

KARLHEINZ  
STOCKHAUSEN

DAVID TUDOR  
PIANO

HISTORIC FIRST  
RECORDINGS..  
OF THE KLAVIERSTÜCKE  
I-VIII & XI

## STOCKHAUSEN'S KLAVIERSTÜCKE

By now there are piano pieces more notationally complex than Stockhausen's Klavierstücke, more difficult to play, more radical in their demands on performer and listener. Yet these pieces stick in the music-historical mind, not only as the first of their kind, but as opening up a new space for piano music that is not yet widely inhabited. The Stockhausen Klavierstücke have never been integrated into the intelligible progression of music, but sit there, indigestible, still a challenge on 57th hearing. They occupy a moment that sticks out of history like a sore thumb, and to hear them played by the legendary

David Tudor in this recording of 1958–59 is to allow them to exist in that moment, without second thoughts, without apology, without revisionism. (By that time, these were all the piano pieces Stockhausen had written; Klavierstücke IX and X didn't appear until 1961.) Stockhausen originally planned to write 21 piano pieces, grouped into six sets. The first four, written in 1952–53, he calls a "transition from 'pointillist music' to 'group composition,'" from a music in which each note stood by itself to a music of gestures unified by articulation, rhythm or dynamics. Of these four, the first is the most group-oriented, with its clouds of notes collected together into measures; gestures such as the opening single notes sustained by pedal and released all at once are (theoretically) mirrored by fierce chords of which the individual notes are released one by one. No. III is the most pointillistic: 55 notes, no more than four together with the same dynamic marking. (The piece begs for academic excess: I once heard a Princeton professor lecture for 75 minutes on merely its pitches, which worked out to one minute, 22 seconds per note.)

Were one to take Stockhausen's own descriptions of these pieces as a recipe for listening, so much would depend on one's ability (and willingness) to hear notes grouped by dynamics and articulation, the ear fighting

against the more intuitive criteria of temporal and registral proximity; in order to hear, for example, the two crisscrossing staccato lines of No. 4 as truly contrapuntal. More to the point is to savor what atypical, counterintuitive textures arise from Stockhausen's obsessive discipline. The next group of pieces, written in 1954–55, were not yet finished when Stockhausen met David Tudor. After hearing Tudor's phenomenal ability to negotiate the detailed complexities of Cage's chance scores, Stockhausen made revisions on all but No. VIII, and dedicated the set to Tudor. In No. V, the ear is suddenly allowed to open up and breathe. Here are gestures whose equivalence one can hear against the background of continual variation. One such gesture is the constellations of 32nd-notes, sometimes several in a row at the same dynamic and register. Often the fast notes are grouped around one "nucleus" pitch, rarely the last one, that is sustained after the rest have died away. Another gesture is the rich, mid-register chord, and another the grumbling chords in the bass.

No. VI was the piece most heavily revised for Tudor's stumming virtuosity. The grace-notes have now become grace-note chords for a thicker, rougher texture that begins to fore-shadow the extraverted clusters of Klavierstück X. The moving line above the music in the score to No. VI, showing the pianist when to fluctuate in a series of tempos from 45 to 180, shapes the music, but Stockhausen doesn't provide any reference beats to make the tempo shifts audible. After all this rigorous variety, No. VII is almost meditative, a limpid pool of quietly sustained tones and pure overtones that contradict the piano's equal-tempered tuning. Activity swirls around sustained notes, including "harmonics with subharmonic resonances", that is, notes held silently to resonate when a higher note is sharply struck. The music first revolves around a mid-register C-sharp, then an A-sharp and



Karlheinz Stockhausen & David Tudor, Darmstadt, September 25, 1959 after the performance of Stockhausen's Klavierstück VI  
Photo by Pitt Ludwig, IMD Bildarchiv.

C-sharp in the bass, then an A in the treble, a B-flat in the bass, and so on. Brief No. VIII also uses some of this pitch-linking, in a context of contrasted groups. Klavierstück XI, of course is one of the most frequently referred-to works of 20th century music. It consists of 19 fragments, ranging from 8 sparse notes to 12 densely-packed measures, arranged disjunctly on a single oversized sheet of paper (coming from the publisher with its own frame to hold it on the piano rack). The fragments are to be played in any order spontaneously chosen in performance, and each is followed in the score by the tempo and dynamic to be used for the next fragment.

Thus, any section might be loud and slow, or fast and soft, depending on which fragment it follows. Henry Cowell had already moved toward such indeterminate ordering in his “elastic form” pieces, and Cage’s chance

procedures were surely an outside impetus. But, immediately, Klavierstück XI became the paradigm of the open form work, opening up a new genre of composition. In perceiving this type of form, everything depends on the clarity of the pianist’s gestural characterizations; in Tudor’s hands, they are consummately clear. Stockhausen calls his piano pieces his “drawings”, the pieces in which he sketches out ideas without the added color complexity of instrumental timbres. More significantly, in these early pieces you can hear a composer grappling with the challenge of electronic sound, looking for “envelope curves” that will allow the old medium to compete with the new. As played by Tudor in this historic recording, the piano gives its answer to the synthesizer.

Kyle Gann, November 1993



David Tudor, 1958;  
Photo by Hans Kenner,  
IMD Bildarchiv.

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As played by Tudor in this historic recording, the piano gives its answer to the synthesizer. *Kyle Gann*

Pour Stockhausen, ses pièces pour piano sont des « dessins », des morceaux dans lesquels il esquisse des idées sans la complexité de l'apport chromatique de timbres instrumentaux. Plus particulièrement, les premières œuvres présentées ici donnent à entendre un compositeur aux prises avec le défi de la sonorité électronique, à la recherche de « courbes enveloppes » permettant à l'ancien outil de rivaliser avec le nouveau. Joué ainsi par Tudor dans cet enregistrement historique, le piano livre sa réponse au synthétiseur. *Kyle Gann, translated by Benjamin Mouliets*

KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN (1928–2007)  
DAVID TUDOR *piano* (1926–1996)  
HISTORIC FIRST RECORDINGS OF THE KLAVIERSTÜCKE  
I–VIII & XI (4 VERSIONS)

1	KLAVIERSTÜCK I	2:51	5	KLAVIERSTÜCK V	5:00	9	KLAVIERSTÜCK XI/1	7:00
2	KLAVIERSTÜCK II	1:25	6	KLAVIERSTÜCK VI	16:20	10	KLAVIERSTÜCK XI/2	9:35
3	KLAVIERSTÜCK III	0:39	7	KLAVIERSTÜCK VII	6:50	11	KLAVIERSTÜCK XI/3	8:35
4	KLAVIERSTÜCK IV	2:14	8	KLAVIERSTÜCK VIII	1:47	12	KLAVIERSTÜCK XI/4	7:01

dedicated to Marcelle Mercenier                      dedicated to David Tudor                      dedicated to David Tudor

ISRC CH130.1800825 to CH130.1800836

Total Time 69:36

ADD <sup>24</sup>Bit

Historic first recordings of the Klavierstücke by WDR Köln in Funkhaus, Saal 2 on September 19, 1958 (9–12) and September 27, 1959 (1–8); Recording supervision/producers: Heinz Oepen (9–12) and Otto Tomek (1–8); Engineers: Albert Wegener (9–12) and Wilhelm Aulenkamp (1–8); Photos by Hans Kenner & Pit Ludwig IMD Bildarchiv; Liner notes by Kyle Gann; CD-master by Peter Pfister; Executive producers: Wolfgang Becker & Harry Vogt/WDR Köln and Bernhard "Benne" Vischer; Christian C. Dalucas & Werner X. Uehlinger Hat Hut Records Ltd.



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