On *Originale* by Mark Bloch

The 33 year old composer Karlheinz Stockhausen was transformed by his meeting with John Cage in Darmstadt, Germany in 1958. The result was more graphic scores and a more theatrical direction for his music. The score for *Originale* (Originals) was created rapidly during a visit to Finland in July 1961 by Stockhausen. He was responding to a commission for a “theatrical” work from a theater producer in Cologne. He used as his point of departure *Kontakte* (1960), a piece he had recently completed for electronic four-channel tape and piano/percussion duo. The underappreciated staging of *Originale* at its Cologne premiere in Fall 1961 resulted in funding drying up two days into the twelve-day run which Stockhausen, artistically satisfied, made other arrangements to complete.

Nevertheless, *Kontakte* and *Originale* were both important for many reasons. *Kontakte* was probably the first true quadraphonic composition ever. To surround the audience with sound, Stockhausen used a turntable with a rotating loudspeaker surrounded by four microphones to enable the re-recording of spinning sounds. Then, *Kontakte*’s live piano, percussion and the quad tape combined with live “actors” to create *Originale*. *Kontakte*, even without the theatrical component, was one of the first pieces of its kind to combine pre-recorded sound and live instrumentation, with the goal of presenting the entire range of sound from noise to tone. For Stockhausen, it also signaled the beginning of his next work, the open form composition *Momente*, a “moment” score approach, rather than a progression.

For *Originale*, the language and action by the performers was introduced as elements in a score just as musical instruments would be. Eighteen sets of instructions for the actors were placed in time boxes. Each character’s actions were carefully timed according to the score. These actions were grouped into seven ‘structures’ to be performed alone or up to three at once.

The reason the work was called “Originals” was because performers were playing themselves. A painter played The Painter, an actor played The Actor and a poet played The Poet. They did what they would “originally” do. Cinematographers, gaffers and models also went about their work on stage.

These activities, occurring all at once, created the complex texture of the piece which is why it was such a natural for the Happenings genre that was popular at this time. The form’s creator, Allan Kaprow was brought in to stage the production in New York. A scaffolding was constructed and elements such as a loose chimpanzee and a goldfish swimming in a bowl hanging from the ceiling added to the chaotic feel of the piece.

In addition to the bedlam and ambient noise created by the performers going about their business, Stockhausen’s *Kontakte* provided the “musical” soundtrack of *Originale*. A film camera, a tape recorder and a stage manager shouting instructions accompany a pianist and a percussionist (playing themselves) performing *Kontakte*. A few minutes into the score, the players stop and the tape of their performance and the shouts of the stage manager is then played. In this way the notion of “originals” playing themselves is further complicated.
At the same time, the composer specified by name in his score that a special performer he encountered at Darmstadt in Germany, who was not an “original,” create “action music”: the artist Nam June Paik would perform bizarre actions inspired by what Stockhausen had previously seen him do.

In 2003, for the occasion of a screening of Peter and Barbara Moore’s film of the NY event, Stockhausen’s Originale: Doubletakes, (16mm, black and white, sound, 32 minutes, 1964-93), Andy Ditzler wrote that Paik performs three of his own pieces during Originale, “including Simple (1961), in which he covers himself with shaving cream, flour, and rice, and climbs into a tub to wash off, then drinks the water out of his own shoe.”

In summer 1964, cellist Charlotte Moorman was putting together her 2nd Annual New York Avant Garde Festival. Moorman had never heard of Paik, who went on to be a Fluxus performer and invent the Video Art genre, but it was the start of an artistic collaboration between the two that would last for decades and be a centerpiece of both of their lives.

The NYC venue for Originale was Judson Hall, across from Carnegie Hall at 165 West 57th Street, which is no relation to the downtown Judson Church, off Washington Square Park, where much avant garde activity was to follow in the next few years. The two names are just a coincidence. The performances played on September 8th, 9th, 11th, 12th and 13th as part of the festival.

Andy Ditzler writes the following about the film: “Peter Moore (1932-1993)... was commissioned by theater producer Rhett Brown, wife of artist Robert Delford Brown (who appeared as The Painter in Originale) to produce a film of the event. Shooting in 16mm and using available light, Moore documented two nights of the run, and took still photos at the remaining shows. The film’s subtitle, Doubletakes, reflects the fact that the film was shot during two successive evenings, so different views of the onstage events are seen in the film.”

“Art historian and Moore’s wife Barbara, who was present, recalls that the camera used to shoot Doubletakes was borrowed from the filmmaker and video artist Ed Emshwiller... Ms. Moore also noted that the onscreen presence of Brown as The Painter indicates that Peter Moore shot the film during the early nights of the run, since Brown was soon kicked out of the performance after a disagreement with Kaprow about his approach to the role.”
Brown responded in 2008, “There are many versions of what happened in the past. I never had a disagreement with Kaprow.”

Indeed, the Stockhausen scholar Volker Staebel has mentioned other historical conflicts: “(Actor Jackson) Mac Low stated that (Conductor Alvin) Lucier abandoned the set time frame for the duration of the performance by Paik, which Lucier does not remember. Lucier does remember, however, that Allan Ginsberg wanted to give his performance undisturbed by other activities.”

Meanwhile, adding to the turmoil, outside the concert hall, several New York artists, including Henry Flynt, Tony Conrad, and George Maciunas protested against Stockhausen as a “cultural imperialist.” Stockhausen had reportedly disparaged jazz at a conference at Harvard in 1958. According to the book, *Fluxus Codex,* “he said ‘jazz (Black Music) is primitive...barbaric...beat and a few simple cords...garbage...’ The group declared: ‘The First cultural task is publicly to expose and fight the domination of white, european - U.S. Ruling class Art’”

All in all, it was a landmark event in the development of the avant garde in New York and for Fluxus in particular. Alliances were formed, others were shaken. It also marked an important turning point in the life of Robert Delford Brown.
AVANT-GARDE

Stuffed Bird at 48 Sharp

The idea, the director explained, is "a collage of music with action."

The music was electronic, but the action was clearly electrifying as Karlheinz Stockhausen’s "Originale" was presented as the top event of Manhattan’s second annual Avant-Garde Festival.

It all started when Cologne’s small Theater am Dom commissioned Stockhausen, 36, Germany’s leading exponent of nonmusical music, to do a play. Stockhausen had eight friends with artistic talents of sorts—a painter, a poet, an amateur moviemaker, a Korean composer, a newspaper vendor, a street singer and two musicians. He also had a 94-minute composition called Kon takte, which blended canned electronic sounds and instrumental music. He wrote a "score" in which his various friends were instructed to perform all or part of their specialties on a rigid time schedule coordinated to the composition. Scandalized city fathers, who had made all these goings-on possible through a subsidy to the arts, tried to ban the production.

Bearded Beets. No avant-gardist could resist a success like that, and when an English translation became available this year, the New York festival’s sponsors leaped at it. Allan Kaprow, the inventor of "happenings," was signed up as director, and Allen Ginsberg, grand old man of the beats, was persuaded to take on the exacting role of the poet. The opening at Judson Hall could not have been more auspicious; it was picketed by a rival group calling itself "Fluxus," bearing signs: "Fight the rich man’s snob art." Fluxus Leader Henry Flynt favors "compositions" in which a group of people assemble in a dark room while ether is blown through the air vents.

The New York production featured two white hens, a chimpanzee, six fish floating in two bowls suspended from the ceiling, a shapely model stripping to her black lace panties and bra, and a young man who squirted himself all over with shaving lather and then jumped into a tub of water.

Fish in Bowls. As the Kontakte musical score—a mixture of taped airport drones, traffic noise, radio static, mixed in with homemade sounds from drum, piano, saxophone and cello—unwinds, the performers follow carefully drawn stage directions. At 48 minutes sharp, for instance, the percussionist is instructed to "feed all animals, fish in bowls, birds and/or fowl in cages or wooden crates. A stuffed bird in cage is also fed." The director is told to "tear a picture with an ape or with a pack of dogs on leash." At 68 minutes, the painter is instructed to "begin throwing nails on magnetic surface."

Cellist Charlotte Moorman, who had a concert to herself earlier in the festival in which she played a duet with a mechanized robot equipped with twirling foam-rubber breasts, is told at 36 minutes to "play and sing for four minutes." She can perform anything she likes, so one night she played a Beethoven piece, another night Bach. At 15 minutes, during "a long pause," she is free to do whatever she wants and made dark plans to give Allen Ginsberg a much needed shave, "if he does not resist too much."

Also Beans. Viewer participation was induced by bombarding the audience with leaflets, pink toilet paper, dried beans and rotten green apples. One thoroughly Stockhausened blonde thought apples were for eating, but the rest of the gardists in the audience knew better. They responded by pelting the actors with the fruit. The hall was packed for all five performances.

Back in Cologne, Stockhausen was unmoved either by the critical jitters or the audience’s muffled cheers. "The play gave me an experience I should not want to miss. Everything else is of no interest to me," says he.

Dolly

Every group has its Dolly. Paul A. Al Hir niams, Ianetz, hit like hattan E. Jerry, as a pro

CHANNING ONSTAGE in the second act of his Broadway musical, Then Louis Armstrong’s recording hit the counters, Typi

STOCKHAUSEN’S "ORIGINALE" AT JUDSON HALL

The apples weren't for eating.
Robert Delford Brown recalls being one of the first one to suggest Charlotte Moorman use nudity in her art, something she did for decades after Originale, mostly in her collaborations with Nam June Paik, who was also in Originale. “It was the Avant Garde Festival and I was the one that said Charlotte should go topless,” Brown remembered. “She kept saying, ‘What could I do?’ I said, ‘Take your clothes off, Charlotte, take your clothes off.’ So she took her clothes off, and she was a topless show. She was asking everybody, ‘What could I do? What could I do?’ This was in Originale, and she took her clothes off, and she was playing the cello.” Moorman was wrapped in semi-transparent gauze.

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september 8, 9, 11, 12, 13

**"originale"** by karlheinz stockhausen

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monday september 1 1964

electronic music

assisted by

james tenney, piano
mary bennett, oboe
james tenney, piano

**music of the stone**

kander kylang

john cage

intermission

**duet II**

christian villaniyoung

**two instruments**

morton feldein

**tape**

michael von biel

**tape for 3**

bruce wise

usually by james tenney

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sunday august 30 1964

charlotte moorman, 'cello

assissted by

nam june paik, piano
jerry jennings, soprano saxophone

tiny brown

26 1.499 for a string player

john cage

intermission

**per arco**
giuseppe chiari

**plus-minus**

morton feldein, piano

**dual II**

christian villaniyoung

**four pieces**

morton feldein

**realization by nam june paik***

**realization by james tenney**
Stockhausen’s ‘Originale’

By Alan Rich

Whatever else you can say about Karlheinz Stockhausen’s latest musical effort, you have to admit at least that it lives up to its name. “Originale” is what it is called and, brother, that’s what you get.

The basic idea itself is not so new, however. Stockhausen’s premise is that music is theater; that sounds, sights, actions, designs, colors, words, objects and people can somehow form an artistic unity. That can be traced back just about as far as patience permits... back, back, back through some of John Cage’s recent expositions, through Wagner’s plan for the total emanating from a variety of sources including tape recorders and an ensemble of live musicians. Much of it is attractive in its special avant-garde way; some of the taped moments in particular build up to passions and tensions in a way that add much stature to this new medium.

What Stockhausen has done in this piece is to carry one step further some ideas about music and space that he has been working with for some time. Instead of merely surrounding his audience with sounds and orchestrating the shape of the auditorium into his musical conception, he has added a new dimension by establishing the framework of an absurd improvised drama. What happens is that the whole troupe of performers—mimes, readers, actors, musicians, and animals—personify the musical situation. Stockhausen is an important and original figure in today’s creative world, and an effort on his part as extensive and intricate as “Originale” cannot be brushed off lightly. Some of it is just plain silly, and some of it is in excruciatingly bad taste, such as a poem read by Allen Ginsberg that manages to mingle references to John Foster Dulles and James Forrestal with a general spray of scatological sarcasm, and an extended phallic episode that I simply wish had not happened beyond that, you’re on your own.

Another thing, and this might be straightened out in the next few performances of which there are to be four this week, the actors seemed far too inner-involved to make communication with the audience. As I understand the concept, the whole fascination rigmarole ought really to be dumped right in the audience’s lap. This didn’t happen; everybody, performers and audience alike, seemed terribly nervous about the whole thing. Instead of participation, there was a general feeling of standoffishness. That’s why the business with the apples was so good; it broke the ice.

I haven’t really said whether I liked it or not, and I’m lost to much of the audience.