

The University at Buffalo Department of Music and
The Robert & Carol Morris Center for 21st Century Music present

Stockhausen's *Mantra* For Two Pianos

Eric Huebner and Steven Beck, pianos

Sound and electronic interface design: Ryan MacEvoy McCullough

Sound projection: Chris Jacobs and Ryan MacEvoy McCullough

Saturday, October 14, 2017

7:30pm

Lippes Concert Hall in Slee Hall

PROGRAM

Mantra (1970)

Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928 – 2007)

Program Note

by Katherine Chi

To say it as simply as possible, *Mantra*, as it stands, is a miniature of the way a galaxy is composed. When I was composing the work, I had no accessory feelings or thoughts; I knew only that I had to fulfill the mantra. And it demanded itself, it just started blossoming. As it was being constructed through me, I somehow felt that it must be a very true picture of the way the cosmos is constructed, I've never worked on a piece before in which I was so sure that every note I was putting down was right. And this was due to the integral systemization - the combination of the scalar idea with the idea of deriving everything from the One. It shines very strongly.

- Karlheinz Stockhausen

Mantra is a seminal piece of the twentieth century, a pivotal work both in the context of Stockhausen's compositional development and a tour de force contribution to the canon of music for two pianos. It was written in 1970 in two stages: the formal skeleton was conceived in Osaka, Japan (May 1 – June 20, 1970) and the remaining work was completed in Kürten, Germany (July 10 – August 18, 1970). The genesis of the work was not straightforward and ultimately came about from the intersection of a turning point in Stockhausen's compositional process and the desire to write a piece for a specific pair of pianists, the Kontarsky brothers. *Mantra* is Stockhausen's first major formulaic composition, where he utilizes a serial-derived process, projecting a single melody onto all other aspects of the composition, generating all parameters from one simple idea. Stockhausen created a Tonformel (sound-formula), a thirteen-note melody or "mantra" that is the cell from which dynamics, articulation, rhythm and form is derived. There are thirteen different gradations of dynamics, thirteen types of articulation, and sine-tone generators for each pianist that sequence through the series of thirteen pitches and its inversion, respectively, providing a slow cantus firmus for the work.

Stockhausen conceived the "mantra" as a 13-note melody, using all 12 pitches of the scale, starting and ending on the same pitch. The material for Piano I is derived from this "mantra" while the material for Piano II comes from its inversion or mirror:

The image shows the musical notation for the "mantra" melody. It is presented on a grand staff with two staves. The upper staff is labeled "Piano I" and the lower staff is labeled "Piano II". The melody consists of 13 notes, numbered 1 through 13. The notes are: 1 (C4), 2 (C#4), 3 (D4), 4 (D#4), 5 (E4), 6 (F4), 7 (F#4), 8 (G4), 9 (G#4), 10 (A4), 11 (A#4), 12 (B4), and 13 (C5). The notes are written in a sequence that starts on C4 and ends on C5, with each note being a half step higher than the previous one. The notes are written in a sequence that starts on C4 and ends on C5, with each note being a half step higher than the previous one. The notes are written in a sequence that starts on C4 and ends on C5, with each note being a half step higher than the previous one.

The first four chords of the piece will use all of the notes of the "mantra" and from this basic compressed cell the entire piece will begin to unfold and expand through pitch, time, timbre and rhythm. The "mantra" will be reiterated in many guises 84 times throughout the piece. The longest "mantra," which is produced by a sine-tone generator, will take the whole piece to complete the thirteen-note "melody." Each note of the sine-tone "mantra melody" roughly corresponds to a division of the

piece into thirteen cycles. There are thirteen notes and divisions for both Piano I and Piano II; however the progression of the sine-generated tones for each of the pianos is not simultaneous. It is ironic that this “melody” produced by the sine-wave generator can never be heard by itself. It will not produce a pitch by itself unless it is combined with the sounds of the piano, voice and/or percussion.

Although the score is tightly conceived compositionally, the leap from conception to performance is enormously difficult, making performances of this approximately seventy to eighty-minute piece rare. Stockhausen demands that the performers embrace a wider definition of virtuosity, and its execution requires a complex setup that is beyond the basic knowledge of a traditional classical pianist. Besides performing a piece that is physically demanding at the keyboard, the pianists must also learn how to use electronic and percussion instruments, and to respond to a new spatial environment.

Mantra, as the title page of the music score clearly states, was written not for two pianos, but rather for two pianists. The title suggests the idea that the physical presence and the physicality of the pianists are of great importance; hence the “musical-theatre” of the pianists comes to the forefront. The pianists are required to utilize a space beyond the confines of the keyboard. They need to incorporate mallet work on the crotales and woodblocks into their keyboard work and constantly be adjusting the frequency of ring modulation throughout the piece. In one particular section Stockhausen’s fascination with Japanese Noh Theater is integrated into the piece requiring the pianists to use their voice and to act. Another important component that is weaved into the texture is morse code that is simulated electronically and also by the pianists on the keyboard.

Mantra is an exploration of an expanded sound world that allows a unique perspective of how electronics and instruments can co-exist.

NOTE: The above program note has been reprinted with full permission from it’s author, pianist Katherine Chi.

Meet the Artists

Pianist Eric Huebner has drawn worldwide acclaim for his performances of new and traditional music since making his debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at age 17. In January 2012, he was appointed pianist of the New York Philharmonic and has been featured in works by Lindberg, Stravinsky, Ives, Milhaud, Carter and R. Strauss among others. In March 2016, he was featured in recital as part of the New York Philharmonic's "Messiaen Week" - a series of concerts featuring the work of the late French composer. Other recent solo projects include a complete performance in November 2016 of György Ligeti's piano études on the St. Louis Symphony's contemporary music series held at the Pulitzer Arts Foundation gallery in St. Louis. He has collaborated with the conductor David Robertson in performances of György Ligeti's Piano Concerto, Olivier Messiaen's *Oiseaux Exotiques* and on the American premiere with percussionist Colin Currie of Elliott Carter's *Two Controversies* and a *Conversation* for piano, percussion and chamber ensemble. From 2001 through 2012, Huebner was a member of Antares, a quartet comprised of clarinet, violin, cello and piano. First prize winners of the 2002 Concert Artists Guild International Competition, Antares appeared regularly in major chamber music venues throughout the United States and worked closely with many composers on the commissioning of new works for its combination.

A passionate interpreter of the music of our time, Huebner has premiered countless new works, including a recent set of piano études by Pulitzer Prize winning composer Roger Reynolds with whom he's had a particularly fruitful collaboration. Huebner has been involved with the New York Philharmonic's CONTACT! series since its inception and is a member of the orchestra's Contemporary Music Ensemble Committee. A regular visitor to the west coast, Huebner has twice been a featured recitalist at the Ojai Festival in California, has performed on the Monday Evening series in Los Angeles, the Carlsbad Music Festival, and at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and made recital appearances at Zipper Hall, Villa Aurora and the Italian Consulate. In New York City, he has appeared as soloist and chamber musician in Carnegie's Zankel and Weill Recital Hall, Miller Theatre, Merkin Hall, (le) Poisson Rouge, Roulette and Subculture. Additionally, he has appeared with numerous NYC-based contemporary music ensembles, including the International

Contemporary Ensemble, Talea, New York New Music Ensemble, American Contemporary Music Ensemble, Manhattan Sinfonietta, So Percussion and the American Modern Ensemble.

A devoted teacher as well as performer, Mr. Huebner is an Associate Professor of Music at the University at Buffalo (SUNY) where he maintains a studio of graduate and undergraduate piano majors and minors and teaches courses in 20th century piano music and piano literature. Since the fall of 2014, he has been a member of the adjunct faculty of The Juilliard School where he teaches a course in orchestral keyboard performance.

Mr. Huebner's performances have been broadcast on PBS and NPR, and on radio stations KMOZ (Los Angeles), WNYC (New York), Radio Bremen (Germany), ORF (Austria) and the BBC. He has recorded for Col Legno, Centaur, Bridge, Albany, Tzadik, Innova, New Focus Recordings and Mode Records. A recent solo release on New Focus Recordings features Huebner in works by Schumann, Carter and Stravinsky. Mr. Huebner holds a B.M. and M.M. from The Juilliard School where he studied with Jerome Lowenthal. He lives in Buffalo and New York City and is married to composer Caroline Mallonée.

American pianist **Steven Beck** was born in 1978. He is a graduate of the Juilliard School, where his teachers were Seymour Lipkin, Peter Serkin and Bruce Brubaker.

Mr. Beck made his debut with the National Symphony Orchestra, and has toured Japan as soloist with the New York Symphonic Ensemble. Other orchestras with which he has appeared include the New Juilliard Ensemble (under David Robertson), Sequitur, the Jupiter Symphony Chamber Players, and the Virginia Symphony.

Mr. Beck has performed as soloist and chamber musician at the Kennedy Center, Alice Tully Hall, Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, Merkin Hall, Miller Theater, Steinway Hall, Tonic, and Barbes, as well as on the New York Philharmonic Ensembles Series and WNYC; summer appearances have been at the Aspen Music Festival, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, the Greenwich Music Festival, the Woodstock Mozart Festival, and the Wellesley Composers' Conference. He is an Artist Presenter and regular

performer at Bargemusic (where he recently performed all of the Beethoven piano sonatas), performs frequently as a musician with the Mark Morris Dance Group, and has performed with the New York City Ballet. He has worked with Elliott Carter, Henri Dutilleux, George Perle, and Charles Wuorinen, and has appeared with ensembles such as Speculum Musicae, the Da Capo Chamber Players, the Manhattan String Quartet, the Pacifica String Quartet, The Metropolis Ensemble, New York Philomusica, the New York New Music Ensemble, Mosaic, the Lyric Chamber Music Society, the Omega Ensemble, Ensemble Sospeso, the Orchestra of the S.E.M. Ensemble, Counterinduction, the American Contemporary Music Ensemble, the East Coast Composers' Ensemble, the Fountain Ensemble, Friends and Enemies of New Music, Lost Dog, and Antisocial Music. He is a member of the new music ensemble Future In Reverse (FIRE) as well as the notorious Knights of the Many-Sided Table. His recordings are on the Albany, Bridge, Monument, Mulatta, and Annemarie Classics labels.

Acknowledgments

The performers would like to thank the Robert and Carol Morris Center for 21st Century Music and director David Felder for making tonight's performance possible. A piece like this is a team effort and we greatly appreciate the assistance and advice of Ryan MacEvoy McCullough who designed the electronics interface and assisted with sound projection. The department's piano technician, Devin Zimmer, built the custom crotale racks and percussionists Daniel Druckman and Greg Zuber in New York provided the wood blocks and low crotales. We are also grateful to the department's director of music technology, Chris Jacobs for handling the sound projection.