

KOSMOPPOSITION IN C + -

a review
by Dr. Ian Parsons



Christian Tschinkel's *Kosmoposition in C +/-* is an astonishing work. You can find something of the key to this, contained in its title. Its sense of cosmos and position are a constant thread throughout its massive 15 movements: the paradoxical tension between the enormity of space, and the constancy of place within it – the paradox of being located somewhere but sensing everything, and of everything growing, exploding from single points of position. Throughout the entire work you feel both big and small at once, trapped and exploding into limitless space. It is the composed dichotomy of quantum physics, where particles and waves exist together even though they are opposites. It is music that gives voice to the entangled nature of being, in a world where creative and destructive potential are forever fused. And this is where the + and - of the title has its own poetic resonance too. There is always a sense of limitless potential for renewal and change alongside a portent of apocalypse. But in this music, like in the wave-particle dualities of quantum physics, these are not in dialogue, but existing together, at once. It's an incredible achievement.

The music has its roots in Stockhausen's groundbreaking innovations of electronic music that are heard in works such as *GESANG DER JÜNGLINGE* (1956) and *TELEMUSIK* (1966), where different sound sources are intermodulated to create totally new sounds that reflect the limitless possibilities of diversity in sound, and ultimately in thinking. But from those roots, Christian Tschinkel has allowed a sprawling electronic symphony to grow – one that has been shape-shifted by the century and millennium that have turned since Stockhausen's work: by the radical changes in musicians' understandings of what sound can be and do; by the sounds of metal, techno, and rock, as well as the modernism and postmodernism of the avant-garde; and by a world that must face both its positive and negative potentials at once.

Both are constantly unleashed throughout this music. We hear the ambiguities of a

relentlessly, at times even aggressively, creative universe that is always haunted by the spectre of its own apocalypse. It is terrifying and invigorating, as we hear human life mingling with explosions of dissonance, the colossal blows of electronic sledgehammers, the sharpening of knives. Have we survived the apocalypse or are we about to witness it? We don't know. Our position in the cosmos is here and everywhere, now and always, at once.

The use of sound in *Kosmoposition in C +/-* is daring. Sounds mingle in unexpected ways – a sitar here, a choir there, a radio transmission somewhere else, and all the vastness of electronic synthesis that Christian Tschinkel has already demonstrated so well in his earlier work, such as his magnificent *Kuiper Belt Project* of 2006, but now developed with even more sophistication and audacity, enabled by advances both in technology and in his own creative vision. It is rich in its timbres and rhythms, its swirls and swarms of sound, its references to the known and the unknowable. It leads you to imagine big things.

The 15 movements are all self-contained but with a strong sense of unity and journey between them. At the centre lies 'Consul Konstellation', the work's longest movement, at 10 minutes. Its feel of a human-technological world, where neither side of the relationship really knows what the other is capable of, and yet both are dependant on what the other does, creates a kind of crisis point in the work's overall narrative. You feel everything up until then has been anticipating this confrontation and everything after it is the result. But the constant superimposition of the "+" and the "-" leaves it to you to decide to what extent this point of crisis has averted, and to what extent it has initiated, disaster.

The bigness and smallness of being human, its power and its powerlessness, the activity of composing and the passivity of being composed, the hugeness of the cosmos and tininess of position: it all meets in this music. From the stomping footprints and scraping metal of its opening, to a far-off tribute to astronomy at the end, the passage of *Kosmoposition in C +/-* is both terrifying and irresistible. Play it loudly. Immerse yourself in it. And then ponder the imponderability of where you are and where you've been, as centuries of humanity resonate from the past into the cosmic explosions of the future. And again and always comes the chaos from which everything is reborn.

That's what I heard in these 71 minutes of acousmatic amazingness.