

Music Assignment

Name: Saidatta Shamsundar Sawant.

Department: Master of Computer Application (MCA).

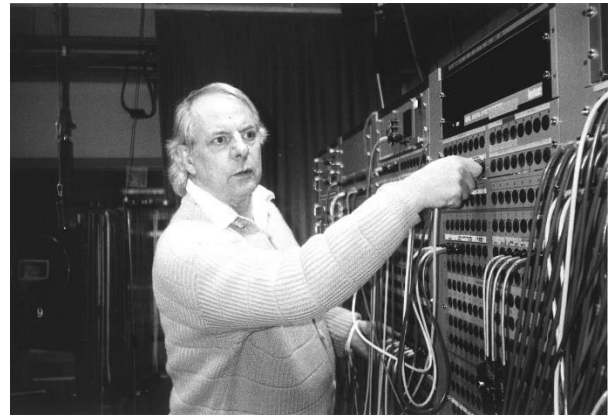
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Topic: Helicopter String Quartet- Story behind.

Helicopter String Quartet- Story behind

The **Helicopter String Quartet** is one of Karlheinz Stockhausen's best-known pieces, and one of the most complex to perform. It involves a string quartet, four helicopters with pilots, as well as audio and video equipment and technicians. It was first performed and recorded in 1995. Although performable as a self-sufficient piece, it also forms the third scene of the opera *Mittwoch aus Licht*.

Karlheinz Stockhausen (22 August 1928 – 5 December 2007) was a German composer, widely acknowledged by critics as one of the most important but also controversial composers of the 20th and early 21st centuries. A critic calls him "one of the great visionaries of 20th-century music". He is known for his groundbreaking work in electronic music, for introducing controlled chance (aleatory techniques or aleatoric musical techniques) into serial composition, and for musical spatialization.



History

The *Helicopter Quartet* was originally commissioned by Professor Hans Landesmann of the Salzburger Festspiele in early 1991. Stockhausen had been asked to compose a quartet for Professor Hans Landesmann of the Salzburger Festspiele in early 1991, but the composer had no interest in writing one, that is until he had a dream. Stockhausen was at a party, where the guests snubbed him, were rude to him, whispered behind their hands about him, and he dreamt he could fly away, quite literally. In another dream, Stockhausen dreamt he was hovering high above four helicopters in which of each four musicians were playing his music. On waking he saw the potential of such a work and made a series of notes and sketches. This idea was progressed by two further dreams: one in which Stockhausen saw and heard a giant swarm of bees, buzzing, swirling, turning in the sky like a helicopter blade; and a third in which he saw a violinist play music that captured the magical sound of buzzing bees. Though often performed as a separate piece, the *Helicopter Quartet* is only one part ("Scene Three") of Stockhausen's opera *Mittwoch aus Licht* or *Wednesday* from the cycle of seven operas *Licht*.

Stockhausen sent his score for *Helicopter Quartet* to Professor Landesmann who welcomed it enthusiastically. Of course, Stockhausen has not always been received with such all-embracing support—many considered him to be the P. T. Barnum of classical music, eschewing content for showmanship. One can imagine the sharp intake of breath from some when reading of the requirement list for Stockhausen's airborne quartet:

- 4 helicopters with pilots and 4 sound technicians.
- 4 television transmitters, 4 x 3 sound transmitters.
- Auditorium with 4 columns of televisions.
- 4 columns of loudspeakers.
- Sound projectionist with mixing console / moderator.



The first performances of the piece took place in Amsterdam on 26 June 1995, as part of the Holland Festival, with Alouette helicopters from the Royal Dutch Air Force display team, The Grasshoppers. The performers were: first violinist Irvine Arditti and pilot Marco Oliver; second violinist Graeme Jennings and pilot Lieutenant Denis Jans; violist Garth Knox and pilot Lieutenant Robert de Lange; cellist Rohan de Saram and pilot Captain Erik Boekelman. There were three performances given, at the Westergasfabriek, after two test flights at the same location the day before, and several earlier at an airfield in Deelen for the purpose of trying out the microphones. Following these performances, Stockhausen revised the score, adding about three minutes of material near the end, just before the descent, increasing the overall duration from about 29 minutes to 32 minutes. Since its premiere, the Helicopter Quartet has been performed "fairly regularly" and has become "the most iconic piece of classical music from the 1990s", though it was not presented in its full context, as the third scene of *Mittwoch aus Licht*, until the opera's staged premiere in August 2012.

In 2001 Angelin Preljocaj choreographed this music for a modern dance work titled *helicopter*.

The Helicopter Quartet is one of Stockhausen's most outrageous and incredible works, performed by four musicians, one in each of the four helicopters, who keep in sync with each other by monitors. The whole piece last 30-minutes with the helicopters hovering in the sky—the sound of the rotor blades adding to the music—as a long series of string tremolos (based on complicated formulae set forth by Stockhausen) are played over and over, in relation to the quartet's three themes of Michael, Eve and Lucifer.

Music Notation:

HELIKOPTER-STREICHQUARTETT
Stockhausen

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Karlheinz Stockhausen uses different coloured lines such as red, green, blue and yellow to identify each quartet member. Each line follows the notes that each member played and their crossover allows the viewer to understand that they were playing it at the same time.

Conclusion:

- Directed by: Frank Scheffer.
- Venue: Holland Festival (Amsterdam, Netherlands).
- Production date: 1996.
- Recording date: 1996.
- Duration: 1 h 17 min.
- Production: Holland Festival / Allegri Film.
- Available version(s): EN

Sources:

Above Information is from internet. Links from where I gathered this information:

- https://dangerousminds.net/comments/stockhausens_audacious_helicopter_string_quartet.
- <https://www.medici.tv/en/documentaries/karlheinz-stockhausen-helicopter-string-quartet/>.
- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helikopter-Streichquartett>.
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karlheinz_Stockhausen.