

TELEMUSIK

Text CD 16

Lecture 1966

Beginning CD 16

1 Text (6'16")

Stockhausen:

Dear Listeners,

At the beginning of this year the Japanese Radio, *Nippon Hoso Kyokai*, invited me to come to Tokyo. I was supposed to realise a new piece in the Studio for Electronic Music there, together with four Japanese technicians. At the end of January I flew over the North Pole to Tokyo, and of course already during the flight I thought about what the piece was going to be like. I had never been to the studio but had been given a list of equipment available there. However, it was not possible to really know a lot about it from that.

One thing was clear to me: I wanted to make a new piece exclusively for tape performance and to try to use not only electronically produced sounds, but also, if possible, include already existing music. For years, I had thought about integrating music from different countries and of the most diverse musical styles into my work. Besides, I wanted to try to make a piece that would include as much as possible of what I would experience in Japan – a country I had never visited before. So that everything that I heard, and everything I saw and thought, even dreamt, would be included in the work.

Now the first days in Tokyo were really not easy. First of all, one cannot sleep at all because of the large time difference. Then, the food is completely different from European cuisine. Dealing with the people is very odd at first, because one cannot understand the language at all, and even if one speaks other European languages, it hardly helps at all. Except, of course, for the few Japanese at the hotel and the radio who spoke English.

During the first few nights, I planned the overall formal context of the work and, after several discarded sketches, I had an idea that recurred more and more often, and which of course was strongly influenced by what I had tried out on the equipment in the studio during the first few days. The equipment was basically the same as what was in the Cologne Studio for Electronic Music, but there were more modulators, which made it possible to transform and modulate existing music and then combine it with electronically produced sounds. And I thought it might be possible to produce a piece in which the entire music plays in a very high pitch-range – technically speaking between 6,000 and 12,000 vibrations per second – and that now and then I would reflect a few parts downwards, sections so to speak of this music that seems to be so far away because the ear cannot analyse it, so that it entered the normal audible range and suddenly became understandable.

This way, I would then be able to mix electronic and existing music in the very distant, seemingly distant range, and depending how I modulate parts of it downwards, I would be able to mix the two categories

and modulate them with each other. Later, I derived the title of the work, TELEMUSIK, from this process: “Tele” means as much as to bring the “distant” close up. We think the same way when we speak of the telephone or television. I must say that that was closely related to what my technicians played for me during the first few days in our breaks. I was also naturally very interested to hear original Japanese music, and they played me excerpts of court music, GAGAKU music, from recordings of temple ceremonies in Buddhist temples. Then excerpts of KABUKI music. KABUKI music is a kind of popular opera, in which only men play – even the female roles. And of course, Japanese contemporary music that is very strongly influenced by European contemporary music.

All of these musical impressions initially gave me a very heterogeneous and coherent image of Japanese music. And for my piece, I had planned to integrate these very different impressions into a new unity, to compose cross-references and interaction between them.

When I think now about my entire sojourn of a good four months in Japan, I can best explain it to you – especially in regard to my experiences, in particular my musical experiences concerning my piece, TELEMUSIK – by playing musical examples, excerpts of music recordings that I myself heard and then to a certain extent used, sometimes as very short fragments, in TELEMUSIK.

2 Example

First, a short excerpt from a recording of GAGAKU music. The piece is called ETENRAKU.

Example 1 (4'41")

Already during the composition I thought it would not be sensible to exclusively use Japanese music just because I was in Japan, but to reflect my openness for everything this new country showed me in terms of musical experiences and in daily life by expanding them to include music from other countries. So I had music from the island of Bali played.

3 Example 2 (2'42")

Or a tape recording of a so-called IBANI SANSA song, of a Negro tribe from the southern Sahara.

4 Example 3 (2'09")

Or I chose a short section from a recording of Spanish music, SEVILLANAS.

5 Example 4 (2'35")

A jump from Spanish music to Hungary. A piece called PISTA BÁCSEI, JÁNOS BÁCSEI.

6 Example 5 (1'45")

And back to Japan. An excerpt from a recording of KABUKI music, YATAI AIKATA.

7 Example 6 (1'31")

Now a recording of Brazilian Indians from the upper Amazon, the SHIPIBO tribe. It is the dance and song that belongs to a puberty ritual for young girls.

8 Example 7 (2'01")

And one of the strongest impressions was a ceremony in a temple, the TODAISHI temple in Nara. Every year, the so-called OMIZUTORI festival takes place there. It is the festival of water sanctification. This year it was celebrated by 11 priests. The ceremony is 1200 years old and every year the priests of the TODAISHI temple prepare themselves for the ceremony with six weeks of asceticism. They wear paper

clothing. Every day, they practice certain parts of the ceremony and at the end of the six-week fasting period, the OMIZUTORI is performed, so to speak, for three days and nights.

With the help of a very nice Japanese man, I made friends with the two high priests, and they invited me to come the ceremony. I was allowed to watch from an aisle that went around the square altar area, separated from it by wooden partitions with viewing holes in them, so I could see and hear everything that the priests did during these three days and nights. There were only brief interruptions when the priests ate once a day at twelve o'clock noon, and when they bathed together in the afternoon between five and six. The unbelievable part of the ceremony was that you could hear everything that was sung, spoken or shouted, as music. Even the movements combined so well with what I heard, that I experienced a unity between movements and music I had never known, and that was the most characteristic part. I cannot describe the details. They are wonderful, but that would go too far for now.

I will now show you only one section of this ceremony, when suddenly, after a very lively period – the priests walked around the altar in heavy wooden shoes, in an accelerando. And when they arrived at the climax of speed, one after the other threw off one of his wooden shoes, every time he passed by the south side of the altar, so that bit by bit, the walking became softer. One after the other, they walked in their stocking feet. And finally, they all walked in their stocking feet. Then they gradually walked in a ritardando and at the end, only the smallest, the eleventh, was left and walked around the altar by himself, so that one experiences a fascinating musical build-up and phase-down of a sound structure. Immediately after this ceremony, the priests squatted down or leaned up against the wooden partitions and took large, different-sized shells that had mouthpieces, and blew into them. Long music with very sustained tones and small glissandi, and I used an excerpt of that in TELEMUSIK.

9 Example 8 (5'21")

Now, please listen to an excerpt of the fantastically virtuoso Chinese music, KEIHOSAU.

10 Example 9 (2'43")

Now, a short excerpt from a recording that was made in the KOHYASAN temple, a mountain temple, where priests sing prayers in chorus for hours, alternating individually.

11 Example 10 (1'48")

I now jump back to Brazil. By the way, I can add here that the examples that I quote here are in the order in which I used them in TELEMUSIK. Sometimes, a few of the ideas are used at the same time and modulate with each other in up to four layers. The piece is for five-channel performance, by the way, composed for five loudspeaker groups, and that is why these jumps occur, which also shows however – I chose them purposely – depending on how much or how little the individual examples are related to each other, how I jump from one country to the other. Therefore, a section of a JAVAHE Indian mother from Brazil singing to her baby.

12 Example 11 (2'52")

And this piece is placed across from the song, partly overlapping, the singing of several SUYAI Indian men from Brazil.

13 Example 12 (2'04")

And now you hear short excerpts of recordings of Vietnamese mountain tribes. Whether they still sing like this today is certainly questionable. First a song for a love festival.

14 Example 13 (1'25")

Concert of flutes.

15 Example 14 (1'44")

Vietnamese wind music.

16 Example 15 (1'27")

Then an excerpt of gong music.

17 Example 16 (1'20")

From the YAKUSHIJI temple in Nara, you will hear another recording of a ceremony in which the solo priest sings first, and then a priest choir answers. This place is quite clearly recognisable in TELEMUSIK, combined with very high, shiny electronic sounds.

18 Example 17 (3'47")

Probably the most fascinating aspect of art music that I experienced in Japan is NOH music. I attended very many NOH performances of the most diverse schools. And you will hear part of the NOH drama HASHI BENKEI.

19 Example 18 (5'09")

The most impressive NOH music for me is what I call the typical sense of time of NOH. It is a sense of time that I then also discovered in the most diverse areas of Japan, for example at tea ceremonies or Sumo wrestling. I became a passionate fan of Sumo wrestling, by the way, and often travelled as far as Osaka to follow the Sumo wrestling; and the tea ceremony is, to put it briefly, as follows: one is unbelievably concentrated on the smallest changes for a long period of time. With NOH theatre it is the foot movements, the hand movements, the head movements that change millimetre by millimetre from left to right. For example, in NOH theatre it can take 20 minutes for a man to move from the curtain of the stage entrance to the middle of the stage. And one isn't bored for a minute. One is extremely concentrated. There is something similar at the Sumo ring fights. For example, the Sumo wrestlers prepare themselves for their opponent in the course of several ceremonies that are repeated. The left leg is stamped on the salt ground upon which they fight, hardly packed salt ground. Then the right leg, the hands are clapped together in front of the body. They then squat down and scrutinise each other very closely in order to find out which method the opponent might use. There is a particular number of codified techniques that can be used to bring the opponent down to the ground. The time for this opening phase used to be unlimited. I have been told sometimes it took over two hours, during which the two opponents stared at each other until they finally suddenly began the fight. Nowadays it is limited to three minutes. And then, suddenly, when they begin to fight, everything happens in a half-second or a second, and the whole fight is over and one of them is lying on the ground. And unless you are an expert, you usually have no idea how that could even happen.

It is similar with the tea ceremony. For example, I participated in a tea ceremony when I was invited as a guest of honour. It was my first. A Japanese professor accompanied me and I thought, since the tea had taken so long to prepare, I should also drink it slowly, in small sips. But when the professor, who was

sitting to my left, was served from the teapot, I saw how he completely emptied his cup in two or three jerks and then put it down in front of him. It wasn't until afterwards that I realised that that was the clue. He also explained to me that one must drink green tea at exactly the moment in which it is suspended, and that it is never bitter while it is still rising. So this sense of time, very different from that of Europeans – between extremely slow and long and then extremely fast and concentrated – left a very strong impression on me. I often told the Japanese when they asked me: “What was the most characteristic aspect for you in comparison to Europe?” – then I always said: “The Japanese sense of time in everything”. In Europe we live quasi in a middle time range, in which everything takes place somewhere between slow and fast, and in Japan these extremes are much further apart. Perhaps in the Orient altogether, as I was able to discover later, on my return trip through the most diverse Asian countries, e.g. in particular Cambodia, or in Thailand or in India, but also in Persia and Lebanon.

I must now conclude my comments on the composition TELEMUSIK. Perhaps I should name some terms that occurred to me in the context of the title TELEMUSIK. TELEMUSIK, as you have learned from the quoted musical examples, means very much more than what I said at the beginning. Namely, it also means what lies very far apart from each other in this world in time and space: Brazil, Central Africa, Hungary, Spain, Japan, India. I have not been able to quote all the examples that I used. So, in this composition, I have attempted to bring very close together what is far apart. To a large extent, this happens at the same time. It is composed polyphonically, in several layers. Spatial distances are made vertical and the same thing happens with time. Some of the music excerpts I quoted are very old. They originate from very diverse historical epochs and these are suddenly simultaneous. They become Now in the composition. And what is separated by time and space, what is far away from each other is connected, so to speak, by a process of tele-composition, and related to each other, not just put next to and on top of each other, but rather melted together to form new qualities. That was my goal. And now you must judge whether or not I accomplished that.

So I wrote down the terms that occurred to me: Ultra, laser beams, stardust, north, glass, cloud shadows, helium, pole, mirror, I of I, high frequency, white on white, reflection, snow prints, bright, Noh Kan – that is, the very high NOH flute – skyscrapers, glaciers, ring modulation – that is the process that I usually used to modulate the music fragments I used – silver silence, resurrection, high fidelity.

Now please listen to TELEMUSIK, composed in 1966 at the Studio for Electronic Music of the Japanese Radio Nippon Hoso Kyokai.

Translation: Jayne Obst

