



The CD of the Second Symposium of the Brazilian Computer Music Association

Review by: Carlos Palombini

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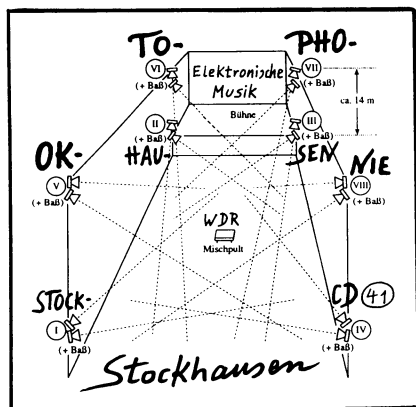
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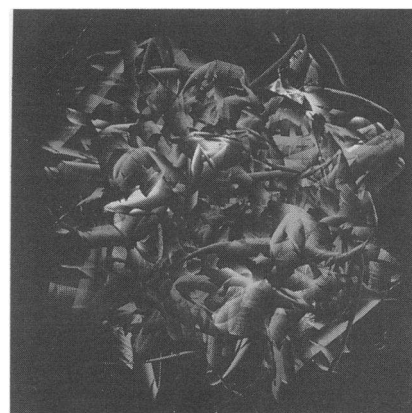
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of *Oktophonie*, as well as an eight-track digital tape for performance, can be ordered directly from the Stockhausen-Verlag.

The CD of the Second Symposium of the Brazilian Computer Music Association

Available from eMusic Foundation, 116 North Lake Avenue, Albany, New York 12206, USA; telephone (518) 434-4110; fax (518) 534-1308; electronic mail eMusic@aol.com



Tuesday from *Licht*. Certain themes and characters of *Licht* appear in *Oktophonie*, including Eva, Michael, and Lucifer, but unless one knows their roles and the general plot of the opera, the significance of these appearances is obscure, for they are not explained in the booklet. A formal plan of *Oktophonie* is listed. The work is in two parts. Part I contains *First shot, first downing, sound bomb, 1. Invasion, soundbomb, second downing, . . . , Eva segment, counting, 2. Invasion, Light, Fright, War, Lucifer, Michael, trumpet*. In Part II, there is *Mercy, Wind, 3. Invasion, Explosion, Beyond, Synthi-Fou, and Farewell*. But such a description provokes as many questions as it answers. In absolute music, the problems are formal, whereas in opera there are problems of plot. The close integration of *Oktophonie* with the rest of this vast opera poses a problem for the listener: to immerse oneself in the new music of Karlheinz Stockhausen, even for a period of 69 min, is to glimpse only a fragment of the global conception. At 30 min into this work, one has heard virtually all the sound material that one is going to hear, yet 39 min of plot remain. It is clear that the composer believes that this is music to absorb rather than to merely hear. The score

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The 10 works on this CD are selections of over 40 pieces played during the 6 concerts of the Second Symposium of the Brazilian Computer Music Association, which took place 30 July–2 August 1995 in Cañela, Brazil.

Words about music tend to fall under the weakest grammatical category: the adjective. In this light, Conrado Silva's *Pericón* is amusing, while Robert Willey's *Saudade de Ouro Preto* is sentimental and eclectic. Roland Barthes once proposed a parlor game in which one tries to speak of music without using adjectives. For example, Victor Lazzarini's cybernetic *Noite* manipulates the vocoder in an unobtrusive manner; Carlos Cerana's and Diego Losa's *Electrocañas* moves from monody to polyphony and morphology; */Cartas/rs95.car* is a computer-generated thread of 4 min that Aluizio Arcela poses as an object of the natural world. We may lose ourselves in the contemplation of its pattern.

Celso Aguiar's *Piece of Mind* is overly eventful. An opening bell-like sound grabs our attention and prepares the ear. Allure and grain knit

the sonic objects together. Instead of rendering them unrecognizable or "denaturalized" (as proposed by early *musique concrète* theory), Mr. Aguiar renders them unreal (as we heard in early *musique concrète*). The alternation between music and plot is inevitable. Ralf Ollertz's *Pyrócuca*, on the other hand, verges on minimalism and is plot-free.

Working with virtual performer and virtual instrument, Stephen Pope creates a dialogue between the harmonic grain of bell resonances and the virtual discontinuous grain of their successive attacks. As tempo increases and decreases with a mechanical feeling, attacks are bound to cross the grain threshold. But this compelling two-part counterpoint remains a perceptual possibility. The virtual performer of Mr. Pope's 168 virtual bells imposes its own limits upon speed. These limits are shared by the CD's virtual dancer: *Bat out of Hell* is ballet music.

Eduardo Miranda's *Olivine Trees* questions its own feasibility. The subject is the dichotomy of art music versus pop music. Flat sonus and a finely crafted interplay of shapes and matters are underlined and punctuated by a swinging bass cell. Unveiling this cell, *Olivine Trees* bursts forth into pop music. Flat sonus

gains momentum, and finally the whole thing bubbles over into pop before vanishing in a crash. (*Olivine Trees* stars the Chaosynth program and the darker overtones of Eduardo Miranda's sense of humor.)

Mario Verandi picks up flamenco figures and constructs electroacoustic foliage that hypertrophy and then retire into the flamenco from whence they came. Reproduction and creation—the primordial dichotomy—are ruled over by the emphatic flamenco gestures that Mr. Verandi performs. *Figuras Flamencas* inflates and deflates. In this respiration, music and drama meet, reproduction and creation blend, reality and vagary are stirred into one another.

With powerful tools, an economy of means, and unusual sensibility, Messrs. Ollertz, Miranda, Verandi, and Pope forge and contribute to the new Western musical tradition. On the pretext of pitch, Mr. Pope constructs a perceptually more complex phenomena. On the pretext of timbre, Mr. Miranda ponders the fate of his own craft. Mr. Ollertz carries the ideal of an abstract *musique concrète* to impeccable fruition, while Mr. Verandi creates theater for the ear.

We live in a world flattened by the abolition of all distances; however, this has not brought us closer together. Instead, it seems, we have lost contact with things and ourselves. We lay the blame on technology. In desperation, we turn to the objects and "let them speak," but their objectness is tainted with our subjectivity. The electroacoustic apparatus furnishes powerful means of inquiring into the universe of things. Positioning things as sonic objects and allowing us to play with them, this technology fosters a humanness which, over millennia, we have been losing. The tape recorder, the synthesizer, and the computer, when trans-

formed into poetry, deserve to be heard.

Products

BIAS Peak Digital Audio Editor

Berkley Integrated Audio Software, P.O. 2481, Sausalito, California 94966, USA; telephone (415) 331-2446; electronic mail sberkley@a.crl.com; Peak program US\$ 299; the Composer/Audio Designer, Sampler, Audio Pro, and Audio Librarian Paks each US\$ 129

*Reviewed by Ray Drama
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Developed by Berkley Integrated Audio Software (BIAS), Peak is an audio editor program for Macintosh computers with or without sound cards. It attempts to challenge the dominance of Digidesign's Sound Designer II program, whose shortcomings are familiar (awkward display, poor mixing facilities, etc.), while also competing with Passport's Alchemy and Macromedia's Sound-Edit16. Offering native-mode compatibility with the Power Macintosh series, Peak also supports sample data transfer to and from MIDI sampler instruments via the Ensoniq and SMDI (Kurzweil, Peavey) high-speed interfaces.

Peak has been designed to complement programs by Digidesign (Pro-Tools, Session), Macromedia (Deck II), Opcode (DigiTrax), Passport (Alchemy), Sonic Solutions (Sonic System), and others. Peak is said to be the first two-channel program to offer non-destructive editing. This means, for instance, that when an edit is undone or pasted, there is no waiting for the audio file to be rewritten. The program also features an unlimited number of undo/redo com-

mands, unlimited zoom levels (with zoom memory), and background waveform redraws.

A great deal of effort has apparently gone into Peak's Loop Surfer feature, which lets pop musicians adjust loop start and end points while a file is playing. Once a desired loop is found, it can be captured as either a defined region or a new file. With support for Adobe Premiere audio plug-ins, Peak is compatible with third-party software, such as Cyber-Sound FX, an effects program from In-Vision Interactive, and the L1, Q10, and other plug-ins from Waves. Besides Macintosh-standard AIFF and SDII file formats, Peak supports Windows WAV format, as well as QuickTime and Red Book formats.

BIAS has also released several "Peak Accessory Paks" that add further capabilities to the program. The Composer/Audio Designer Pak adds effects and audio processing options, including "Rappify," "Reverse Boomerang," "Phase Vocoding," and "Pitch Change," among others. The Sampler Pak is a tool for sampler owners who wish to edit and modify samples, and offers direct support for a variety of MIDI samplers, from Ensoniq, Kurzweil, Peavey, E-mu, and other companies. The Audio Pro Pak supplies editing tools for "declicking," gain changing, normalizing, sample-rate conversion, and time compression/expansion. Finally, the Audio Librarian Pak is designed for those who maintain a large number of sound effects and other audio files. Through Apple Events, the Audio Librarian Pak allows Peak users to catalog and audition sounds from an ordinary database application, such as FileMaker Pro (several ready-made templates are included). The Audio Librarian Pak includes "Thresholding," which automatically separates multiple audio events in a single file into multiple regions.