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## EMBARKATION EN ROUTE

'Telemusik was a further attempt to write not my music, but music of the whole earth, of all men and races.'

It is hardly unknown for composers, especially German ones, to have grandiose visions. A very few other composers active today can be said to have accepted the 'tradition of the world' - notably the Americans John Cage and La Monte Young. Yet it would be a mistake to confuse Stockhausen's aims with the work of these two radical extremists; Stockhausen, for all his acceptance, is still fimly rooted in the European tradition. At the moment, Stockhausen's stylistic spectrum is his most impressive European feature, demonstrating a stylistic change from Kontra-Punkte' to 'Aus Den Sieben Tagen', or, as one commentator recently noted, 'out of the Webernian frying-pan into the Cagean fire'.

If 'AusDen Sieben Tagen' comes closest of all Stockhausen's works to a Cageian aethetic, it does so in a spirit of compromise. Strongly influenced through the work maybe by Cage, Cardew et al., it does not represent pastiche in its purest form. Tim Souster believes that in the piece 'the hippy and the Teuton are fundementally at odds', The element of control that Stockhausen exerts over his improvising group in 'Aus Den Sieben Tagen' is

indicative yet again of his Europeanism.

'Aus Den Sieben Tagen' has received a number of performances in Birmingham recently from 'Embarkation', a group of improvising players centred on the University. For them, the fifteen pieces that constitute this entirely verbal score seem to represent a manifesto for their activities. 'Arrival' begins with an exhortation to re-think the artist's position in much the same way as the composer has done:

"Give up everything, we were on the track.

Begin with yourself:
You are a musician.
You can transform all the vibrations of the world into sounds.

If you firmly believe this and from now on never doubt it, begin with the simplest exercises".

Such a revolutionary aesthetic is by no means easy to adopt wholeheartedly, and the individual members of 'Embarkation' display different degrees of commitment in their performances. Some of the 'fringe' members of the group are unable as yet to rid themselves of the nineteenth century backlash, others unable to produce the spiritual concentration that such music requires;

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play a sound with the certainty

that you have an infinite amount of time and space.

These limitations, a function of the group's varying composition, is evident in other pieces that have been 'embarked' on, Two recent performances have been especially distinguished; 'Triple Concerts' by Keith Potter in the Arts Lab. Concert (May 29), and a setting of Apollinaire's 'The Windows' by the group's flautist, Chris Villars, (St. Francis Hall, Birmingham University, June 22).

The score for this latter piece consisted of the poem which was used as a basis for free interpretation by the players, one of whom declaimed the poem in an impressively sensitive mixture of Sprechstimme, Song and normal speaking. The identity of the group changed utterly (as it had earlier in John Casken's 'Visu') as a result of working with a visual as well as an aural medium: the slow, painstaking advances towards sustained climax were replaced by a series of all-eventful episodes, strung on the evocative thread of the poetry. Each episode assumed its own character, the instruments seeming to colour each other's sound; the crux came in the penultimate section, 'where the train white with snow and nocturnal lights escapes from winter'; here the speaker led the players into a nostalgic moment of extraordinary beauty.

The hard core of 'Embarkation's more dedicated players are immensely competent; their work is not for those with an impatient ear, they are able to suspend time, to magnify, hold and examine the sounds which use it up relentlessly, with patience and sympathy. The audience must be prepared for near disaster or some kind of unmeasurable success. They constantly reappraise the activity to which they devote themselves and we are privileged to hea hear its developments. As the Barber Institute prepares to preserve its gentality with another round of indifferent chamber music concerts, others around the campus may wish to take

advantage of 'Embarkation's exciting potential.