AGNIESZKA DRAUS

Music Theory and Interpretation Department, Academy of Music, Krakow

Luzifers-Abschied from Samstag aus Licht. Stockhausen and the Italian affair

ABSTRACT: The homeland of Leonardo and Palestrina, Dante and Eco, Verdi and Fellini became crucial for the reception of music of one of the most controversial, and at the same time innovative composers of the second half of the 20th century, a German artist, Karlheinz Stockhausen. The genius- and visionary-bearing nation opened itself to the new musical art, and appointed the author of *Hymnen* to be the coryphaeus of that art. This fascination transformed into a desire to better present the composer's personality to a wider audience. Many of the most recent Stockhausen's compositions were created as a response to numerous Italian orders, including *ArtArche*'s from Milan or Massimo Simonini's from the *Angelica Foundation*, many of them were performed for the first time in the most magnificent works of Italian architecture, for example the Milan cathedral. The stage premieres of *Donnerstag*, *Samstag* and *Montag aus Licht* took place in Milan's La Scala, with the creative participation of such celebrities as a theatre and opera director, Luca Ronconi and an architect, Gae Aulenti, famous most of all for her contemporary designs of Parisian museum buildings, and in the project of *Licht* – for scenography. In 2007 Stockhausen's music filled *25. Rassegna di Nuova Musica* in *Macerata Teatro Lauro Rossi*; during two days the most famous electronic compositions were presented: *Mittwochs-Gruss, Cosmic Pulses, Gesang der Jünglinge, Telemusik* and *Kontakte*.

Lucifer's Farewell is the last – and the most "Italian" – scene devoted to this character of the opera – Samstag aus Licht. It was finished in August 1982 upon the order of Associazione Sagra Musicale Umbra in Perugia, celebrating the 800th birth anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi. The opening night took place on 18th September that same year in Chiesa di San Rufino in Assisi. In the composition Stockhausen interprets the text of Lodi delle virtu (A Salutation of the Virtues) of the little poor man in the original wording of the Italian language.

The article is an interpretation both text and music of *Luzifers Abschied* within a wide range of problem context of the whole stage cycle *Licht* ('Light') by Karlheinz Stockhausen.

KEYWORDS: Stockhausen, St. Francis, contemporary music, music theatre, opera, avant-guard, electronics, sacrum, Licht-cycle, ritual

Stockhausen and the Italians

The homeland of Leonardo and Palestrina, Dante and Eco, Verdi and Fellini, became crucial for the reception of music of one of the most controversial, and at the same time innovative composers of the second half of the 20th

century, a German artist, Karlheinz Stockhausen. The nation which gave birth to geniuses and visionaries opened itself to the new musical art, and appointed the author of Hymnen to be the coryphaeus of that art. This fascination transformed into a desire to better present the composer's personality to a wider audience. Many of Stockhausen's most recent compositions were created as a response to numerous Italian commissions, including those by ArtArche from Milan and Massimo Simonini from the Angelica Foundation. Many of them were performed for the first time in the most magnificent monuments of Italian architecture. such as Milan cathedral. The stage premieres of Donnerstag, Samstag and Montag aus Licht took place in Milan's La Scala, with the creative participation of such celebrities as Luca Ronconi, theatre and opera director, and Gae Aulenti, the architect most famous for her contemporary designs of Parisian museum buildings, and for the stage design of Licht. In 2007 Stockhausen's music filled 25. Rassegna di Nuova Musica in Macerata Teatro Lauro Rossi; during the two days which saw the presentation of his most famous electronic compositions: Mittwochs-Gruss, Cosmic Pulses, Gesang der Jünglinge, Telemusik and Kontakte.

Don Luigi Garbini, the founder of the Laboratory of Contemporary Music in the Service of the Liturgy (LCMSL), and the author of A Brief History of Sacral Music. From Synagogue Singing to Stockhausen, was proud of his friendship with the composer. A great admirer of the music of the author of the heptalogy, Garbini initiated a project titled Electronic Mass with music by no other than Stockhausen, claiming that the composer "is a reference point of a trend in music of the present day, combining the emancipation of technology with historical and cosmic vision, in which characters may be interpreted on many levels, as in the instance of the symbolism of time included in the mythological cycle of Licht." Many Italian composers collaborated with Stockhausen, including Goffredo Petrassi, Franco Donatoni, Luca Francesconi, Ennio Morricone, Francesco Pennisi, Sandro Gorli, Luca Mosca, Alessandro Solbiati, Michele Tadini and Jacopo Baboni Schilingi. All of them were directed by the same vision in creating contemporary music, which guided their work towards the sacral. In the seven-part cycle of Licht, an almost 30-hour long, intercultural, intersemiotic, intermedial, interterritorial and, finally, intertextual stage piece of art - opus vitae, Karlheinz Stockhausen also included his own interpretation of a Catholic prayer in a theatre situation, resembling a liturgy. The words he selected are not coincidental: it is the text of a prayer by one of the most famous Italian saints, St. Francis.

¹ Don Luigi Garbini "An interview with Krzysztof Kwiatkowski, *Nowa muzyka dla dawnego obrzędu*", *Ruch Muzyczny 7*, (2006).

The Heptalogy

The cycle which preoccupied the composer for more than a third of his creative life is a synthesis of the subjects that interested him for some time, as well as musical solutions. It is an interpretation not only of musical language or an inter-opus style, but also Stockhausen's idiom as an individual composer. Musically, he creates a super-formula for the cycle — the symbolic 18 bars determining the "melody sounds, echoes, pre-echoes, ranges, rustles and reverberations, empty and timbre rests, improvisations, gestures, etc." He uses a rich vocal and instrumental casting, often going beyond the conventional European instruments — next to the traditional methods of producing sounds; he also introduces other acoustic tones, effects referring to the religious practices of meditation and incantation from many exotic locations all over the world, onomatopoeic sounds, various noises. He combines traditional live instrument tones with contemporary electronic ones, thus achieving completely novel sound colouring. He experiments not only with sound qualities but also with its spatial distribution. He enriches the audio-visual layer with a strict system of gestures and stage movements.

The cohesive content of the cycle is formed by the author's interpretation of religious narratives from all over the world, themes from times long gone by, mythological, Biblical motifs directly related to contemporary forms of worship. The subject of Genesis presented in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible is set against the creationist myths and ritual behaviours of many ancient and primitive cultures of the world. The three parts of the weekly cycle - the three days - are a presentation of the composition's leading characters: Donnerstag is a day that belongs to Michael, Samstag is Lucifer's day, and Montag belongs to Eve, to the cult of womanhood. Other days develop the plot, yielding such events as Michael's confrontation with Lucifer (Dienstag), Eve's trial (Freitag), the cooperation of all three characters (Mittwoch). The mystical relationship between Eve and Michael of Sonntag bears offspring in Montag aus Licht – thus the specific "eternal spiral" (ewige Spirale) of the week continues.2 To each day of the week, the composer strictly ascribes particular planets, colours, elements (which become characters of the drama in Samstag aus Licht in scene I Lucifer's Dream), senses (also present in Samstag in scene II Kathinka's Chant as Lucifer's Requiem) and graphic symbolic figures. This creates a "specific" horoscope for each separate part of the cycle, as well as for the whole heptalogy. Integrating in one composition the values and sounds from all over the world in its three dimensions – past, present and future – the author presents his own interpretation of the seven important aspects of human life in a visibly ritualised manner. Sonntag aus Licht, written as

² Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Texte zur Musik 1977–1984*, Band 6 Interpretation (Köln, 1989), p. 156

the last of them, clearly acts as an introduction which in traditional opera genres is performed by an overture. *Montag aus Licht* shows the ritual of birth from the moment of anticipation to delivery and the first stages of a child's life. *Dienstag aus Licht* is the ritual of battle in the form of a sophisticated game and brutal war. The leitmotif of *Mittwoch aus Licht* is love; however, Stockhausen also presents here another aspect of human existence: the ritual of communication. *Donnerstag aus Licht* is a ritual of a journey, both symbolic as well as real. In *Freitag aus Licht* references to Biblical issues are the strongest. The composition's content interprets the events of temptation and Eve's betrayal in the garden of Eden and the consequences of paradise lost.

The Saturday link is especially interesting. In *Samstag aus Licht*, next to the enchantments and ritual practices referring to the *Book of the Dead* of ancient Egypt, the composer introduces the motif of death as a dream present in eastern philosophy. Next to a scene resembling a church service he places a *danse macabre* scene with a grotesque character of a stilt walker. Thus he juxtaposes various rituals connected with death and resurrection, blending the plots of ancient mythologies and pagan rituals with Christian forms of worship. He combines them with the tradition of folk street performances, creating a modern interpretation of medieval mysteries.

Luzifers Abschied

Lucifer's Farewell is the last scene devoted to this character of the opera – Samstag aus Licht. It was finished in August 1982, having been commissioned by Associazione Sagra Musicale Umbra in Perugia, to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the birth of St. Francis of Assisi. The opening night was on 18th September that same year in Chiesa di San Rufino in Assisi.

In the composition Stockhausen interprets the text of *Lodi alle virtù* (A Salutation of the Virtues) of a poor little man in the original wording of the Italian language.

LAUDI E PREGHIERE

SALUTO ALLE (LODI DELLE) VIRTÙ3

- ¹ Ave, regina sapienza,
- il Signore ti salvi
- con tua sorella, la santa e pura semplicità.
- ² Signora santa povertà,
- il Signore ti salvi

³ Preghiere. San Francesco [St. Franciscus Preyers] http://www.ofm.org/francesco/pray/prego2.php.

con tua sorella, la santa umiltà.

³ Signora santa carità,

il Signore ti salvi

con tua sorella, la santa obbedienza.

4 Santissime virtù,

voi tutte salvi il Signore

dal quale venite e procedete.

- ⁵ Non c'è assolutamente uomo nel mondo intero, che possa avere una sola di voi, se prima non muore [a se stesso].
- ⁶ Chi ne ha una e le altre non offende, tutte le possiede,
- ⁷ e chi anche una sola ne offende non ne possiede nessuna e le offende tutte.
- ⁸ e ognuna confonde i vizi e i peccati.
- ⁹ La santa sapienza confonde Satana e tutte le sue insidie.
- La pura santa semplicità
 confonde ogni sapienza di questo mondo
- e la sapienza della carne.
- ¹¹ La santa povertà confonde la cupidigia, l'avarizia
- e le preoccupazioni del secolo presente.
- 12 La santa umiltà

confonde la superbia

- e tutti gli uomini che sono nel mondo
- e similmente tutte le cose che sono nel mondo.
- 13 La santa carità

confonde tutte le diaboliche e carnali tentazioni

- e tutti i timori carnali.
- 14 La santa obbedienza

confonde tutte le volontà corporali e carnali

- e ogni volontà propria,
- ¹⁵ e tiene il suo corpo mortificato per l'obbedienza allo spirito e per l'obbedienza al proprio fratello;
- 16 e allora l'uomo è suddito e sottomesso
- a tutti gli uomini che sono nel mondo,
- 17 e non soltanto ai soli uomini,

ma anche a tutte le bestie e alle fiere,

¹⁸ così che possano fare di lui quello che vogliono per quanto sarà loro concesso dall'alto del Signore.

ECOMIUMS AND PRAYERS

A SALUTATION OF THE VIRTUES4

¹Hail, Queen Wisdom!
May the Lord protect You,
with Your Sister, holy pure Simplicity!

²Lady holy Poverty,
may the Lord protect You,
with Your Sister, holy Humility!

³ Lady holy Charity,
may the Lord protect You,
with Your Sister, holy Obedience.

⁴ Most holy Virtues,
may the Lord protect all of You
from Whom You come and proceed.

⁵ There is surely no one in the whole world who can possess any one of You without dying first.
⁶ Whoever possesses one and does not offend the others possesses all.
⁷ Whoever offends one does not possess any and offends all.
⁸ And each one confounds vice and sin.

9Holy Wisdom confounds Satan and all his cunning. ¹⁰Pure holy Simplicity confounds all the wisdom of this world and the wisdom of the body. 11 Holy Poverty confounds the desire for riches, greed, and the cares of this world. 12 Holy Humility confounds pride, all people who are in the world and all that is in the world. 13 Holy Charity confounds every diabolical and carnal temptation and every carnal year. 14 Holy Obedience confounds every corporal and carnal wish, 15 binds its mortified body to obedience of the Spirit

⁴ ibid., http://www.ofm.org/francesco/pray/prayo2.php

and obedience to one's brother,

16 so that it is subject and submissive
to everyone in the world,

17 not only to people
but to every beast and wild animal as well

18 that they may do whatever they want with it
insofar as it has been given to them
from above by the Lord.

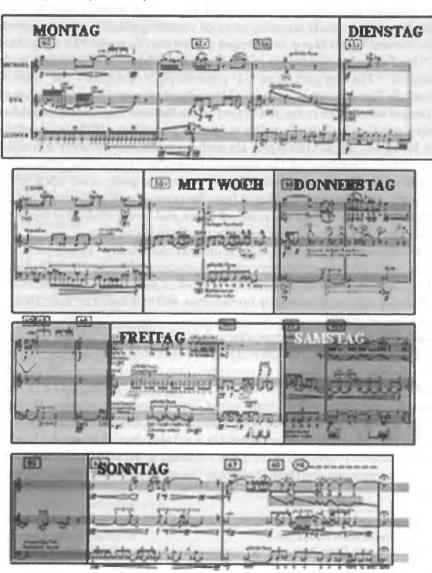
It is a prayer written by St. Francis during the years of his reformation, at the time when his reflections were dominated by subjects "echoing and developing Biblical texts". A clearly favourite motif of virtues appears also in A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in A Prayer Before the Cross and The Exposition of the "Our Father". A Salutation of the Virtues is a three-part, so-called psalmic "salutation". The first part (lines 1-4) presents pairs of sisters — the "most holy virtues". St. Francis creates for them a hierarchy of his own, following the words of the Gospel which refer to the Son of God as the Father's truest wisdom, while his words prescribe simplicity, humility and poverty as well as a life in love and obedience. In the second part (lines 5-8) the author emphasises the unity and equality of the virtues, paraphrasing the words of James the Apostle "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (Jk 2:10). The third part seems the most significant from the point of view of Samstag aus Licht subject-matter. It refers to the image of Satan and "every diabolical temptation" against which man struggles successfully thanks to the virtues.

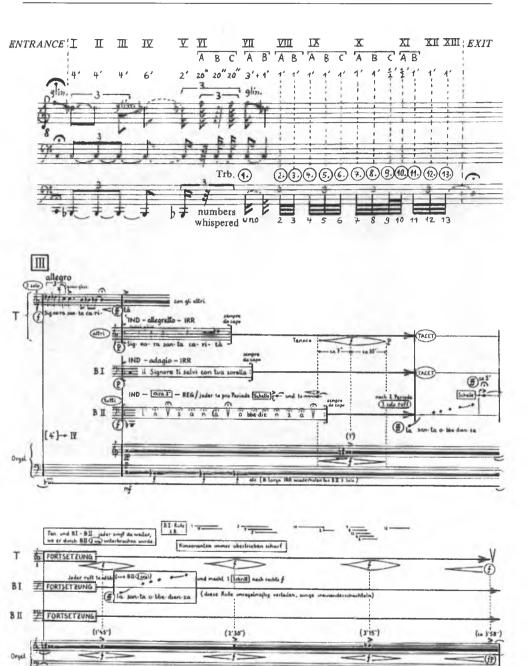
Stockhausen divides the text of *the salutation* individually – into 13 parts, which are then written into separate segments of the whole cycle's super-formula, appropriated for *Luzifers Abschied*. The aforementioned 13 parts of the scene are enclosed in a frame-like form, preceded by *Introduction* and concluded by *Exit*. Those specific frames reveal the composer's intentions – to capture the scene in a form of ceremony, during which the consecutive verses of the hymn are intoned in a manner of declamation, melodious though ecstatic. This resembles various types of worship: from a Catholic mass, through an exotic religious ecstasy, ending with exorcisms. Stockhausen plans to stage the scene in a church (or a scenery resembling a temple interior). The cast consists of male voices, organs and 7 trombones. High male timbres imitate praying monks, non-synchronously performing the consecutive verses of the text, while the bass chorus (13+13) also dressed in monks' habits, recites the consecutive syllables of the hymn's title facing the walls in the church naves. The organs accompanying them strengthen the atmosphere of a church service.

⁵ Compare with *Modlitwy i uwielbienia* in: Źródła franciszkańskie, eds. Roland Preys and Zdzisław Kijas (Kraków, 2005), 318.

⁶ Compare with Carlo Paolazzi, Wprowadzenie do lektury in: Źródła franciszkańskie, op. cit., 329

The development of the musical material may be traced on an example of an interpretation of the hymn's third verse. The illustration below shows the Saturday fragment of the super-formula set against its complete form; next there is the formal pattern of the scene with marked key tones for the mentioned verse, and finally the respective part of the score. Glissando from Michael's formula as well as the sounds from the formula of Eve and Lucifer -c and b — were introduced directly from the part of the organ accompaniment and as recitation tones of the chorus ensemble. The soloist performs the Saturday part of Michael's formula as the leading melody of the hymn.





 $\label{licht} \emph{Licht} \ \text{super-formula, the formal pattern of } \emph{Luzifers Abschied} \ \text{and a fragment of the} \\ \text{composition's score.}$

© Stockhausen Stiftung für Musik, www.stockhausen.org

Some soloists also use Lenten rattlers or mass bells. The trombones are to interfere with the meditative nature of "the prayer", referring at the same time to the main character of the composition, Lucifer. The scene is concluded by a ritual procession and the releasing of a white dove from a cage – the symbol of the Holy Spirit, Lucifer's ultimate vanquisher.



Fragment of the stage production of *Luzifers Abschied* in *Chiesa di San Rufino* in Assisi, 1982 © Stockhausen Stiftung für Musik, www.stockhausen.org

Final remarks

The main character of *Samstag aus Licht* is Lucifer and its content's leitmotif – death and resurrection. And although the title of one of the scenes of the opera includes the word *Requiem*, *Samstag* does not have much in common with the concept of a composition about death as perceived traditionally in West European culture. In a conversation with Guido Canella and Luigi Ferrari, the composer admitted that his intention was, on the one hand, to present death as a process, and on the other, as a stage, a transition, not the end.⁷ At that point

⁷ Karlheinz Stockhausen's talks with Guido Canella and Luigi Ferrari, "Musik und Tod: Samstag aus Licht", Hinterland, 29-30, 7 (1984), K. Stockhausen *Texte zur Musik* vol. 6, (Köln, 1989), 235.

he referred to the performances of the Japanese $N\bar{o}$ theatre and the long burial rituals practiced in Bali. He pointed to their stages: dying (perceived as a state of hibernation, dream), bidding farewell to the deceased with prayer and dance, and finally the sung expression of hope for a better life. In the opera, the musical and staging solutions conform to the elements co-creating the character of Lucifer, such as the melody of his formula, the timbre, the instrument as well as the mental process which are all connected with him (bass, trombone and cognition), and finally the black colour of costumes with the characteristic symbol of a red circle and a black point in its centre against a white background.

"The Morning Star," "the Day Star," "the Light-Bringer" - these are the translations given in the Bible to Lucifer's name, the symbol of the downfall of the greatest, the sin of pride committed by the most pure, transformation from being the most admired to the most condemned.8 Michael calls him the son of the morning in the scene Festival in Donnerstag aus Licht. Amongst the many representations of Lucifer in the cycle (such as a cynical creature doubting the virtues of man or a leader of rebellious troops of evil forces) there is also the one with the author's autobiographical motif: the character of little Michael's father (in Donnerstag aus Licht) with the significant name of "Luzimon" which is a combination of names and characters of the demon and the composer's father - Simon. In The Urantia Book, as well as in Stockhausen's work, Lucifer is a rebel and a blasphemer. He appears in the form of a dragon – as in the Apocalypse of St John (12:3-9), he is the father of Cain – precisely as is quoted in rabbinic texts. However, the composer evokes yet another plot – a truly romantic concept of sympathy for the devil, who is only guilty of his own weaknesses which make him more human. To the already mentioned middle scene of Samstag aus Licht Stockhausen gives the subheading Requiem für Luzifer, wanting to call, after Victor Hugo: Forgive. Be compassionate even for demons (La Petié suprême, V).10 The source of the subject of the devil's death may be the Jewish Talmudic writings, according to which demons "just as angels have wings to fly from one end of the world to the other, and just as them know the future. They eat, multiply and die just as humans do."11 On the other hand, in the context of a cosmic universe presented in the cycle, the emotions connected with the scene of Lucifer's death bring to mind one of the last scenes of George Lucas'

⁸ However, it is a mistake made by Origen in the interpretation of a fragment of *The Book of Isaiah* about the fall of King Nebuchadnezzar. The lines about the fall of the son of the morning star have been assumed to be a metaphor on the fall of Babylon. In the translation of Vulgate by St. Jerome, the word 'morning star' was given the meaning of *Lucifer* which contributed to perpetuating the legend of the fallen angel. Compare Piotr Oczko, *Mit Lucyfera*. *Literackie dzieje Upadlego Aniola od starożytności po wiek XVII*. (Krakow, 2005), 23.

⁹ Compare N. A. Dahl, *Der Erstgeborene Satans und der Vater des Teufels*, (Berlin, 1964), 70-84.

 $^{^{\}mbox{\tiny 10}}$ Quoted after: Maximilian Rudwin, Diabeł w legendzie i literaturze. (Krakow, 1999), 326.

[&]quot; Kaufman Kohler, "Demonology" in: *Jewish Encyclopedia*, ed. Cyrus Adler et al. (New York, 1901) http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=245&letter=D.

super-production *Star Wars*, in which the villain of the whole series returns to the light side of the force just before his death, coercing the audience to be moved to tears and compassion.¹²

However, from the point of view of the message of Samstag aus Licht, the kev scene seems to be no other than Luzifers-Abschied. Lucifer's character is not presented here directly, but evoked significantly and multi-dimensionally. The composer introduces the text of a hymn of a Catholic saint, whose biography provides remarkable evidence of transition from sin to redemption, from vanity to humility, the triumph of good over evil. Thomas of Celano, one of the first biographers of St. Francis wrote: "When still this man with a youthful ardour burned in sins and when his lecherous years thrust him unduly to avail himself to the rights of his tender age, and not knowing how to master his desires, he devoured the poison of the primaeval serpent, suddenly the Devine scourge befell him, or be it anointing."13 This transition may be interpreted on the one hand in the light of a Redemptory's concept of granting forgiveness to evil, and on the other - from the point of view of a specific illumination and of choosing the ultimate right road. The association with the character of the Italian Saint may thus be twofold: with Lucifer, the character of Licht, who on his deathbed was granted a chance to repent and return to Heaven, as well as with his creator, the composer, who during the years of writing the heptalogy transformed from enfant terrible of the world avant-garde into a preacher of his own, new art. It was then that he construed his individual, syncretic religious ideology, defining in it the function of the music of the future, which "must be spiritual music, dedicated to God, that will be a perpetual prayer, not only in the form of a Catholic mass but also in other forms of worship from all over our planet, thus integrating the religious symbolism of the whole world."14 Comparing these last words with the description of Francis, who "all became not only a praying man, but a prayer itself"15, their similarity cannot escape our notice.

LUZIFERs-ABSCHIED

Lucifer's Farewell 1982

for men's chorus, organs and 7 trombones ca. 61'

commissioned by:

Associazione Sagra Musicale Umbra (Perugia, Italy) for the

800th anniversary of the birth of St Francis of Assisi
Francesco Siciliani, chairman of Sagra Musicale Umb

dedicated to: stage premiere: Francesco Siciliani, chairman of *Sagra Musicale Umbra* 25th May 1984 *Palazzo dello Sport* Milan (*La Scala* ensemble)

¹² The film hexalogy Star Wars, USA 1977-2005.

¹³ Thomas of Celano, *Życiorys pierwszy Świętego Franciszka z Asyżu*, in: *Źródła francisz-kańskie*, op. cit., 445.

¹⁴ Karlheinz Stockhausen, a statement closing the 8th Summer Courses, transcribed by the author, (Kürten, 2005).

¹⁵ Thomas of Celano, op. cit., 633.

WDR in Gross Sankt Martin Church in Cologne

Koeln Haendel Collegium, conductor Dieter Gutknecht

Guenter Hempel (organs)

Michael Struck (solo trombone)

Karlheinz Stockhausen (sound production)

score: Stockhausen Verlag Werk No. 54 recording: Deutsche Grammophon 423 596-2

Stockhausen Verlag CD 34

