Stahnke, Manfred

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(*b* Kiel, Oct 30, 1951). German composer. He studied music theory, the violin, and the piano in Lübeck, later composition and musicology in Freiburg, Hamburg, Urbana-Champaign, and Stanford. Under Constantin Floros Stahnke received the PhD in musicology at Hamburg University (1979). His mentors in composition included Wolfgang Fortner, Klaus Huber, György Ligeti, and Ben Johnston. Stahnke taught at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg (1983–2018). Inducted into the Freie Akademie der Künste in Hamburg in 1999, he has led its music division since 2017. He composed for and played keyboard in Ensemble CHAOSMA, and has performed on viola in the improvisation ensemble TonArt since 2013. Stahnke has received numerous awards, including the Beethoven award (Bonn), as well as the Bachpreis-Stipendium and the Ligeti award (Hamburg). He has authored and edited several articles and books, and has composed four staged operas. Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Intégrales, and SWR Sinfonieorchester, among others, have performed his music. In the 1970s, Ligeti's non-ideological compositional approach motivated Stahnke to bypass the boundaries of the avant-garde. He inherited Harry Partch's legacy through Johnston and researched non-Western musical traditions. Since the 1980s, Stahnke has developed a hybrid aesthetic, synthesizing elements from such traditions, e.g., equidistant and non-octave scales, or Persian modes, and just intonation. He often juxtaposes microtonal structures, improvisation, and digital technologies. For instance, in his opera *Orpheus Kristall*, the concept of 'difference-tone harmony' and the resulting microtonal chords underpin the music in the hall. Remote internet musicians react to the onstage music in real-time and improvise using a scale with 53-tones per octave, which stems from ancient Chinese music theory. Software selects certain harmonics of the incoming improvisations, filters them through electronic samples, and superimposes them. Stahnke's compositions reflect an inclusive aesthetic based on research beyond the horizons of commercialized Western art music. Street music, Ars Subtilior, micro-rhythms, and literary associations have also influenced his pieces.

Works

(*selective list*)

Stage

Der Untergang des Hauses Usher (Stahnke, after E.A. Poe), 1981, Kiel
Wahnsinn das ist die Seele der Handlung (Stahnke, after E.A. Poe), 1983, Gelsenkirchen
Heinrich der Vierte (Stahnke, after L. Pirandello), 1987, Kiel
Orpheus Kristall (S. Homem de Mello), 2002, Munich

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Solo

Capra I, vn, 1987
Ansichten eines Käfers, gui, 1991
Diamantenpracht, hp, 2005
Ana B Chronicles, vc, 2005
Partch Zither, zither 2007
Paloma Metallica, pf, 2011
Cantus Infirmus, pf, kbd, 2011

Chamber (max. six performers)

Ritus, fl, vc, pf, 1979
St Qt no. 3 ‘Penthesilea’, 1983
Partch Harp, hp, synth, 1987
Harbor Town Love at Millennium’s End, sax, pf, perc, 1994
Lumpengalerie, fl, cl, vn, vc, perc, pf, 1999
St Qt no. 4 ‘Schrödingers Kristall’, 2 000
Frankfurt Musicbox, vn, va, vc, pf, perc, 2003
Changguflage, changgo, vn, va, vc, 2009
Holzschnitt, vn, va, vc, 2 pf, 2011
Asymptotics, fl, elec gui, 2011

Large Ensemble and Orchestra

Der Mandelbrotbaum, orch, 1988
Centonage, chbr ens, 1990

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Kreislieder, chbr ens, 1990
Halakiltunti, chbr ens, 1993
Trace des sorciers, orch, 1997
Scales of Ages, sax, orch, 2003
Danzbodnlock, vn, orch, 2006
Such(t)machine, chbr orch., 2011
Verminderte Elbharmonie, sop, ens, 2012

Principal Publisher: Stahnke-Verlag and Babelscores

Bibliography

(*selective list*)

S. Safari: 'Diamond Splendor', *Sonus: a Journal of Investigation into Global Musical Possibilities*, 32/1 (2011), 40–57

N. Bargrizan: 'Technology, Microtonality, and Mediation in Manfred Stahnke's *Orpheus Kristall*', *Müzik-Bilim Dergisi/ Journal of Musicology,* 1/6 (2015), 1–48

B. Helmer and G. Hajdu: *Just in Tone and Time: Assoziationen an Manfred Stahnke; eine Festschrift* (Neumünster, 2017)

M. Stahnke: *Mein Blick auf Ligeti/Partch & Compagnons* (Norderstedt, 2017)

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