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SURPASSING IMPROVISATION? Stockhausen's concept of intuitive music *

Abstract: In 1968 Karlheinz Stockhausen invented the concept of intuitive music, which was designed to free music from the obstacles of 'preformed material' (i.e., clichés rooted in some existing styles) and connect it to the vibrations of 'universal consciousness'. However, Stockhausen's intuitive music never transcended the borders of improvisation. It could best be described as controlled improvisation (within the domain of serialist music), facing all the problems common to this species of improvisation. Stockhausen's persistent efforts to stress the superiority of his intuitive music to all kinds of improvisation (as well as connecting the identity of the contents of his consciousness with divine and 'universal' ones) were only ideologically motivated and never meant to be elaborated in precise musical terms.

Keywords: Stockhausen, improvisation, serialism, cliché, style, intuitive music.

From 1968–1970, Karlheinz Stockhausen composed two textual pieces¹ of 'intuitive music': *Aus den Sieben Tagen* and *Für kommende Zeiten*.² He wrote the first piece in just a few days (7–10 May 1968).

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¹ Even Stockhausen himself was uncertain about defining these works. He described *Aus den Sieben Tagen* as 'textual compositions', and for the pieces from *Für kommende Zeiten* he used a less ambitious title – 'texts'. In this article, we use the term textual pieces, which seems most appropriate, because it does not refer to composing as the creating and fixing of a certain musical course.

² One performance of the piece *Musik für ein Haus* (on September 1st 1968), indicative of Stockhausen's influence, is also ranked within the domain of intuitive music (Cf. Martin Iddon, 'The Haus That Karlheinz Built: Composition, Authority, and the 1968 Darmstadt Ferienkurse', *The Musical quarterly*, Vol. 1987, Nr. 1, 2004, 106). By 1974, Stockhausen had written several other textual pieces, such as *Ylem*, and the first three parts of *Herbstmusik*. Besides, in an attempt to maximize the share of 'intuitively' composed works within his own opus he also, quite groundlessly, associated some other compositions with the concept of 'intuitive music'. This, above all, refers to *Prozession* and *Kurzwellen* (Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Ich halte dann den Finger vor die Lippen...' /Gespräch mit Michael Kurtz am 22. September 1980/, in: *Texte zur Musik 1977–1984. Band 6: Interpretation*, Köln, Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, 1989, 398; Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Kurzwellen für sechs Spieler /1968/', in: *Texte zur Musik 1963–1970. Band 3: Einführungen und Projekte. Kurse, Sendungen, Standpunkte, Nebennoten*, Köln, Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, 1971, 114), but also to *Hymnen*. Thus, in August 1968, on the cover of the LP record of the latter work, he wrote a typical instruction: 'Gradually accelerate the stream of your intuition [*Beschleunige zunehmend den Strom deiner Intuition*]' (Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Hymnen. Elektronische und Konkrete Musik mit Solisten /geschrieben im November 1967, ergänzt 1969/', in: *Texte zur Musik 1963–1970. Band 3: Einführungen und Projekte. Kurse, Sendungen, Standpunkte, Nebennoten*, Köln, Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg,

The textual pieces contained within the second work, however, he wrote during a three-year period, finishing the last of them, *Ceylon*, at the same time as his composition *Mantra*, in which he composed using 'formulas', practically discarding the ambitious concept of intuitive music. The concept of intuitive music was based on four principles:

- 1) Intuitive music is new music – never heard or created before – because it is determined exclusively by 'universal consciousness', which, basically, any man can reach (provided he is sufficiently spiritually exalted);
- 2) Intuitive music is not attached to any style, or period; it flows from the inner (sacral) regions of the human spirit, not from the outside (profane) regions of planet Earth;
- 3) There are no compositions of intuitive music *stricto sensu*; there are only textual pieces, specific guidelines for performers, who, while playing, should bring themselves and the audience to the highest spheres of 'universal consciousness';
- 4) Intuitive music, eventually, cancels the difference between the composer and performer; it promotes the members of the performing ensemble as equal participants in the spontaneous creative act, which, therefore, becomes collective. Stockhausen, who always had difficulties accepting this ultimate consequence of intuitive music, attempted to reserve for himself, as the author of textual pieces, the role of the guide or guru, who inspires, enlightens and directs all members of performing ensemble.

Although the concept of intuitive music was intended to be totally different from the previous concept of polyphonic world music, there was, still, a certain continuity.³ Namely, Stockhausen planned that intuitive music – as well as polyphonic world music – should be performed by four or five players with different musical *backgrounds*.⁴ The two remaining principles of polyphonic world music, however, he explicitly discarded, because they were indiscriminating towards practice, which seriously threatened his project: improvisation. Therefore, the categories on which improvisation was based – styles, together with

1971, 99). Since Stockhausen himself never included *Musik für ein Haus* among his works (nor organized a new performance), and since *Ylem* and *Herbstmusik* were not nearly as influential as *Aus den Sieben Tagen* and *Für kommende Zeiten*, we did not take this textual piece into consideration.

³ On the basic principles of the concept of polyphonic world music, see: Dragana Jeremić-Molnar and Aleksandar Molnar, 'Echoes of Modernism in Rock Music of the Late Sixties and Early Seventies. The Influence of Karlheinz Stockhausen on Early Works of the German Group *Can*', in: Dejan Despić and Melita Milin (eds), *Rethinking Musical Modernism*, Belgrade, Musicological Institute, 2008, 271–282.

⁴ In practice, this rule was broken from the very beginning: at the premiere performance of the first textual piece, *Musik für ein Haus*, there were twelve performers, with very similar musical *backgrounds*.

times and regions – had to be branded as dangerous to music which aspires to be free, ‘decisively new’, and which, within this freedom, intuitively reaches toward the ‘universal consciousness’. The precarious balance between ‘determinism and indeterminism’, established within the context of polyphonic world music, was destroyed by the ‘nearly blank page’⁵ that was filled by poetic instructions instead of notes, which guided the intuitive musical meditation of performers and listeners. Stockhausen’s instructions for ‘discovering intuitive music’ were, in that way, heterogeneous. Generally, they could be any of the following:

- describing musical events and processes in a more or less concrete way (‘extremely long quiet sounds’, ‘abrupt ending’, etc.);
- determining relationships between performers during the performance of musical events and processes (‘sing / play as parallel with the others as possible’);
- suggesting musical events or processes through interpretative techniques (‘play single sounds with such dedication until you feel the warmth radiating from you’);
- fundamentally useless instructions, imposing on performers the obligation to ‘operationalize’ them (‘try to sing *synchronously* with others, without visual signs, / play more and more *attacca*’);
- utterly senseless (‘play a vibration in the rhythm of your atoms’).⁶

Stockhausen himself insisted that performances of intuitive music – if the performers truly follow their intuition – must differ one from another, and that the ensemble which performs the same textual piece several times, must always play it differently.⁷ Paradoxically, these expectations pointed to the importance of text, as the only guarantee of continuity between performances of *one* textual piece, as well as the balance of interpretation of what the composer originally designed as *one* intuitive spiritual

⁵ Jean-Claude Eloy: ‘Stockhausen or the Metamorphosis of Creative Vitality’. Determinism and Indeterminism Throughout His Work’, www.stockhausen.org/Eloy-Stock%20English%20Full.pdf, 1997, 11.

⁶ For similar typology, see: Carl Bergström-Nielsen, *Fixing / Circumscribing / Suggesting / Evoking. An Analysis of Stockhausen's Text Pieces*, <http://vbn.aau.dk/fbspretrieve/11964099/FCSE.pdf>, 2006, 6.

⁷ ‘No, I do not want to repeat anything. [...] Once you are on the track to follow intuition, you even try to abandon what you have learned [such as] the features of the repetition, the mechanisms of the reproduction. Certainly, a new realization would be completely different’. (Karlheinz Stockhausen, ‘Questions and Answers on Intuitive Music’, www.stockhausen.org/intuitive_music.html, 1971)

process. Therefore, the cohesion of all performances of one work depended mostly on the concentration of 'useful' instructions – those which do not allow different interpretations.⁸

The text for the play 'Litanei' (from *Aus den sieben Tagen*), however useless, is still interesting, because it reveals Stockhausen's universal pattern of creating 'intuitive music':⁹

'Not to create *my own* music, but merely to transmit oscillations which I receive; to function as a translator, to be a radio receiver. When I composed rightfully, in the most rightful state, *I myself* did not exist any more. And now I attempt to reach the next level. I try to connect You, the performer, to the streams which flow through me, to which I am connected. I am not trying to make You a composer in the old sense, but to acquire quite a new kind of confidence in Your abilities: that You should, through me, be connected to the inexhaustible stream which flows through us in [the] form of music vibrations.'¹⁰

These 'music vibrations' Stockhausen also, more ambitiously, called the 'archetypes of music processes, each leading to quite unique music events'.¹¹ Moreover, he formulated a new task for any composer attempting to come to grips with the archetypes of intuitive music:

'In years to come I must investigate whether, for example, one specific instruction that I write, leads to one, specific, archetypal music, in comparison with some other instruction. How can we discern

⁸ Thus, the performers decided that the first textual pieces in both works ('Richtige Dauern' and 'Übereinstimmung') allow for the least doubts in performance, and therefore, have the highest level of similarity in different performances (which means that the performances could be sensibly termed the *performances of a certain textual piece*). Conversely, instructions for interpretation of the textual piece 'Intensität', predetermined dramatic differences between performances. It was also noted that the textual pieces which were compiled in *Für kommende Zeiten* are more fixed than those in the first part (Cf. Carl Bergström-Nielsen, op. cit., 5–6), and that they reflect Stockhausen's increasing worry about their identity and the possibilities for uniform performances.

⁹ This induced Michael Kurtz to remark rightfully that 'Litanei' (as well as 'Ankunft') are not really textual pieces, but theoretical manifestations of Stockhausen's concept of 'intuitive music', while 'Oben' and 'Unten' could best be described as improvised theatrical plays. Cf. Michael Kurtz, *Stockhausen. A Biography*, London, Faber & Faber, 1988, 161.

¹⁰ 'Daß ich nicht MEINE Musik mache, sondern die Schwingungen übertrage, die ich auffange; daß ich wie ein Übersetzer funktioniere, ein Radioapparat bin. Wenn ich richtig, in der richtigen Verfassung komponierte, existierte ich SELBST nicht mehr. Nun versuche ich, die nächste Stufe zu erreichen. Ich versuche, Dich, den Spieler, an die Ströme anzuschließen, die durch mich fließen, an die ich angeschlossen bin. Ich versuche nicht, Dich zum Komponisten im alten Sinne zu machen, sondern ein ganz neues Vertrauen in Deine Fähigkeiten zu gewinnen: daß Du durch mich angeschlossen wirst an die unerschöpfliche Quelle, die sich in musikalischen Schwingungen durch uns ergießt': Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Litanei (Aus den Sieben Tagen)', in: *Texte zur Musik 1963–1970. Band 3: Einführungen und Projekte. Kurse, Sendungen, Standpunkte, Nebennoten*, Köln, Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, 1971, 365.

¹¹ 'Archetypen musikalischer Prozesse, von denen jeder zu ganz eigenen musikalischen Geschehenissen führt': Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Aus den sieben Tagen (31 Juli 1969)', op. cit., 124.

processes for governing intuitive music; how, by one specific process instruction, a group of musicians could be brought into a state in which they would play a certain type of music, which quite characteristically develops into unlimited future; how many archetypal musical processes we can reveal, formulate, or, better yet, stimulate; those questions are essential for advanced composing.¹²

We can conclude that the task of the composer, through dedicated and zealous investigation, is to discover super-personal 'archetypes' – that is, in-depth relationships between initial philosophemes ('instructions') and their musical 'oscillations', together with the whole 'genetic development', which would, by internal logic, stretch indefinitely 'into unlimited future'.

It is clear that intuitive music was not intended to be just another example of applying aleatoric technique in the composing process; it should have radicalized the role of music in communication with the 'other side' (through 'universal consciousness'). Such an ambitious aim contributed to the popularity of intuitive music, but at the same time, exposed it to a great danger. Namely, the whole concept was based on the assumption of the existence of 'universal consciousness', and its 'translatability', into (intuitive) music. In order that different performances of one textual piece could possibly be different, (the spiritually exalted) performers and listeners had to become conscious of a certain content of the 'universal consciousness', (which could through precisely determined vibrations be more or less evenly and consistently translated into musical substance).

The whole concept of intuitive music was based on the axiom that the performers and listeners must follow the path which Stockhausen first trod in comprehending the contents of 'universal consciousness', and, therefore, each performance of some textual piece represents a form of musical meditation, through which, one approximation of these contents (in written poetic instructions) is 'translated' into another (more or less similar musical solution). This is, undoubtedly, the central ideology of intuitive music, often disregarded by many of Stockhausen's followers and promoters, while pointing out his merits in opening new perspectives for group 'free music-making', which – in addition to the composer's and performer's segments – deserves thorough investigation.

¹² 'Ich muß in den nächsten Jahren forschen, ob zum Beispiel eine bestimmte Instruktion, die ich schreibe, zu einer spezifisch archetypischen Musik führt, verglichen mit einer anderen Instruktion. Wie können wir Prozeß-Steuerungen für intuitive Musik finden; wie kann man mit einer bestimmten Prozeßanweisung eine Gruppe von Musikern in einen Zustand versetzen, in dem sie eine bestimmte Art von Musik hervorbringen, die sich ganz charakteristisch genetisch entwickelt bis in unbegrenzte Zukunft hinein; wie viele archetypischen musikalischen Prozesse können wir entdecken, formulieren, oder besser stimulieren: das sind wesentliche Fragen für das fortschrittliche Komponieren': Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Interview II (durch Dr. Hanspeter Krellmann, 1969)', op. cit., 325.

One of the most famous episodes in Stockhausen's life, also important to his work, is the 'fatal' Sunday in May 1968, during which Satprem's (Bernard Enginger) book *Sri Aurobindo or the Adventure of Consciousness* raised him from a depressive state (manifested through insomnia, starvation and even suicidal thoughts) following the departure of his wife, Mary Bauermeister. From that book Stockhausen learned about Aurobindo's theory of the relationship between sounds (vibrations) and different levels of consciousness. According to Aurobindo's theory, poetry helps to create 'holes' in men's consciousness, through which divine inspiration can enter; music is the medium through which the divine inspiration transfers man into higher spheres, where cosmic vibrations clearly resound. 'Identifying' himself with the Indian guru, Stockhausen believed that he possessed the occult knowledge which enabled him to create such textual pieces, that could function as a door into the 'universal consciousness'. Moreover, by practicing principles of meditative music (in which a man should 'lose himself', 'surpass', 'raise to divinity'), he experienced a changed relationship with reality: the world seemed to him as 'new', because the web of the functional relationships between outside objects was destroyed, and the objects themselves started pointing to something else,¹³ that is, to a 'higher reality'.

The title *Aus den sieben Tagen* refers to the seven days in May when Stockhausen hovered between life and death, surviving only by denying that which was hovering and – with Aurobindo's invaluable help – by transforming himself into a 'higher being', that is, reaching the 'universal consciousness'. Transformed Stockhausen addressed the whole of humanity, inviting them to follow him, in exactly the same way that he joined Aurobindo. The works *Aus den Sieben Tagen* and *Für kommende Zeiten* comprised, therefore, the textual pieces, with emancipating potential which should have been much greater than the potential of *Stimmung*, composed at the beginning of 1968. Through these two works, which were also meant to represent the 'fast flying machines towards cosmic and divine', as he had also planned for *Stimmung*, Stockhausen intended to incite people (performers and listeners) to take part in a kind of worship (devoid of 'personal theology'), to establish between themselves the true *Unio mystica* and become 'higher beings' (mature enough for a new level of – cosmic – existence).

Following not only Sri Aurobindo, but the universal mystical pattern of continuation of apophysis and ecstasy,¹⁴ Stockhausen demanded that both the performers and listeners of intuitive music stop thinking, and not allow 'the flow of pictures [keine Bilder in sich aufkommenlassen]', in order to

¹³ For more details about this cf. Marcel Poorthuis, 'Minimal music as exotism' *Radio Belgrade, Third Programme*, 1984, Nr. 60, 330–331.

¹⁴ Thomas Ulrich, *Neue Musik aus religiösem Geist. Theologisches Denken im Werk von Karlheinz Stockhausen und John Cage*, Saarbrücken: PFAU-Verlag, 2007, 84 et passim.

'become empty [ganz leer]' and make their spirit susceptible to the authentic contents of 'universal consciousness [Universalbewußtsein]', and 'slow sinking into the subconscious [langsam hinuntersteigen in das Unterbewußtsein]'.¹⁵ This delving into the subconscious is accompanied by 'tuning' ('Einstimmung'), that is, adjusting to the common mood, which is not 'arbitrary or just negative – which means that it does not exclude all musical thinking in a certain direction – and is always determined by some of the texts which I wrote, and which provoke the intuitive in a precisely determined way'.¹⁶ Intuitive music should, therefore, be music which (beforehand, 'emptied') performers (and afterwards, listeners) 'reveal', following Stockhausen's instructions (inspired by teachings of Sri Aurobindo).

By the mid-1960s, Stockhausen began to induce his fellow musicians to listen and react to each other. He did this because he realized how dependent on them he was, on the plane of 'revealing' composing. Notwithstanding his long-standing habit of praising the originality of his newfound form of processualism, Stockhausen felt that he had to take a stand regarding the long and rich tradition of *improvising*, which he himself practised as a pianist,¹⁷ and which in his time culminated in free jazz,¹⁸ especially since in the 1959 text 'Musik und Graphik' he stated that improvisation in modern music

¹⁵ Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Interview I (durch Peter Bockelmann, 2. Juli 1968)', in: *Texte zur Musik 1963–1970. Band 3: Einführungen und Projekte. Kurse, Sendungen, Standpunkte, Nebennoten*, Köln, Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, 1971, 314.

¹⁶ '[...] aber nicht eine beliebige oder nur negative – daß heißt, alles musikalische Denken in bestimmten Richtungen ausschließende – [ist], sondern sie ist jeweils konzentriert durch einen von mir geschriebenen Text der das Intuitive in ganz bestimmter Weiße herausfordert': Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'AUS DEN SIEBEN TAGEN (31. Juli 1969)', in: *Texte zur Musik 1963–1970. Band 3: Einführungen und Projekte. Kurse, Sendungen, Standpunkte, Nebennoten*, Köln, Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, 1971, 123–124.

¹⁷ About the experience of improvising, Stockhausen wrote: 'From 1947 until 1951 I played almost every night in clubs and bars in the city of Cologne, or sometimes even in the afternoons in cafes to make a living. And towards the end of my studies, in 1950, a magician came to the student's dormitory and he asked me to improvise, because I was rather famous in the city of Cologne amongst the students and younger musicians for improvisation, and I improvised for him and then he accepted my collaboration. We traveled through all of Germany, and he performed his magic and I played the piano, improvising according to his different tricks.' (David Paul, 'Karlheinz Stockhausen', *Seconds*, 1997, Nr. 44, http://www.stockhausen.org/stockhausen%20by_david_paul.html.) In a conversation with the jazz historian from Köln, Bernd Hoffmann, Stockhausen stated that as a student he practiced various styles of improvisation, from *Boogie Woogie* to *Be-bop*: 'I preferred playing *Bebop*, because it was quite abstract, because it was fast and very precise [Am liebsten habe ich *Bebop* gespielt, weil das ganz abstrakt war, sehr schnell ging und sehr punktuell]' (Markus Heuger, 'Stockhausen goes to town – Der öffentliche Stockhausen', *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 1998, Nr. 4: 10–15, <http://www.markusheuger.de/theory/stocktown.html>). From the period of Stockhausen's work on the composition *Mikrophonie*, remains the testimony of his assistant, Hugh Davies, who heard him play *Lil Darling*, *Summertime* and *Tea for Two* on the piano 'in a rather lively style, which was sometimes reminiscent of George Shearing, and rhythmically very interesting [in einem ziemlich flotten Stil, erinnert manchmal ein bißchen an George Shearing, rhythmisch ganz interessant]' (Ibid.).

¹⁸ Stockhausen admitted, however, that free jazz was relevant for him and his musicians in so far as it leads individual players to join the collective creative process (Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Towards a Cosmic Music*, Longmead, Shaftesbury, Dorset, Element Books, 1989, 13).

increasingly deteriorates, and 'what we, today, still – for example, in jazz – call improvisation, hardly represents spontaneous discovering of music ideas, but, much more, reproduction of clichés learned by heart'.¹⁹ The composer, complained Stockhausen, has become 'a clerk at the writing table',²⁰ who, as in the case of Cage, emancipates the graphic from the acoustic to the extreme, making the 'picture become autonomous'.²¹ At the time, Stockhausen already saw the possibility of mediating between notation and sound in 'performance instructions':

[Gottfried Michael] Koenig once told me about a plan to write a piece for a small ensemble – ideally, a string quartet – with a score that should not include notes, but only playing instructions. It was meant to explain the structure of the piece – in general, as well as in detail; in everything else, it should define the actions, which refer to the reactions of performers to one another, not to individual notes or figures.²²

By the end of 1960's, Stockhausen developed this idea into the conclusive concept of intuitive music. It was meant to be emancipated from the tradition of improvisation, thanks to Aurobindo's doctrine about the transformation of man into a 'higher being', which Stockhausen brought to the extreme, stating that he reached the mystical revelation that he, actually, was not from planet Earth, but from the star Sirius.

Stockhausen tried to explain the difference between intuitive and improvised music as follows: 'We learn from tradition that the moments of [a] composer's intuitive ecstasy have always been considered crucial. From the intellectual standpoint, according to traditional standards, that is 'indeterminism'. But, from the viewpoint of intuition, which is also human experience, although rarely used today, the result is, again, a very specific 'determined' music. We must ask ourselves, which force in man determines music primarily, intellectual or intuitive? [...]

¹⁹ 'Was man heute noch – zum Beispiel im Jazz – Improvisation nennt, ist kaum noch spontane Erfindung musikalischer Gedanken, vielmehr Reproduktion auswendig gelernter Klischees': Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Musik und Graphik (1959)', in: *Texte zu elektronischen und instrumentalen Musik. Band 1: Aufsätze 1952–1962 zur Theorie des Komponierens*, Köln, Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, 1963, 176. In jazz and in pop music, everything is based on interpretation techniques, which have no correlates in musical score; moreover, from the written score one could not play what has been imagined. (Ibid., 184).

²⁰ Ibid., 176.

²¹ Ibid., 182.

²² 'Berrichtete mir einmal von dem Plan, für ein kleines Ensemble – am besten Streichquartett – ein Stück zu schreiben, dessen Partitur keine Noten enthält, sondern lediglich die Spielanweisung. Es sollte die *Struktur* des Stücks erläutert werden – im großen wie im Detail; im übrigen wären Aktionen zu definieren, die die Reaktionen der Spieler aufeinander betreffen, nicht einzelne Töne oder Figuren.' Ibid., 184–185.

My music [...] is unconditionally oriented towards intuitive performers, who are able to work as a group. That is something decisively new. That cannot be compared to some traditional string quartet, because the latter plays rationally determined music. Earlier examples, which could be found as precedents of my work, exist only in free jazz and other traditions, for example, in Indian music. In those traditions, there are always rules, patterns, according to which one “improvises”. A group of performers who play purely intuitively is something new in *all* traditions. Intuitive music is more than improvisation. It surpasses improvisation.²³

Intuitive music, therefore, is not music based on improvisation: improvisation is always applied within the framework of a certain style (which implicates ‘rules, patterns’, etc.), while intuitive music is neither subject to style, nor any other (rhythmical, melodious or harmonious) limits. Thus, intuitive music cannot be the ‘polyphony of styles, times and regions’, because it would only accumulate limitations, instead of finding emancipation from them. However, this does not mean that intuitive music is ‘undetermined’. On the contrary, it is entirely ‘determined’, by vibrations which come from the ‘universal consciousness’, and which only the initiated can feel and transform into music.²⁴ Besides, in intuitive music, the creative ecstasy does not remain the privilege of the composer, but also becomes familiar to the performer. Since the performers are directed to those ‘very short moments of intuitive ecstasy [äusserst kurzen Momenten intuitiver Eingebung]’,²⁵ the major part of their preparation for performance must be dedicated to developing appropriate techniques for ‘provoking intuition’, but also to ‘reducing their capacity for inducing spontaneity’,²⁶ because, as in improvising, each individual’s spontaneity is dangerous if not subordinated to the ensemble, to the music it collectively performs and, *last but not least*, to the idea

²³ ‘Wir wissen aus der Tradition, daß die Momente der intuitiven Eingebung von Komponisten stets als die entscheidenden bezeichnet worden sind. Vom Standpunkt des Intellektuellen her ist das nach den Maßstäben der Tradition “Indetermination”. Jedoch vom Standpunkt der Intuition aus, die ja ebenso eine menschliche Erfahrung ist, wenn sie heute auch nur wenig benutzt wird, ist das Ergebnis wieder eine sehr bestimmte, ‘determinierte’ Musik. Wir müssen uns fragen: welche Kraft im Menschen determiniert primär die Musik, die intellektuelle oder die intuitive? Karlheinz Stockhausen, ‘Interview II (durch Dr. Hanspeter Krellmann, 1969)’, op. cit., 321–322.

²⁴ That metaphysical component was also meant to be the *differentia specifica* of the concept of ‘intuitive music’, according to the textual pieces written at the beginning of 1960’s on the New York scene (such as the *Piano Piece for David Tudor No. 1* La Monte Younga) (Martin Iddon, ‘The Haus That Karlheinz Built: Composition, Authority, and the 1968 Darmstadt Ferienkurse’, *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 1987, Nr. 1, 2004, 92–93).

²⁵ Karlheinz Stockhausen, ‘KURZWELLEN für sechs Spieler (1968)’, in: *Texte zur Musik 1963–1970. Band 3: Einführungen und Projekte. Kurse, Sendungen, Standpunkte, Nebennoten*, Köln, Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, 1971, 114.

²⁶ George E. Lewis: ‘Improvised Music After 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives’, in: Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble (eds), *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue*, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2004, 155.

which the composer had set as a goal of intuitive music performance. However, contrary to improvisation, the very skill of improvisation, which some performers possess and use 'spontaneously', not being able to emancipate themselves from it (or, better yet, completely eliminate it), is dangerous to intuitive music.²⁷

The crucial phase of intuitive music was, therefore, the 'transformation'. Only the transformation could provide distancing from the (infamous) tradition of improvisation: not only did intuitive music have to be played interactively, but, every musician had to imitate what he had heard first, and only later 'transform' it,²⁸ according to the understanding of 'higher being' in himself, towards which, following the vibrations of music (and also following the composer) he himself was being 'transformed' (thus paving the way for the audience, which was the last to 'transform'). Since this quality of Stockhausen's music could not be judged by mere terrestrials (mortals), the ideological problem of the 'transformation' was transparent only to those who, like Stockhausen, discovered their extraterrestrial origin and succeeded in sailing off to the vibrating path of mystical conception.

The only thing mere mortals could do – Stockhausen's mystical experiences and reassurances notwithstanding – was to reduce intuitive music, together with the ambitious ideal of musical 'transformation', to its 'earthly' counterpart: a kind of *controlled improvisation*, whose founder stubbornly refused to call it by its proper name. If the main point of any controlled improvisation is to channel the performance towards a 'desirable musical result', then Stockhausen's intuitive music was confronted with the same problem: it aimed towards a certain 'desirable musical result', and this result, precisely due to pretensions to communication with the 'universal consciousness' (that is, the 'higher being'), could not depend on momentary inspiration of the performer, nor vary completely from one performance to another. Intuitive *improvisation*, therefore, not only remained within the frameworks of one of the existing musical styles – serialism – but, as such, used its typical clichés.²⁹ Moreover, since the

²⁷ 'There is a sort of automatic recording within us, which also automatically spits out all the recorded stuff[,] also the garbage, and then one stops' (Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Questions and Answers on Intuitive Music', op. cit.). Without appropriate preparation, even the best performer, confronted with the task of playing 'intuitive music', could do nothing more but 'play what he has heard before. It is really a very decisive turning point in the development of a musician, to break out of his whole environment, training, and technical mechanics. So a very conscious being is needed: he must know the music of the world. He must already be a world-wide informed mind, who has travelled in many countries, or heard records of the music of all other cultures, in order to avoid it all' (Ibid.). On Stockhausen's critique of the group for 'intuitive music' *New Phonic Art* Vinka Globokara, which remained within the context of improvisation and 'polyphony of styles, times and regions', see: Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Questions and Answers on Intuitive Music', op. cit.

²⁸ Jonathan Cott, *Stockhausen: Conversations with the Composer*, London, Pan Books Ltd, 1974, 33.

²⁹ Thomas Ulrich, op. cit., 101.

'universal consciousness' could not directly control it, intuitive improvising inevitably needed more efficient means for ensuring elementary performing continuity than Stockhausen's poetic instructions (the text of the piece): the precise verbal instructions he provided when he prepared and attended performances, or the recording of the performances, when he was absent.³⁰

Thus, the first series of textual piece recordings from *Aus den Sieben Tagen*, made in Darmstadt in August 1969, proves that, indeed, Stockhausen's consciousness, and not the 'universal consciousness' was prominent in intuitive music: that series 'could scarcely have emanated from anyone but Stockhausen', since 'most of these works explore the continuum between pitch and noise, with a predisposition to the latter', typical of Stockhausen's (written) works at the time.³¹ The question remains, however: how was Stockhausen's composer's ego imprinted in the performances of the mentioned textual pieces? At worst, as any other kind of controlled improvisation, they could be the outcome of 'automatic motor processing',³² based on the elimination of that same thing which had always been the essence of improvisation: the performer's spontaneity, that is, 'genuine fantasy and ingenuity'.³³

³⁰ Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Interview II (durch Dr. Hanspeter Krellmann, 1969)', in: *Texte zur Musik 1963–1970. Band 3: Einführungen und Projekte. Kurse, Sendungen, Standpunkte, Nebennoten*, Köln, Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, 1971, 326.

³¹ Richard Toop, 'Karlheinz Stockhausen', in: L. Macy (ed), *The Grove Online*, 2007.

³² 'The change from controlled processing to automatic motor processing as a result of extensive skill rehearsal is an idea of long standing [...] and it undoubtedly improves movement quality and integration [...] The accompanying feeling of automaticity, about which much metaphysical speculation exists in the improvisation literature, can be simply viewed as a natural result of considerable practice, a stage at which it has become possible to completely dispense with conscious monitoring of motor programs, so that the hands appear to have a life of their own, driven by the musical constraints of the situation [...] In a sense, the performer is played by the music. The same thing happens with common actions like walking and eating [...] Hence automaticity in improvisation can be frequent in both free and highly structured contexts, since task requirements are often self-chosen, but is more likely to be successful in musical terms for the less experienced player towards the free end of the spectrum' (Jeff Pressing, 'Improvisation: Methods and Models', in: John A. Sloboda (ed), *Generative Processes in Music. The Psychology of Performance, Improvisation, and Composition*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988, 139–140).

³³ Reginald Smith Brindle, *New Music. The Avant-Garde since 1945*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988, 86. The emphasizing of spontaneity ('imagination') ensues from Smith Brindle's comprehensive definition of improvisation: 'Improvisation (from the latin *ex improviso* – without preparation) used to mean an unprepared musical performance or "extemporization" based either on precise themes or musical forms (fugue, theme and variations, passacaglia, etc.), or on the free development of musical ideas spontaneously suggested by the imagination, and resulting in a kaleidoscope succession of events, often held together by only a tenuous thread' (Ibid., 81). As a rule, suppressing spontaneity led to denying the uniqueness of improvisation. Namely, if improvisation is always based on the abundance of clichés, formulas, tricks and models, it must, in essence, be unique: if it can be repeated, than it is not improvised. 'Nothing is certain except the trivial fact that the basic trait that distinguishes improvisation from composition is lack of notation. Yet the statement that improvisation lacks notation is not reversible. Music lacking notation is by no means always or even in the main improvisatory in character' (Carl Dahlhaus, *Schoenberg and the New Music*, Cambridge etc., Cambridge University Press, 1988, 268.) In Dahlhaus's opinion, compared to composition, the improvisation is necessarily one-sided, because it concentrates on the isolated element of music (rhythm, harmony or timbre).

Certainly, Stockhausen's principle that the performers should listen and react to each other was, as Reginald Smith Brindle rightly pointed out, just one of the available solutions to the problems of 'controlled' improvisation. However, this solution was inadequate, since it primarily regulated the transference of initiative among the performers, and did not prevent the use of serial clichés or 'automatic motor processing'. Moreover, it was precisely Stockhausen's attempt to disguise the true nature of intuitive music – as controlled improvisation – by invoking the 'universal consciousness', which made it possible that every prosaic and simple 'interruption of the conscious control of the motor programmes' (as a, more or less, intended result of rehearsing and/or playing together for a long time)³⁴ should be proclaimed as a mystic manifestation of 'universal consciousness'. And the 'desirable musical result' of such controlled improvisation was, at the same time, the 'desirable ideological result', since it inevitably led to the conclusion that Stockhausen's entire opus represented the very emanation of the 'universal consciousness', and opened the way for humanity into the happy cosmic future.

The best way to understand Stockhausen's concept of intuitive music is to put it into the context of overstretched avant-garde attempts to make a break in the whole earlier musical tradition, including all forms of improvisation. Stockhausen discarded this tradition because it reserved – very rare – moments of 'intuition' (that is, creative 'revelations') for composers only (reducing the performers to 'manual work', and the audience to the way of listening which respects only 'virtuosity and routine'); contrary to this, intuitive music was based on a new (religiously framed) way of life,³⁵ new spiritual techniques (which would enable one to come 'into contact' with the intuitive 'whenever we want, for as long as we want

³⁴ 'Musicians who have played together for a long time, and under the undisputable authority of the band leader – which was exactly the case with musicians who, from 1969–1970, performed Stockhausen's textual pieces under his management, were particularly exposed to this danger. Playing under such conditions brings about the new determinism, because a perfectly homogenous group, in which everybody has completely accepted the usual patterns, can, in fact, improvise constructed works, which proves that every freedom relies on the solid foundations of reflexes, while taking complete responsibility for simultaneous tracking the elements and rules turns out to be deadly' (François-Bernard Mâche, 'Interviews with contemporary composers', *Radio Belgrade, Third Programme*, Nr. 47, 1980, 128). This was also proved by the experiment conducted at the Natal University, on four musicians who practiced group improvising. For the purpose of the experiment, they were separated into individual rooms where they played simultaneously, with no possibility of hearing one another. In spite of that, the sound recording made by combining the recordings of their improvisations was perfectly harmonious, since it gave an impression that the performers played in the same room, 'responding to each other with what appeared to be uncanny sensitivity' (Christopher Ballantine, 'Towards an Aesthetic of Experimental Music', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 63, Nr. 2, 1977, 236). The creative spontaneity of the improvisers was jeopardized not only by the control of the leader, but also by his own routine, which was more dangerous for group than for individual improvising.

³⁵ Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Fragen und Antworten zur Intuitiven Musik (1973)', in: *Texte zur Musik 1970–1977*. Band 4: Werk-Einführungen. Elektronische Musik, Weltmusik, Vorschläge und Standpunkte, Zum Werk Anderer, Köln, Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg, 1978, 144.

[wann immer wir wollen und für wie lange wir wollen]³⁶) and new musical patterns (not of human, but of cosmic origin)³⁷ – which would be accepted by composers, performers, and the audience.

Since improvisation was not based on these assumptions, Stockhausen thought that it, as well as the whole musical tradition, must be replaced by intuitive music, as the highest state of musical development of humanity on the planet Earth. Postulating this, Stockhausen tied the sustainability of the whole project of intuitive music to its acceptance by the performers and the audience (that is, humanity at large). In other words, the less that people thought that they should live by required standards and master required spiritual techniques, and the fewer people who believed that they could discern cosmic vibrations through Stockhausen's music, the less ability intuitive music had to differ from other forms of controlled improvisation. And when it became clear that intuitive music was just a type of improvisation within the domain of serialist music, Stockhausen's avant-garde pretensions began to seem like obstacles to the freedom of improvisation.

Instead of being, as it was pompously announced, the first medium through which humanity could communicate with cosmic vibrations, intuitive music passed into music history as one of many unsuccessful examples to first disguise the problem of controlled improvisation, and after that, simply ignore it. Therefore, the main reason for the failure of intuitive music was not human spiritual immaturity, but the ideological masquerade by which Stockhausen, from the very beginning, undermined the improvising freedom of his performers.

Translated by Goran Kapetanović

³⁶ Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Zur Uraufführung der Orchesterfassung (1970)', in: *Ibid.*, 99.

³⁷ The pinnacle of intuitive music was, in Stockhausen's opinion, musical imitation of the rhythm of celestial bodies, or the universe on the whole. (Karlheinz Stockhausen, 'Verbindung /1973/', in: *Ibid.*, 116–117).

САЖЕТАК

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ПРЕВАЗИЛАЖЕЊЕ ИМПРОВИЗАЦИЈЕ Штокхаузенов концепт интуитивне музике

Карлхајнц Штокхаузен је 1968. формулисао концепт интуитивне музике, који је требало да ослободи музику од окова „преформираниог материјала“ (тј. клишеа који имају корен у неком од постојећих стилова) и да је повеже са вибрацијама „универзалне свести“. Ипак, Штокхаузенова интуитивна музика никада није прекорачила границе импровизације. Она би се најбоље могла описати као контролисана импровизација (у домену серијалне музике), која се суочавала са свим проблемима заједничким за ову врсту импровизације. Заправо, Штокхаузенови перманентни напори да нагласи супериорност сопствене интуитивне музике у односу на све врсте импровизације (као и идентичност сопствених садржаја свести са садржајима божанске и „универзалне“ свести) били су искључиво идеолошки мотивисани и никада није ни требало да буду разрађени у прецизним музичким категоријама.