICHT, SAMSTAG (SATURDAY) aus LICHT, MONTAG (MONDAY) aus LICHT, DIENSTAG (TUESDAY) aus LICHT**, then **FREITAG (FRIDAY) aus LICHT**, the temptation of *Eve* by *Lucifer*.

There is a reason for the sequence in which I composed the individual days. The basic idea was that there are three main figures in LICHT, namely *Michael*, the cosmo-creator of our local universe and my master and teacher, then *Eva* as the spirit responsible for the living beings on many inhabited planets, and *Lucifer* as the (no longer responsible) navigator of our small area of the local universe.

5th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: FREITAG basically consists of three musical layers: one is pure electronic music, which can constantly be heard during the two acts, 145 minutes of electronic music. Then there are the so-called *Realszenen (real scenes)* on the stage: ten scenes in which *Eva* and *Ludon* encounter each other. In the name, one hears that it has something to do with *Lucifer*. He attempts to convince her to join with his son *Kaino* and conceive a child, which would then help speed up evolution. He says this very cryptically, but she understands and answers: "Das geht gar nicht." ("That is not at all possible.")

6th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: The third layer consists of those "transreal" parts that I call the *Tonszenen (tone scenes)*. The tone scenes belong to the twelve couples.

7th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: This theme of FREITAG aus LICHT is about twelve loving couples. The first is a man and a woman, the second a cat and a dog, the third a typewriter and a copy machine, the fourth a race driver and a race car, and so on. In each relationship of the partners named, all of whom are portrayed by dancers in stage objects, one clearly senses that the objects have human traits, or the humans have traits of the named objects.

8th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: The music is composed accordingly. For each couple there is a woman's and a man's voice, first sung, but then transformed using vocoders and other electronic means, or modulated with sounds and tones of the named objects.

9th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: And when the couples exchange partners, extreme, bizarre hybrid couples emerge. They look and sound very curious.

During two years of work in the studio, I realised a 24-channel electronic tape. Each channel is transmitted to one of the 12 x 2 dancers on headphones. They then move perfectly synchronously with the music projected by the 12 pairs of loudspeakers. One experiences the 24-part polyphony of transient

beings. Whatever these beings produce is, as I call it, *transreal*, i.e. stranger than surreal, it is spook music.

10th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: One can only arrive at the *transreal* if one approaches the borders of the rational. Most people think whatever is irrational is not reasonable or not rational enough. But that is a misunderstanding. Many people also say that the mystical only interests those who are not rational enough or not reasonable enough, but that again is a misunderstanding. Not until one approaches the limits of the thinkable and what can be rationally explained – and these limits are constantly moved forward by new efforts of thought – does one feel what lies beyond the rational. That is the mystical area, and the fact that it exists is the most important thing for me as a musician. Everything rational serves to shed more and more light on what I don't know and what I haven't yet tried out. But I know exactly that it is what I do not understand, not only in this life but also in unlimited time, and what fascinates me the most and what I call wonderful is the much larger and decisive area that inspires me to work rationally in the first place.

11th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: EXAMEN (EXAMINATIONS) is life, my life, and I think the life of every human on this planet. EXAMEN is one part of the first day of LICHT, and this part is called **DONNERSTAG (THURSDAY) aus LICHT**. Why Thursday? Thursday is the day of learning. The human being learns in examinations, and as I see it, he learns through music above all. The main character is *Michael*. *Michael* is a singer, an instrumentalist and a dancer. So I experience the threefold *Michael* in three people, in three arts and in three forms of experience: once concretely as a human, once as a spiritual being that can also fly, that is no longer bound to the laws of gravity or to a limitation of space or time, and once as a being who is invisible but present.

12th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: SAMSTAG (SATURDAY) is the day of death and of resurrection, in which *Lucifer* plays the leading role. He is a comical spirit who always manifests himself, of course on this planet as well, as a human being. *Lucifer* is, as he says, against ascent by way of death, and that is *Lucifer's* central theme as the antagonist of *Michael*. *Michael* is the way he is for the process of learning and for humans, and he possesses endless love, while *Lucifer* finds it repulsive that these half-animal, half-angel creatures, completely torn between the two, were created at all. *Lucifer*, who now also rules on SAMSTAG, does not want human music. He says it is banal and primitive.

13th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: MONTAG (MONDAY), the day of birth, festival of women, festival of children. Water is the main element, and one experiences all the stages of its transformation: ocean, rain, hail, steaming ice, steam collected in vials. Sand is watered with purified water and grass grows. Finally, water can be seen

in glass-like artworks: running, dripping, gurgling water. Water in nature and finally as an artistic experience: MONTAG.

14th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: In order for me to even begin composing, it is always necessary for me to be fascinated by something new to me that I want to try out. I want to know how it sounds, if it works. That is truly the most important thing.

15th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: Although some of the interpreters have been experts on their instruments for thirty years, they had to relearn their instruments to a certain extent, because I have used very specific key combinations, e.g. on the flute or the basset horn, that make micro-scales possible which are both very difficult to play and to notate.

16th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: I really want people to have the possibility to be surrounded by the interpreters – as at the World Fair in the spherical auditorium – to be able to feel them very closely. In each opera of LICHT the interpreters appear and move through the audience. In **DIENSTAG aus LICHT** twelve musicians are very close to the listeners. I devised paths, vertical ones from the back to the front, and horizontal ones from left to right and from right to left, so that the playing and singing musicians and those carrying percussion instruments or synthesizers can move around and be experienced both in close proximity and from various distances, thus making it possible to really hear the space.

17th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: DIENSTAG, the day of conflict – of war, one could also say – between *Luciferists* and *Michaelists*. In the first act of JAHRESLAUF there is a time conflict. With his temptations, *Lucifer* tries to stop the course of the year, the passing of time, four times, and that is actually his main intent. And each time, *Michael's* energetic urging causes time to resume, and evolution continues. That is the theme of the first act. The second act is the physical INVASION and the physical conflict with EXPLOSIONS.

18th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: For every part of LICHT, I sketched, developed spaces, and I hope that someday a completely different architecture of LICHT will be realised. One must live in a musical sound-landscape as a perceiver in order to truly have a direct and much closer relationship to music.

19th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: Of course I imagine an auditorium that is large enough so that 300-400 people can move around, go to the individual objects, observe them close up, and listen to what the interpreters sing and play. In Leipzig there is a balcony in the auditorium of the Opera House, where I was able to place a choir

last time, and on the right side too. But this time it has been forbidden for performance technical reasons; I cannot use the balcony at all, because I've been told: "We will forfeit too many seats, we must sell all seats if possible." Then come the economical reasons. I wanted the audience to experience everything in the form of an ascending pyramid, going upwards: the couples one, two, three, and four on the left up to the front next to the orchestra pit (I don't use the orchestra pit), then couple five already rising upwards, six and seven on the zenith of the stage, eight, nine, ten, eleven, and twelve distributed from the front to the back far right behind the audience, so that one sees and hears from all directions.

20th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: One must drastically reduce what one imagines: The stage is up at the front, and everything must happen there, because the hoists are there, and that is where a moon that comes down from above is supposed to move, revolve, and a rocket is to circle it.

21st film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: Everything we experience is always an unbelievable limitation in comparison with our imagination, and that is the law of life. It is also the purpose of life to develop spiritual freedom out of what the limitation forces upon us, and to inwardly create new worlds.

22nd film excerpt (rehearsal)

Another person: Because of the electronic music, we now use time codes very much, and otherwise we work with notation. So a lot has changed, and the large number of events, which cause the work to become fuller as it progresses, is the main difficulty of the work. One new sound scene after another is added and the old ones remain, that is, they disappear, they return and then another is added. There are hours, minutes, seconds and even tenths of seconds, and that is perhaps the only way to perform the work – otherwise it wouldn't be possible. One cannot consult any notation. The tones are long, lasting several minutes, and they cannot be determined. So the time code is vitally important.

23rd film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: In **FREITAG aus LICHT** *Ludon* appears, a wonderful, black ruler, a pure and good singer, very noble. He really wants to achieve a union between his clan and *Eve*, who apparently has highly gifted children, because he hopes that this will lead to great progress in development.

24th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: First she says: "Das geht gar nicht." ("That is not at all possible.") And then another encounter follows later. Both agree to introduce each other to their children. *Eva* brings a childrens' orchestra – and in Leipzig that will be the children's orchestra of the *Johann Sebastian Bach Music School*, a very lively and gifted children's orchestra, with which I have already rehearsed very much. These children play for the children that *Ludon* brings along. He brought a children's choir, and the children also play small percussion instruments. The children in the children's orchestra look very

European, like children who play European instruments. The choir children look wilder, more colourful, and are very temperamental.

25th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Nicholas Isherwood: I heard Stockhausen's music for the first time when I was twelve years old. It was KONTAKTE for electronic music and instruments, and I immediately found it fantastic. He's always inventing something new. One time, for example, he rang me up quite early on a Sunday morning. He asked: "Can you whistle?" I replied: "Yes (whistles) yes, I can." Stockhausen answered: "Thank you." Later I received the score and there was a whole line of whistling. And this simultaneous singing, conducting and playing, all by memory, this is new for Europe. Normally, there is a conductor who conducts, and opera singers who sing and play. The singers follow the conductor, but no one has to do everything. But Stockhausen understands his interpreters very well, and he knows what he can do, what he can allow himself, and it is always possible, that is, it is difficult, but we always manage it.

26th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: The scenes of the objects that join in, the hybrids, continue on, and the moment in which all 12 are present, the partner exchange between the twelve couples begins, which in turn become more and more curious. The duets develop further between objects and humans and animals and humans. Then comes *Evas REUE* (Eve's REPENTANCE), a lyrical scene in which the soprano *Eve* is alone – the two female companions remain behind her at a distance – and she sings *Eve's REPENTANCE* in a very stylised way as a solo with wonderfully composed movements.

27th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: After a raven and a violin have mated as the twelfth couple and the nest has begun a new relationship with the bow of the violin, *Eve's* two female companions enter the stage again, but dressed completely differently as *Elu* and *Lufa*. They play a duet as two women who converse about the latest news using their instruments, only with tones, not with words. Then the flautist calls to all twenty-four beings, who are staring at the two of them and don't comprehend what this now means: "Do you all repent?" and then they all yell: "Yes, we repent!" And suddenly all the lights go out. Everyone disappears as though by magic.

28th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: In the meantime, the hybrid children, six couples, have united and, as 12 choir singers, 6 women's and 6 men's voices, turn around in a large spiral going upwards until they are no longer visible. For this part, I composed a *Choir Spiral*. That is the end of **FREITAG aus LICHT**.

29th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Choir singer: Each of the individual couples sings a different pitch, notated pitches, sustaining them over a lengthy period of time. Perhaps you heard: These are individual vocal glissandi, sometimes also intervals,

so that altogether a mixture, a sort of cluster emerges, sound-cluster. Of course we also have the possibility to take rests to breathe, because no one can sustain this tone for three-quarters of an hour, so here and there individual tones of the cluster are missing. But the mixture is what is important.

30th film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: I have been working with a so-called *super formula* since 1977. The super formula is like the skeleton of a large work, which in the end may last twenty-four hours or longer. I determined the durations back then, and planned the tone forms with all their characteristics, which are then expanded in the individual parts of LICHT.

I feel that the pitches and intervals of the super formula are actually the characters, and that the people who realise the pitches portray them. So the true actors in the entire work of LICHT are actually the pitches and durations, the intensities and the colours, and the tone-forms of the super formula. It is difficult to explain to people that I, as a musician, see pitches like people and experience them as such while composing.

31st film excerpt (rehearsal)

Stockhausen: And thus, a score is actually a world that acts like it's asleep, as though it were dead, and then it is enlivened by an interpretation. It is then alive for a moment, and afterwards it is gone again. That is actually my main experience: The real world, these formulae, these codes are similar to genetic codes, or to the codes of all plants, animals, crystals and human lives. This always applies for a particular time period, a relatively short period, during which the material unifies and personifies this. And then we have the multifarious living beings, as they appear to our eyes. But behind them are these timeless scores, these composed qualities.