

Karlheinz Stockhausen talking about
EXAMINATION

EXAMINATION is about life - my life, and, I believe, the life of every person on this planet. You must assess yourself and learn. EXAMINATION is a scene of the first opera of the LIGHT cycle, entitled THURSDAY from LIGHT. Why THURSDAY ? Thursday is the day of learning. A person learns from an examination, and, as I see it, learns most of all from music, as it is the most beautiful of the Arts, the most subtle form of communication and of vibrations.

EXAMINATION is composed for three sets of three interpreters plus an accompanist. The main figure is Michael. Michael is a singer, an instrumentalist and a dancer. He loves music and in EXAMINATION the following happens. He meets a jury, consisting of two father figures and two mother figures. One of the 'fathers' is represented as a singer and the other as a dancer/mime. One of the 'mothers' also is a singer and one a dancer. They form a jury which Michael can see with his inner eye. He proceeds to give a performance for them, which they then judge, with praise and sometimes criticism. At the beginning, in the first examination, Michael takes on the character of his mother. At first he addresses her as 'Mother Eva' - "you taught me to cry and to laugh, to love and to sing, to dance (the art of heaven)", but gradually he becomes the mother herself. He doesn't only speak to the mother that he sees, in double form, in the jury in front of him, but he actually becomes the mother and he speaks with the words that he heard, when as a three or four year old child, his mother spoke to his father.

... sung section ...

And then his speech becomes confused - Miceva, Luceva, Lucimon, Michael, Micheva and so on. His speech mixes up the syllables of the three characters, Lucifer, Eve and Michael

... sung section ...

Then Michael says: "That was my childhood on this Earth lived through the soul of my mother LUNEVA, made human, made song and as witness of my love for all human children given by the Son of Licht as music."

... sung section ...

With this, the first examination moves directly into the SECOND EXAMINATION. Here Michael the tenor becomes Michael the trumpeter. At this transformation, the jury is quite amazed. The trumpeter recounts the life of his father, as he experienced it as a child, actually taking on the character of his father. This second examination is solely instrumental. The trumpet player becomes the father and a basset-horn player becomes the mother, appearing as an angel, as Michael's guardian angel. In a "fast-forward" style, Michael the trumpeter explains how his father underwent his own life-examination, firstly as a schoolteacher - Michael writes in the air with his trumpet (as though on a blackboard) then as a soldier, making appropriate gestures with his trumpet, at the same time directing a school choir with military style movements, then kneeling and apparently shooting with his trumpet as if it were a machine gun. In this way, mimically, he portrays his father's life with his trumpet. Eventually, there is a "hissing" noise which comes after the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 indicating that something has fallen from the sky. You cannot see this, but suppose it to have happened from the way in which he looks around for something which lands on the earth.

After this comes a very energetic passage for the trumpet (second examination) which ends as he is shot in the back. Simultaneously with the piano, Michael blows a loud exclamation, indicating he has been hit. In a big ritardando he is then barely able to whisper, "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13", as he disappears into another dimension, and we move, without a break, into the third examination. In

this examination, Michael is a dancer and again, the jury is astounded by the transformation. The mother/singer is especially fascinated by Michael the tenor, whilst the father is engrossed in the dance of the feet and by the bass part of the piano playing. Michael himself is as much a dancer as also his father as he is also his mother. As I envisaged and composed this piece, he then sometimes makes strange sounds, hisses and clicks and the scene becomes very mysterious. It seems as though Michael becomes transparent, only visible in outline, as he flies around the space as a spirit. Whenever there is a pause in the music, either as a tenor, trumpeter or dancer, then Michael becomes quite invisible. I see Michael as three-faceted, as three different art forms, and in three manifestations. Firstly, he is solid, as a human being, then as a spirit, that can fly, not bound by gravity, nor by space and time, and as an invisible being, though present. Once again, the music, through voice, trumpet and dance tells the whole story of Michael's childhood. As I have already described, this has been told from the father's and the mother's viewpoints. Now, it is set out from the child's perspective, but this time, it is inlaid with childhood experiences - mutterings, games, going on the hunt, going to sleep, suddenly being awoken, terrified when there is a shot, - everything with a child's eye; more beautifully, mysteriously, transcendently, more in the realm of fantasy and of the beyond and of the here and now, there exists no barrier at all.