

So 12.12. • 17:00

«I will see you on the other side» – Helga Karen

## Übersicht der Programmtexte für das Konzert «I will see you on the other side» von Helga Karen

### Klavierstücke III, II, IV, I—I am a mathematician

The early piano pieces, the four Webernesque miniatures, are an exploration of pointillistic composition and group composition techniques: each note is calculated, measured and assigned a dynamic. There are no melodies, there are no harmonies, only points which will later evolve into groups. Don't listen to the group as a melody, don't listen to the music as a piece—it is a collection of notes, each with its own place and meaning. Here, there are no hierarchies—rather, there is equality and the perfection of a calculation. The numbers become the music, the music becomes a moment in time and space—no more, and certainly no less. Here, the pianist needs to focus on the precision, tempo calculations, performing the dynamics *fff* and *ppp* exactly as written, with no liberties and no emotions. It is calculated, machine-like music, and it must thus be embodied. There is no place for personal thoughts; time is passing, and the notes need to be played.

The pieces will be performed in the order in which they were composed, to emphasize the impact of the compositional exploration on the enrichment of the pianist's roles. From the shy and kind III, to the confused II, to the patient and explorative IV and finishing with the explosive, angry I.

*Calculate my own tempo. If I choose a quarter to be 40, then an eighth note will be 80. It is 11:10, so the bar will have 11 eighth notes instead of 10. But instead of last 5 eighth notes, there will be 7. Then the tempo for the first 6 eighth notes would be  $80:10 \times 11 = 88$ . The last 7 would be instead of 5, so  $88:5 \times 7 = 123.3$ . I'll round down to 123. The first bar is done.*

*Imagine a music box. I am a music box. The music box doesn't move, only the handle moves. My hands are the handle. Remember you saw that mechanical piano in the museum? They put the roll of metal in with the pins sticking out and the mechanism reads the roll. If you roll unevenly, you get this *accelerando* and *ritardando*, the melody becomes unrecognizable. I am a music box with an uneven handlebar.*

### Klavierstück V—I am a human error

The technique of the group composition of a piece refers not only to the composition material such as pitch, dynamics and tempo, but even more so to the structure; a score is created in which there are several actions on the page, divided by the breaks between, filled with the silences, resonances and aftermaths of the actions played.

In Klavierstück V, Stockhausen explored the possibility of separating the notes into “main notes” and “grace notes”, the first containing the main musical information, engraved and em-

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bellished by the latter. The grace notes are often enclosed in the vertical lines and within those lines, those short moments, the pianist can be free and stop counting: they can take their time or speed up, enunciate the colourful patterns of the embellishments, focus on the crispness of the fast notes, on the versatile dynamics. Here, Stockhausen allows the pianist to be a little bit of a human. Even more, Stockhausen wants that human aspect to show the difference between the perfection of the electronically composed group composition and the imperfect result of a piece for an acoustic instrument, leaving a small moment to chance and leaving the piano, the pianist and the concert hall a possibility to influence, to take some control, to add imperfection. But after the second vertical line, the clock starts ticking again.

The chromatic tempo scale makes its first appearance in Stockhausen's piano repertoire here—the tempos are 80, 90, 113.5, 101, 63.5. Can a human feel the .5s? Can a human change from 113.5 to 101? What is the difference between 63 and 63.5? Maybe nothing. Or maybe everything.

*Leave the fourth of the left, play the first of the right, leave the first of the left, play the second of the right, silent left sustains and the fifth of the right and pedal on the release of the second of the left and retake the pedal, second of the left and hold on, release everything else with the pedal.*

*I am an imperfection, I am a human aspect, I am a human error and that is good. Here, I will survive until here, will take a break... I can slow down right before and make these grace notes a bit longer, then I can do the long jumps well. Done! Now back to 101—1,2,3,4,1,2,3,4...*

## **Klavierstück XII—I am an actor**

This piece is Stockhausen's own transcription of a part of his opera *Donnerstag aus Licht* (1980). Stockhausen composed 7 operas about each day of the week, which form the LICHT cycle. The cycle has three protagonists—Michael, Eva and Lucifer—who are portrayed in the operas by an instrument (trumpet, basset horn, trombone), a singer (tenor, soprano, bass) and a dancer-mime. In this particular opera, in the third scene of the first act, Michael undergoes examinations (Examen) as a singer, a trumpet player and a dancer in front of an impressed and mesmerized jury accompanied by a pianist. The Klavierstück XII combines the parts of the three Michaels, the part of the jury, the piano accompanist and other small episodic characters into one. The jury asks Michael to perform more (“weiter, weiter...!” “continue, continue...!”). Michael presents his talents, with his trustful companion Eva showing up now and then to support him through this journey. And every time you hear me counting until thirteen, know, that evil Lucifer is somewhere near (“Eins, zwei, drei, vier, fünf...”).

Here, the pianist truly does it all: speaking, whistling, miming; playing in and out; embodying an opera, unfolding a story, providing not a piece of music, but an experience. This is all achieved while adopting the role of a precise mathematician (the notation of the piece is as exact and

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extreme as ever) and a human (one needs to breathe, embodying a speaker and a singer, one needs to take time between moving from inside the piano and on the keyboard, one needs to enunciate, one needs not to hyperventilate).

*I am an actor. My fingers sing, they speak, they are a trumpet, a piano, they are dancing. Michael is passing the exams so beautifully; the jury is impressed. Michael is strong, versatile, talented, amazing. He embodies power. Be like Michael.*

*First breath in and then out. You should play faster, it is 75.5 here, otherwise you have no air left. But I can't play this faster, I need time to articulate.. If I play any slower, I will have to take a literal breath—there is legato there, I am not allowed to breathe... I can breathe in the next bar, there is a pause.*

## **Natürliche Dauern 10, 22—I am a listener**

How long does the fortissimo last? How long until it disappears? How long until you can't hear the rin-bowl anymore? How long until the sound dissolves into the darkness of the silence?

The most poetic of the piano pieces, the most humane of Stockhausen's piano works—the last piano piece written by Stockhausen is Natürliche Dauern, a cycle of 24 miniature piano pieces. It is a full circle journey, from the four miniature first piano pieces with total control to the 24 miniatures, letting go of the frames and restrictions and moving the control to the music, to the sound, the instrument and the musician. The cycle is all about the natural durations of different varieties. Durations governed by the literal natural durations of the piano chords or the sound of the Japanese rin-bowls, the breath of the pianist or the possible speed of certain embellishments. In pieces 10 and 22, the pianist has to acquire two unusual skills: playing with Indian bells attached to their right hand and playing the Japanese rin-bowls whilst playing the piano. But most importantly, the pianist has to listen. It is not about what the audience hears—it is about what the pianist hears.

I will hear more than you do, because I am here, inside the action, I am part of the resonance, part of the creation of sound. I hear everything and all, I hear the end of the note later than you do, I know when the next one will come longer before you even suspect that something will change. I am your ears. I am an ear.

*There is no beginning and no end. There is a fleeting moment within the walk of passing time, there is a resonance of the particles within the space that's standing still. There is sound, it is dissolving into the silence, and you need to hold on to it, catch it and carry it, and never let it go.*