

PESTOVA/MEYER Piano Duo



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Why **MANTRA**?

The composer **Karlheinz Stockhausen** passed away on the 5th of December 2007, only months before his 80th birthday. As a tribute to one of the most important musical innovators of the Twentieth Century, the *Pestova/Meyer Piano Duo* are presenting his rarely-performed masterpiece **MANTRA** (1970) for two pianos and live electronics.

This project was featured at the *Philharmonie Luxembourg, Festival Archipel* (Geneva), *Live@CIRMMT* (Montreal), Cork School of Music (Ireland), Festival *Voix Nouvelles* in Royaumont (France), New Zealand School of Music and *Festival Musikhøst* (Denmark).

MANTRA is an exciting and highly virtuosic work that calls for an unconventional approach to piano playing. The pianists are required to strike antique cymbals and woodblocks, as well as use their voices. The two grand pianos are processed electronically in real-time to create two “super-instruments” with scintillating sonorities that approach the exotic sound worlds of the *prepared piano* of John Cage, high-energy electric guitar distortion, and Morse-code radio signals.

Our approach to this piece is original due to the fact that we will be using *digital technology* for the electronic processing, resulting in a contemporary reinterpretation of a classic piece on the verge of technological obsolescence with a simple set-up and superior sound quality. The hardware and software for our version of this piece was especially designed by **Stockhausen’s** former sound projectionist and assistant Jan Panis.

Coinciding with the 40-year anniversary of the premiere of **MANTRA** in 2010, The Pestova/Meyer Piano Duo released this remarkable Twentieth Century classic on the [Naxos](#) label. This is the first recording to use digital technology for the electronic processing. Described as *a highly accomplished presentation of one of the landmark pieces in the second half of the 20th century* (The Guardian, UK) and *a very clean, precise and thoroughly captivating take on one of Stockhausen's strongest works*, the recording received international praise for *a new serenity, inexhaustible joy and clockwork precision* (Amazon).

Selected Press

This is a highly accomplished presentation of one of the landmark pieces in the second half of the 20th century.

-Andrew Clements, **The Guardian**, 2 September 2010

A focused, yet expansive, hence highly convincing and technically very accomplished performance of one of Stockhausen's key works.

-Mark Sealy, **MusicWeb**, October 2010

Pianists Xenia Pestova and Pascal Meyer really get into the spirit of the work. There is a complex serial dimension to the rhythms here, but more importantly, there is a wry sense of humour that underpins much of the music. The performance is at its most successful in the quieter passages, where the two pianists have a wonderful sense of poise, not rushing any of the effects or rhythms, but letting each of the motivic devices play out as a response to its situation, to the utterances of the other piano, and of course to the electronic manipulations.

-Gavin Dixon, **Classical CD Reviews**, 22 September 2010

This is a very clean, precise and thoroughly captivating take on one of Stockhausen's strongest works... From the beginning the listener is aware of an unhurried and well-paced, confident stylistic approach... a new serenity... inexhaustible joy... played like clockwork

Amazon, 15 June 2010

Brillant hommage à Stockhausen: Les pianistes Pascal Meyer et Xenia Pestova créent un MANTRA dynamique... (Brilliant tribute to Stockhausen: The pianists Pascal Meyer and Xenia Pestova create a dynamic MANTRA)

-Isabelle Trüb, **Luxemburger Wort**, 26 January 2008

Äußerst sensibel und dennoch deutlich... (Extremely sensitive, yet clear...)

-Martin Möller, **Triersche Volksfreund**, 28 January 2008

Magnifiques de clarté et d'intelligence, Pascal Meyer et Xenia Pestova entremêlent leurs touches et leurs tempéraments avec une rare cohésion. (Magnificently clear and intelligent, Pascal Meyer and Xenia Pestova blend their touch and temperaments with a rare cohesion.)

-Jonas Pulver, **Le Temps**, Geneva, April 2008

The Duo



Image © by Marius Bassie

[Xenia Pestova](#) (New Zealand/Canada) and [Pascal Meyer](#) (Luxembourg) formed a piano duo in 2003. Since studies at the Conservatory of Amsterdam, the two pianists went on to develop international solo performing careers. As a piano duo, they combine their shared aesthetics of sound with their commitment to programming new and non-standard works.

Praised for sensitivity, clarity, intelligence and exquisite coordination, Pestova and Meyer received rave reviews for performances of Karlheinz Stockhausen's *MANTRA*. The duo have had performances in New Zealand, Canada and Europe and appear regularly with the *United Instruments of Lucilin* contemporary music ensemble. Pestova and Meyer were recently featured as soloists in the two-piano concerto *Dialogue* by Bernd Alois Zimmermann with the Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra (OPL) conducted by Arturo Tamayo during *Festival Rainy Days* and Peter Hirsch at the prestigious *Festival Musica* in Strasbourg.

General Requirements

1. Technical Requirements

To be provided by the concert organizer:

- Two equal Grand Pianos with lids removed (3 Pedals), placed 1-2 metres apart (see Routing Diagram)
- Two octaves of *crotales*, certain pitches doubled (see picture 1)
- Three percussion mallet stands with felt or black material
- Four Speakers (*Meyer, D&B, LAcoustics*) hung at least 4 metres above the stage directly over the pianos to avoid feedback, slightly tilted downwards, the outside speakers facing directly forward and the inside speakers on a diagonal towards the audience (see pictures 2-4)
- Four *Neumann KMI40/184* Microphones or equivalent with stands and cables, placed in a V-position, one pointed to middle-C and one to the top octave of each piano (see pictures 5-6)
- Two Subwoofers on either side of the stage
- Yamaha 01v96 Digital Mixing Desk or equivalent (minimum 9 inputs and 7 outputs) on a small table (1,5 x 0,7 x 0,5) in the middle of the hall along with extra power supply for the computer and audio interface. Also required in the middle of the hall: a chair for the sound projectionist, a music stand, and appropriate lighting for the mixing desk and the music stand
- Cables for connection, one Multi cable maximum 25 metres long, plus four premium quality XLR cables for the controllers (length to reach from the pianos to the middle of the hall)
- Technical personnel to set up the above prior to the arrival of the performers and the sound projectionist, and to be available to make modifications after the arrival of the performers and the sound projectionist

To be provided by the performers:

- Macintosh PowerBook Computer with Max MSP software and patch
- Two Hardware Controllers and custom interface for connection to the computer
- Mounting Planks and two low *crotales* (A-sharp and B)
- Two Woodblocks
- Mallets
- Sound projectionist¹

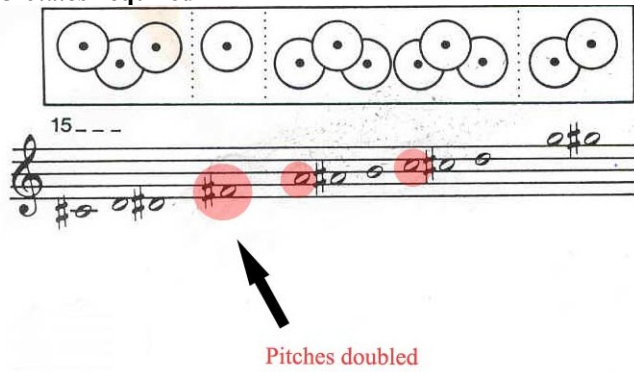
2. Practical Requirements

To be provided by the concert organizer:

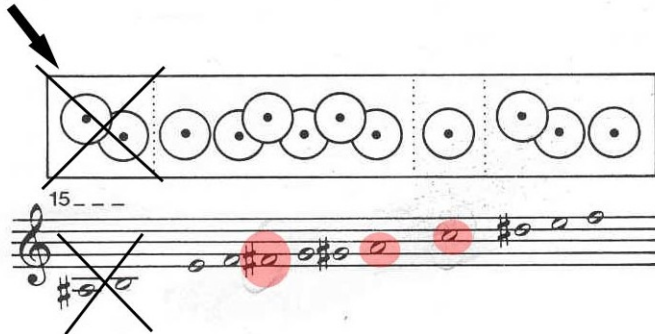
- One full day of setting up and rehearsal in the concert hall with the sound projectionist the day before the concert (all gear to remain in place until the concert)
- On the day of the concert: dress rehearsal (concert hall must be available for the whole day)
- Performance fees for the two artists and sound projectionist
- Travel Expenses: per diems and travel costs for the two artists and the sound projectionist
- Accommodation: 3 hotel rooms for 2 nights (rehearsal day and concert)

¹ MANTRA requires the assistance of an expert sound projectionist who is familiar with the piece.

Picture 1: *Crotales* required



A#,B not required



Pictures 2-4: speaker and piano positions

(at Philharmonie Luxembourg)



(at Festival Archipel)



(at McGill University)



Pictures 5-6: microphone positions

(at Kuerten Summer Courses)



(at Philharmonie Luxembourg)



Routing Diagram

