

IAN PACE – Piano

Recital at City University, London

Friday May 30th, 2014, 7:00 pm

CHRISTOPHER FOX, *More light* (1987-88)

The musical ideas of *More light* are in a continual state of evolution, although the nature and pace of that evolution changes from section to section, and periodically an evolutionary process transforms an idea so radically that it metamorphoses into something new. In a sense the work does not have "material": instead it consists of particular piano sonorities that the processes of the music call into being.

More light was written in 1987 and 1988 for Philip Mead, who commissioned it with funds from Northern Arts and premiered it on July 28 1988 in Newcastle Playhouse. The version of *More light* which Philip Mead played in Newcastle differed from the version recorded here in two respects. In a number of the long pauses the resonance caught by the pedal was reinforced electronically with sustained pitches played through small speakers placed directly under the piano - this proved to be aurally redundant and was immediately dropped. In the second main section of the piece there was some equally redundant over-writing which had to be removed rather more painstakingly. I had conceived this section in a number of contrapuntal layers and had simply written them all into the score without thinking through the muscular trauma I was creating for the pianist's hands, wrists and arms - where the pianist is now asked to play two notes on each demi-semiquaver I originally asked Philip to play three! Being the sort of musician he is he found a way of playing what I had written, but after the premiere he showed me a way of revising the passage which would achieve a much greater fluidity of sound production while retaining the impression of contrapuntal density. It was one of the best composition lessons I have ever had.

I composed *More light* in the belief that they were (in French) the dying words of Monet. The German composer Robert H. P. Platz later told me that (in German) they were the dying words of Goethe. In preparing these notes I've (re)discovered the most likely source of the title, an essay by Morton Feldman in which he writes of Cage's music that it, "as in Monet's later paintings, has us look into the sun, so to speak". The essay is entitled "More light" and is collected in Walter Zimmermann's edition of Feldman's writings and lectures, a volume which I had just reviewed for the journal *Contact* as I was beginning work on *More light*. Feldman died, tragically early, shortly afterwards and the slow music in *More light* became my memorial to him.
(Christopher Fox)

ELO MASING, *Studies in Resonance II* (2011)

studies in resonance II for solo piano is the continuation of my explorations into the resonating possibilities of the instrument which I started in the piano duo *studies in resonance*, written in 2011. Like the duo, *studies in resonance II* is largely concerned with the physicality of piano playing, instructing the performer to use various unconventional hand and arm parts, thus choreographing the movements of the player through the medium of notation. In performance, therefore, the visual aspect of the piece is almost as important as the aural.

studies in resonance II was written for the Australian pianist Zubin Kanga, who premiered it in March 2013 in London. (Elo Masing)

SVEN-INGO KOCH, *Quel Portone Dimenticato* (2011) (The forgotten gate) (UK Premiere)

While enjoying a nightly walk over the Forum Romanum (the guards again had forgotten to close a certain gate) I relatively suddenly pictured / internally heard the opening texture of my piano solo work: Every stone, which I saw there, every fragment of a column told stories of its peculiarly overlapping temporal and historical layers. Like on a fantastic search for traces and hints also I as a composer discover surprising possibilities of the materials in the opening polyphonic texture which I am little by little excavating during the discourse of the piece.

Quel portone dimenticato was composed as a commission of the SWR for the Eclat Festival, Stuttgart. (Sven-Ingo Koch)

ADAM DE LA COUR, *Holy Toledo* (2013-14) (World Premiere)

“Holy Toledo” was written for Ian Pace, and is a homage to the playing of the great pianist Art Tatum. It has often been remarked that many of Tatum’s contemporaries were mistaken in thinking they were hearing two pianists when listening to Tatum’s early recordings, with this in mind I decided to utilise multiple layers of Tatum transcriptions and arrange them into one part. The process was akin to sculpting, and the choices were made in an improvisatory manner, much like Tatum’s own real-time arrangements of standards. The piece consists of four ‘sections’, each dealing with Tatum’s material in a different way, including a ‘cutting session’ that truly tests the technical abilities of the performer. (Adam de la Cour)

INTERVAL

NEWTON ARMSTRONG, *Too Slow, for Milton* (2011)

Too slow, for Milton borrows its harmonies from the Composition for 12 Instruments (1948), but adapts them into a music that is more repetitive, resonant, and languidly-paced. As Milton once told me that my music was ‘too slow’, this seemed a suitably obstinate form of homage. (Newton Armstrong)

ALISTAIR ZALDUA, *Spagyria* (2013-14)

The title of this piece, *Spagyria*, is taken from Paracelsus who coined the term. In his book *Plant Alchemy*, Manfred Junius writes: “In the word 'spagyria' two Greek words are hidden: 'span', to draw out, to divide; and 'ageiro', to gather, to bind, to join. These two concepts form the foundation of every genuine alchemical work, hence the often quoted phrase “Solve et coagula, et habebis magisterium” (“Dissolve and bind, and you will have the magistry”).

This piece is the second part of two works; the initial piece can be presented as either a 13 minute film or as an installation, entitled *Leiden Translations*. Here I created translations of ancient Greek alchemical recipes/texts resulting in a reservoir of short films comprising written notations, contrabass improvisations, and sign language.

In *Spagyria* for solo piano I have produced a further translation of these ideas into determinately notated piano music. This translation is not intended as a realisation of alchemical recipes for pianist but as an attempt to follow and interpret some of the many stages of the spagyric method with musical material and transformational processes. The main change across the whole piece progresses from sentences of pianistic lines, points, and chords towards a situation where piano resonances are foregrounded, similar to the sounding out of the different resonant zones belonging to an imagined meta-instrument. (Alistair Zaldua)

KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN, *Klavierstück X* (1954-55, rev. 1961)

Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Klavierstücke I-X* are seminal works in the history of post-war piano music and composition in general. Numbers V-X were written immediately after Stockhausen had completed the two *Elektronische Studien* and represent in part an attempt to realize some of the concerns of these earlier pieces within the medium of live performance. The emergence of a new generation of pianists such as David Tudor, Aloys and Alfons Kontarsky, Marcelle Mernier and Frederic Rzewski (who gave the premiere of *Klavierstück X*), eager to tackle and understand even the most daunting of new challenges presented to them, provided a further stimulus to Stockhausen in his endeavours to reinvent the instrument and the idiom. The works derive from highly abstract foundations, whereby a musical language is constructed from the most fundamental of sonic parameters, seemingly at first without reference to the musical and instrumental history that had preceded them, though closer inspection reveals degrees of indebtedness to ‘tradition’ on the level of gesture and elsewhere. It was not to be long before Stockhausen would bring the end-results of this period of work into an interaction with ‘found’ sonic entities, such as the voice of a child in *Gesang der Jünglinge* and naturalistic sounds in *Kontakte*.

Klavierstück X presents a multi-layered mediation between extremes of hectic activity and stasis, between single notes and clusters, between prescribed durations and grace notes, between extremes of dynamics, and much else. While in the earlier *Klavierstück VI* Stockhausen experimented with a continually fluctuating scale of tempo gradations printed directly above the notes to be played, in *Klavierstück X* he introduced a further notation device. Groups of attacks are to be performed within prescribed 'attack durations' consisting of multiples of regular metrical units. Within these groups, Stockhausen also indicates when continuous groups of attacks are to speed up or slow down. When first engaging upon intense study of this score and recordings of the piece, I discovered that many groups would seem to require slower execution, and others faster execution, than is conventionally the case. I have opted for an approach in which a notion of the totality of a group determines the specific nature of the details, rather than vice versa.

The piece also makes extensive use of cluster glissandi, for the execution of which various solutions have been found, including the wearing of different types of gloves and/or the sprinkling of talcum powder on the keys. I have found the best solution to be the use of waiter's gloves with the fingers removed, which enable these glissandi to be performed smoothly and at many different dynamics, whilst only minimally restricting motion.

Stockhausen creates seven 'characters', seven types of instrumental figuration which are in a continual state of flux. These are given different representations (and different attack durations) in a series of seven phases, in which all seven characters appear, together with varying degrees of silence (the number seven is used in determining various other parameters). Prior to these phases, the work begins with a rapid exposition of all seven characters in continuous succession. The effect is of a type of cosmic explosion, after which gradually discernable types of materials (or debris) emerge. This type of conception was to have a profound influence on many subsequent generations of composers. (Ian Pace)

Ian Pace is a pianist of long-established reputation, specialising in the farthest reaches of musical modernism and transcendental virtuosity, as well as a writer and musicologist focusing on issues of performance, music and society and the avant-garde. He was born in Hartlepool, England in 1968, and studied at Chetham's School of Music, The Queen's College, Oxford and, as a Fulbright Scholar, at the Juilliard School in New York. His main teacher, and a major influence upon his work, was the Hungarian pianist György Sándor, a student of Bartók.

Based in London since 1993, he has pursued an active international career, performing in 24 countries and at most major European venues and festivals. His absolutely vast repertoire of all periods focuses particularly upon music of the 20th and 21st Century. He has given world premieres of over 200 pieces for solo piano, including works by Julian Anderson, Richard Barrett, James Clarke, James Dillon, Pascal Dusapin, Brian Ferneyhough, Michael Finnissy (whose complete piano works he performed in a landmark 6-concert series in 1996), Christopher Fox, Volker Heyn, Hilda Paredes, Horatiu Radulescu, Frederic Rzewski, Howard Skempton, Gerhard

Stäbler and Walter Zimmermann. He has presented cycles of works including Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke I-X*, and the piano works of Ferneyhough, Fox, Kagel, Ligeti, Lachenmann, Messiaen, Radulescu, Rihm, Rzewski and Skempton. He has played with orchestras including the Orchestre de Paris under Christoph Eschenbach (with whom he premiered and recorded Dusapin's piano concerto *À Quia*), the SWF Orchestra in Stuttgart under Rupert Huber, and the Dortmund Philharmonic under Bernhard Kontarsky. He has recorded over 25 CDs; his most recent recording of Michael Finnissy's five-and-a-half hour *The History of Photography in Sound* (of which he gave the world premiere in London in 2001) was released by Divine Art in October 2013 to rave reviews from critics.

He is Lecturer in Music and Head of Performance at City University, London, having previously held positions at the University of Southampton and Dartington College of Arts. His areas of academic expertise include 19th century performance practice (especially the work of Liszt and Brahms), issues of music and society (with particular reference to the work of Theodor Adorno, the Frankfurt School, and their followers), contemporary performance practice and issues, music and culture under fascism, and the post-1945 avant-garde, in particular in West Germany, upon which he is currently completing a large-scale research project.

Ian Pace will next be performing in London at Goldsmith's College on Monday June 16th at 7:30 pm. The programme will include works of Walter Zimmermann, Rebecca Saunders, Alistair Zaldia and a selection of Goldsmith's composers.