# Mary DECADE. Bauermeister

SMITH COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART

NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS



FTER THE CATACLYSM OF World War II, a number of assumptions about art and music were radically challenged in Germany. The premises underlying the heroic Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk, or "total art-work," became less appealing at the same time that the aesthetic of art as an illusion came into question. Did one need to put a painting in a frame? Was it necessary to have a fixed score—or even a score at all—for a musical composition? Lying in the heart of Cologne, Mary Bauermeister's Lintgasse studio became a forum for interrogating traditional approaches to art, as well as an incubator for developing radical new ideas and techniques. Bauermeister inaugurated her first experimental Lintgasse program in March 1960, billed under the heading "Music-Text-Painting-Architecture." This event drew an eclectic mixture of personalities from surrealist, neo-Dada, and proto-Fluxus circles, including George Maciunas, Joseph Beuys, David Tudor, John Cage, Nam June Paik, and Karlheinz Stockhausen.¹

The collaboration between Stockhausen (1928–2007) and Bauermeister (born 1934) proved to be long lasting and extraordinarily fruitful for both (fig. 28).

PLATE 32, CAT. 30. Mary Bauermeister.

Layers, 1964



# Mary Bauermeister and Karlheinz Stockhausen at the opening of Bauermeister's solo exhibition at Galeria Bonino, 1965. Image:

Galeria Bonino

Their first work together (along with Paik, Tudor, Christoph Caskel, and others) was a sensational piece called Originale (Originals), which was billed as musical theater.<sup>2</sup> Conceived during a shared vacation that Bauermeister and Stockhausen took in Finland, this "gross-out theater" premiered in Cologne during autumn 1961. The performers played themselves: among others, there was a painter (Bauermeister), composer (Paik), pianist (Tudor), percussionist (Caskel), conductor (Stockhausen) and even a newspaper salesperson (listed in the program as "Frau Hoffmann").3 The music, which Stockhausen composed earlier (independent of Originale), was his piece Kontakte, a hybrid live/electronic work for four-channel recorded sound and two live musicians. Above this musical layer, performers in Originale acted out scenes calculated to provoke the audience or simply to shock: they threw beans at onlookers or took flying leaps into bathtubs full of water. Stockhausen notated much of this in a precise score that specifies events. Although Originale is credited to Stockhausen, Bauermeister had much to do with conceptualizing the action,4 and she contributed in other ways to the show's success: after the city of Cologne withdrew its financial support, Bauermeister and her team were able to raise enough money within twenty-four hours to keep it going.5 Its feasibility now proven, the artistic collaboration between Bauermeister

and Stockhausen became more intense in the coming years, even though it was often complicated by a concurrent personal relationship.<sup>6</sup>

Before *Originale* opened in fall 1961, Bauermeister took Stockhausen's seminar at the Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music. There, Stockhausen formulated a view that the structure of Bauermeister's visual art involved the same basic approach as his own serial technique to music composition. Historians have suggested that some serial ideas in visual art are present already in Monet, whose many paintings of the Saint-Lazare train station and Rouen cathedral show the same subject or scene in constantly changing light. Stockhausen cunningly reversed these terms in his manifesto of musical serialism: the myriad forms that serialism generated were not "the same thing in different light," but rather "something always different in the same light."

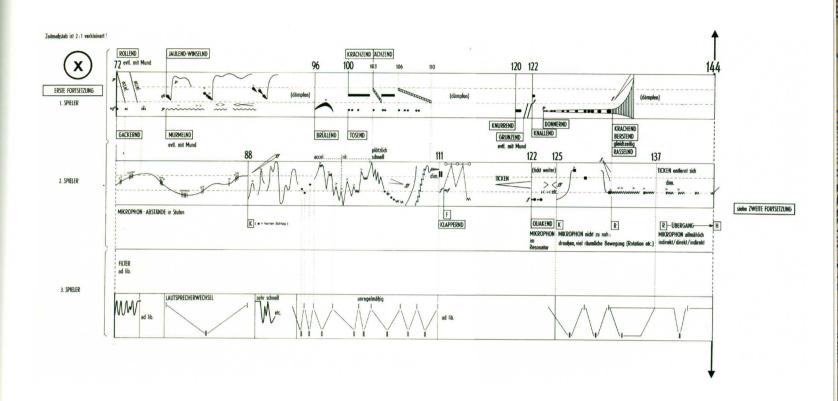
Stockhausen's serialism was essentially a way of quantizing perceptual continua (e.g., frequency, timbre, duration) and then choosing sets of elements using series of integers.9 This mechanistic approach also left considerable leeway for improvisation, especially after Stockhausen sought to specify degrees of change, rather than using the serial system to generate individual elements themselves.<sup>10</sup> On the macroscopic level, Stockhausen engaged with the question of musical form, and this is where he saw the most direct relationship with Bauermeister's work. In an essay from the program book accompanying Bauermeister's influential and highly successful 1962 exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Stockhausen wrote of her work in similar terms to his own.11 Her early "dot pictures" (Pünktchenbilder) exemplified deterministic forms, which mediate between an individual object and a group of objects. Other Bauermeister works related to the Stockhausenian concept of group form, which confers "equal status in more highly organized organisms through characteristic group formations." Still others were understood as embodying principles of statistical form, wherein the artist "attempt[s] to mediate collectives organized according to laws of large numbers with groups and points." In addition to these three categories of deterministic forms, Stockhausen viewed several Bauermeister works as variable forms, which "attempt to compose indeterminacy relationships." 12 One such example is Bauermeister's Magnetbilder (1960), a piece that invited viewers to exchange panels that were mounted on a magnetic sheet.13

During Bauermeister's inaugural Amsterdam show, Stockhausen's music was performed in the exhibition space. One work on the program, *Refrain*, includes a movable transparent plastic strip with the printed score. This strip is printed with special musical symbols. When laid over the score, it adds

"recurrent disturbances that ruffle the ringing tranquility"<sup>14</sup> of the relatively calm vibraphone, celeste, and piano texture. Stockhausen's *vieldeutiger Form* (polyvalent form), a term he specifically used in connection with *Refrain*, described "an attempt to ensure that for each moment occurring in the course of one context, not just one single combination is to be fixed, but variously many, all of which are equally valid." This category encompasses Bauermeister's next artistic innovation, which ushered in one of her most successful periods as an artist.

On their drive back from Amsterdam in 1961, Bauermeister and Stockhausen stopped at an antique store and found a wooden box filled with optical lenses of every shape, size, and strength. Realizing that lenses were not just able to alter a static image, but could enable a more dynamic viewing experience, she conceived the lens box.16 In 1963, she produced her first piece Ohne Titel (Untitled, figs. 11 and 12) utilizing this concept. This work, as well as her other extraordinary lens boxes, consists of a detailed drawing with words, shapes and/or abstract designs situated on the interior of a custom-built wooden box. Then, several layers of optical lenses mounted on transparent plates are slid in between the front of the box and the drawing at the back. The result is "reminiscent of peering into a basin of percolating liquid[:] vision is thrown into oscillation, alternately drawing into the box's interior and cast outside its boundaries."17 One work, called MUSIC BOX - from and with Karlheinz Stockhausen (1965) is a genuine collaborative effort in that the basic drawings are in Stockhausen's own hand. Bauermeister's lenses hover in front of Stockhausen's fanciful beams of eighth notes, playful musical rests, and "performance indications," which seem to reach beyond their musical signification, aspiring to become autonomous graphic elements themselves.<sup>18</sup>

A few months after the Amsterdam show, Bauermeister moved to New York City, where she quickly embedded herself in the city's vibrant contemporary art scene. Working with several prominent personalities including Allen Ginsberg, Alvin Lucier, and Charlotte Moorman, she helped direct the 1964 New York premiere of *Originale* with Allan Kaprow.<sup>19</sup> This run was one of the more colorful music/theatrical productions of the decade, not just because of its motley cast of characters, but also because of the controversy surrounding it. It took place in a small theater across the street from Carnegie Hall. On opening night, a group of protesters picketed outside, carrying placards with slogans such as "down with cultural capitalism!" The rally was mostly against Stockhausen; still, many Fluxus artists previously allied with Bauermeister demonstrated, including George Maciunas, who led the event under the banner "Action Against Cultural Imperialism." The media viewed this and subsequent disruptions as part of the theatrical event itself. As Maciunas's efforts



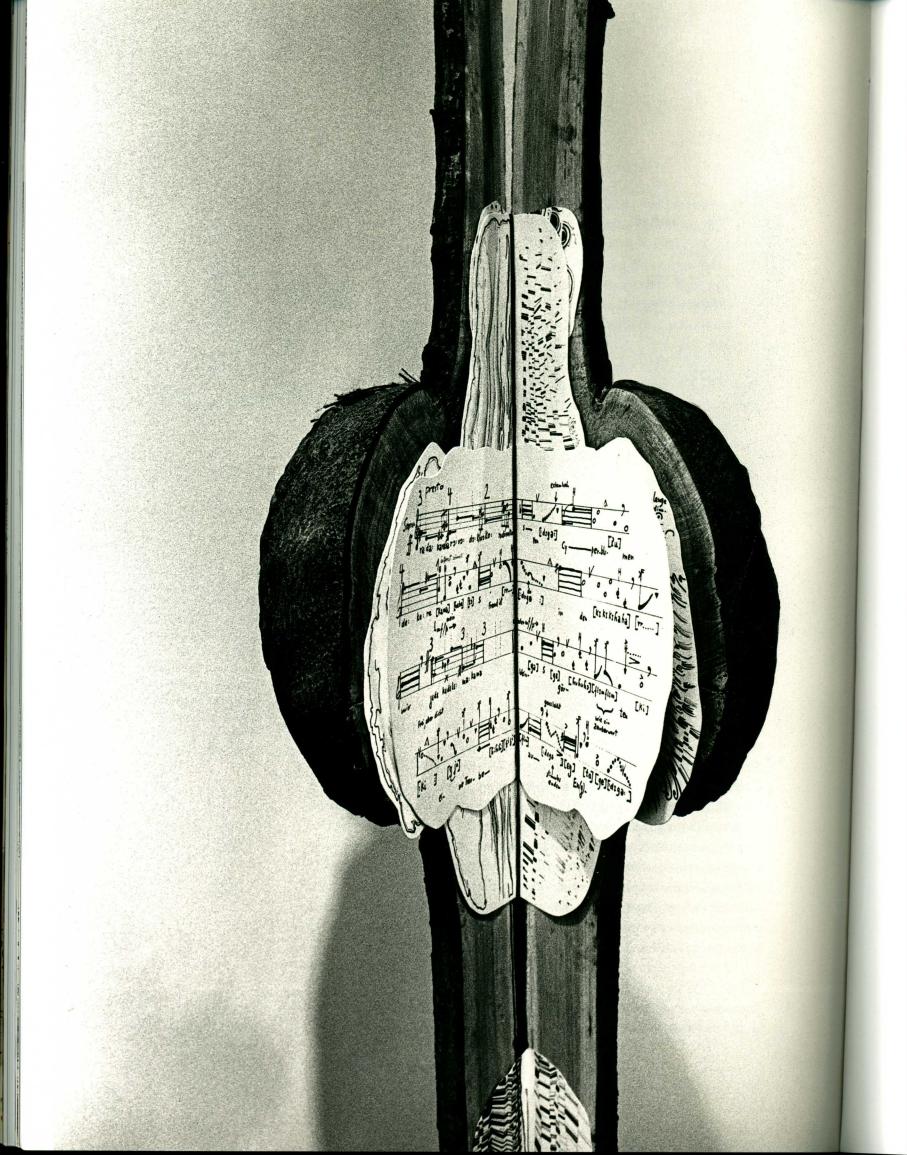
to derail the show became more and more audacious, Bauermeister became increasingly adept at defusing them.<sup>20</sup>

When she was not defending *Originale* in the theater and on the street, Bauermeister was planning her next solo show. Her first lens boxes went on display at the Bonino gallery in New York City in 1965.<sup>21</sup> The overwhelming success of this show led to a long-term relationship with the gallery's owners and many more engagements across the United States.<sup>22</sup> As early as 1964, Stockhausen had assimilated Bauermeister's newer ideas, and he applied them to his own musical invention in an important work called *Mikrophonie I* (fig. 29). In this piece, two percussionists standing on either side of an enormous tam-tam agitate it with cardboard tubes, plastic boxes, metal implements, double-bass bows, and other objects. Two other performers, paired with the percussionists, move microphones around the tam-tam in various patterns. The other two performers – the "sound projectionists," to use a common term in Stockhausen's vocabulary – sit in the center of the hall, electronically manipulating the sounds that are picked up through the microphones and distributing them through an array of loudspeakers.

As one writer has noted, the amplification and "spatialization" of sounds dramatically enlarges the scope of the work, since the "stereo effect will be three-dimensional, with sounds appearing to leap and dance in front of

## FIGURE 29.

Karlheinz Stockhausen. Mikrophonie I, 1964. Mikrophonie I für Tam-Tam, 2 Mikrophone, 2 Filter und Regler (6 Spieler), Nr. 15. © 1974 by Universal Edition (London) Ltd., London/UE 15138



the loudspeakers."<sup>23</sup> This is another analog to Bauermeister's "percolating" lens boxes: as her magnifying lenses amplify the drawings behind them, Stockhausen's amplifiers magnify the sound energy around the tam-tam. But unlike Bauermeister's static drawings, Stockhausen's tam-tam constantly oscillates in time. In this and other works of the 1960s, Stockhausen ushered in an approach to composition wherein live sounds could be altered in real time to enable another layer of compositional forming.

If Originale, Refrain, and Mikrophonie I are emblematic of the relationships between their artistic craftsmanship, then Stockhausen's Momente (Moments) sets its sights on the more personal aspects of the partnership: the couple officially married in 1967. A large-scale work for choir, vocal soloists, and orchestra, Momente is a piece with reconfigurable elements (like Bauermeister's Magnetbilder). In other words, sections of the piece may be rearranged or reordered. Stockhausen began composing Momente while the couple lived and worked in an unheated Sicilian villa belonging to the Baron Francesco Agnello, shortly before Bauermeister's 1962 exhibition. Among the many sections or "moments" that make up Momente, those designated "M" have primarily melodic, horizontal, or monophonic characteristics. M, of course, stands both for Melody and Mary. When one type of moment "blends" with another, it is indicated in parenthesis. The M(m) moment is unique because it represents the most "pure" instantiation of the M-type music. In Partiturbaum (1964) - a work assigned to Bauermeister's oeuvre - the M(m) music plays a central role (fig. 30). The piece consists of a tree trunk with an enormous growth or burl on it. The stem is split open, and several pages of Stockhausen's handwritten score appear, cut out from paper in the shape of what appears to be female genitalia.24 As Stockhausen wrote, "Momente is dedicated to Mary Bauermeister, who is musically 'portrayed' in several moments (e.g. in the solo of the M(m) moment)".25 In this "Mary" moment, the main sung text is the amorous Biblical Song of Solomon. Stockhausen's Momente and its quotation in the Partiturbaum suggest that Stockhausen was moving beyond the rationalism of his earlier works and towards a new conception of art as a more personal and sensual medium.

After *Momente*, Stockhausen dedicated his hour-long vocal work *Stimmung* (1968) to Bauermeister. This piece is remarkable for a number of reasons.<sup>26</sup> It has been interpreted as an ode to erotic love, but also it exhibits subtle serial thinking even though the score may give the impression that it is freely constructed.<sup>27</sup> Built entirely around a single overtone series whose partials are sung by the six singers (a "sex-tet"), *Stimmung* interweaves erotic texts among the slowly mutating musical figures. In one of these texts, Stockhausen pays homage to Bauermeister's single-line drawings by writing the phonemes

### FIGURE 30.

Mary Bauermeister.

Partiturbaum (Score
Tree, with an excerpt
from the score for
Momente by Karlheinz
Stockhausen), 1964.
Collection of Mary
Bauermeister. Image:
Galeria Bonino

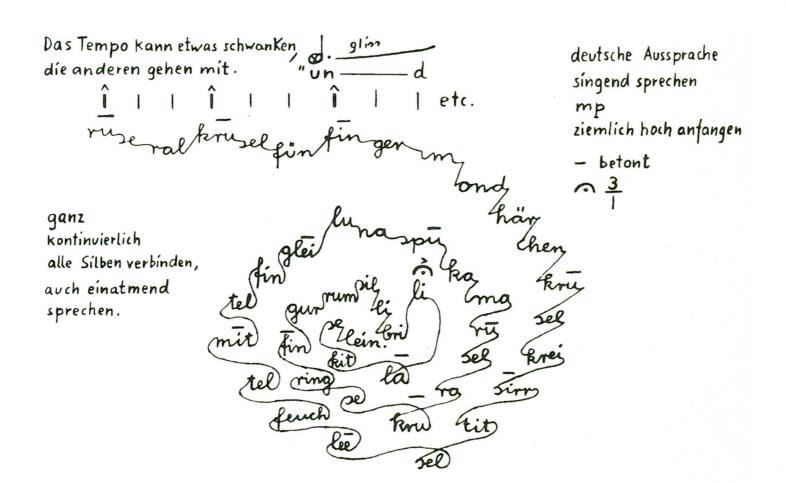


FIGURE 31.

Karlheinz Stockhausen. Stimmung, 1968. Stimmung für 6 Vokalisten, Nr. 24. © 1969 by Universal Edition A. G., Wien/ UE 14805 using a single pen stroke (fig. 31).<sup>28</sup> The sensual sounds and texts in *Momente* and *Stimmung* are, according to Leopoldo Siano, evidence of an "eruption of eroticism in Stockhausen's music" attributable to Bauermeister's influence.<sup>29</sup>

Even as their personal relationship wound down, finally ending in divorce in 1973, Bauermeister and Stockhausen continued to collaborate occasionally. In Stockhausen's works *Sirius* (1975–77) and *Harlequin* (1975), Bauermeister helped design the scenes and costumes.<sup>30</sup> Stockhausen dedicated one of his pieces for solo clarinet from his collection *Amour* (1974–76) to her. The *Michael Sign*, which is a central symbol throughout the massive *Licht* (1977–2003) opera heptology, was also a Bauermeister design.<sup>31</sup> Consisting of three concentric circles with four phallic iris-bulbs emanating from the center (fig. 32), this icon adorns Stockhausen's grave.<sup>32</sup>

Stockhausen's graphic designs for his compact disc series, such as the artwork for the release of his late work *Cosmic Pulses* (fig. 33) often incorporate important elements of his scores or sketches, redrawn in colorful ink to highlight essential structural relationships. Is this visual art, musical analysis, or musical notation? Theodor Adorno's diagnosis that the boundaries among the arts were breaking down in the electronic age seems particularly applicable here, though Larson Powell suggests that Stockhausen might not so much have sought to refresh the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but was in fact searching for a method to bring historically delineated art-forms into tension with each other.<sup>33</sup> A similar analysis could apply to Bauermeister, whose works incorporating stones from the beach (*Eighteen Rows*, pl. 2, cat. 31) or everyday linens woven by Sicilian women (*Needless Needles*, 1964) set these

commonplace objects into tension with the singular, constructed tendencies of high art. The collaborations between Bauermeister and Stockhausen further develop an approach to art that can be traced to surrealists such as André Masson and unconventional avant-gardists such as the Belgian artist and composer Jacques Calonne. These artists tended to view the boundaries between the arts as artificial, in much in the same way as Bauermeister and Stockhausen did.

If his relationship with Bauermeister resulted in Stockhausen's recognition of the value in sensual aspects of musical creation, it is also quite possible that his encounter with her artwork marked an early stage in forming the view that the serial principles for music of the 1950s (which he constantly developed in subsequent decades) were only one facet of a much larger, more general or even cosmological approach to design. Since he found it easy for his formal categories to cross boundaries into visual art, it might have occurred to Stockhausen that they could apply to a much broader spectrum of cosmic activity. While this reading of Stockhausen's intellectual development is speculative, it is certain that his collaboration with Bauermeister encompassed one of the most productive periods of their artistic lives. There is often a playful, respectful attitude in their shared projects that is evident regardless of the state of their personal relationship.<sup>34</sup> Their work together forms an important thread in the interwoven narrative of art and music in the last century.

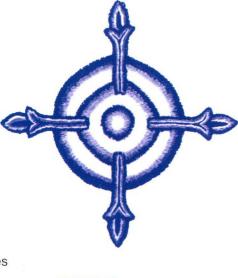
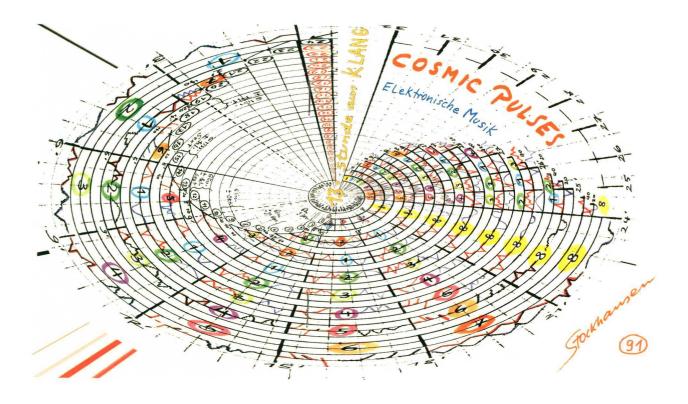


FIGURE 32.

Mary Bauermeister and Karlheinz Stockhausen. *Michael Sign*. © Stockhausen Foundation for Music. http://www.karlheinzstockhausen.org

### FIGURE 33.

Karlheinz Stockhausen. Cosmic Pulses, 2006– 2007. © Stockhausen Foundation for Music. http://www.karlheinzstockhausen.org



endnotes

- Mary Bauermeister, Ich hänge im Triolengitter: Mein Leben mit Karlheinz Stockhausen (Munich: Edition Elke Heidenreich, 2011), p. 25.
- Wilfried Dörstel, "Situation, Moment, Labyr, FLUXUS oder Das zerstörte Original. Das Musiktheater 'Originale' von Karlheinz Stockhausen," in Historisches Archiv der Stadt Köln, ed., intermedial, kontrovers, experimentell. Das Atelier Mary Bauermeister In Köln 1960–1962, (Cologne: Emons Verlag, 1993), pp. 186–205.
- 3 Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Texte zur Musik*, vol. 2 (Cologne: DuMont, 1964), p. 108.
- 4 Bauermeister, *Ich hänge im Triolengitter*, p. 91. "I conceived *Originale* in 1961 along with him, but this was not publicly made clear. I was only one of the eighteen 'originals,' Stockhausen was the composer, it was considered his piece" (author's translation).
- 5 Bauermeister, Heinz-Klaus Metzger, and others speak in greater detail about Originale in a short film by Gregor Zootzky, available on Youtube at https://www. youtube.com/watch?v=zAGxPqqjB9g.
- 6 More on her complex relationship with Stockhausen's wife, Doris, can be found in Bauermeister's memoir, *Ich hänge im Triolengitter*, and in Paul Miller, "Review of Mary Bauermeister, *Ich hänge im Triolengitter: Mein Leben mit Karlheinz Stockhausen," Twentieth Century Music* vol. 9/1-2 (March 2012): 221–27.
- 7 Katharina Sykora, Das Phänomen des Seriellen in der Kunst: Aspekte einer künstlerischen Methode von Monet bis zur amerikanischen Pop Art (Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen + Neumann, 1983), p. 34ff.
- 8 Karlheinz Stockhausen, "Gruppenkomposition: Klavierstück I," in *Texte zur Musik*, vol. 1 (Cologne: DuMont, 1963), p. 70.
- 9 For example, a traditional way to quantize the pitch continuum was to fix twelve equally-spaced pitches within the musical interval of an octave.

- 10 Ligeti cautioned those who interpreted serialism as a simple dialectic between "freedom and mechanical composition" (György Ligeti, "Pierre Boulez," tr. Leo Black, in die Reihe 4 [Bryn Mawr: Theodore Presser, 1960], pp. 36–37).
- 11 karlheinz stockhausen & mary bauermeister, exhibition catalogue with an introduction by Karlheinz Stockhausen (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1962), catalog 311. Reprinted (in German) in Karlheinz Stockhausen, Texte zur Musik, vol. 2, pp. 167–69.
- 12 Stockhausen, "Mary Bauermeister," in Texte zur Musik, vol. 2, pp. 167–69, tr. Jerome Kohl (this translation has not been published as of this date). A longer exposition of Stockhausen's formal categories can be found in Karlheinz Stockhausen, "Erfindung und Entdeckung," in Texte zur Musik, vol. 1, p. 230–51.
- 13 Bauermeister's diagrams of the Magnetbilder can be found in intermedial, kontrovers, experimentell, p. 145.
- 14 Robin Maconie, Other Planets (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005), p. 188.
- 15 Stockhausen, Texte zur Musik, vol. 2, p. 168, tr. Jerome Kohl (this translation has not been published as of this date).
- 16 Bauermeister, Ich hänge im Triolengitter, pp. 78–79.
- 17 Natilee Harren, "Worlds in a Box: Mary Bauermeister and the Experimental Art of the Sixties," http://artforum.com/picks/id=27263&view=print (accessed August 11, 2014).
- 18 In fact, Stockhausen's Refrain already has some association with the lens box concept, because "looking through" the transparent strip to the music behind is much like looking into a lens box. Much later, Stockhausen put actual music into boxes when he designed the twelve Tierkreis (1975–76) music boxes, each of which plays a melody specifically composed for a zodiac sign. These melodies

- were composed so they could be played on wind-up music boxes, which were custom built by the firm Jean Reuge in Switzerland (Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Texte zur Musik*, vol. 4 [Cologne: DuMont, 1978], p. 275.) Stockhausen dedicated the melody *Virgo* to Bauermeister and Jaynee Stephens. Stockhausen incorporated these melodies into many other subsequent works.
- 19 A three-part Youtube video of this is available online as of August 2014. The first ten-minute video in the series (directed by Peter Moore) can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGpwaB4A-g9E (accessed August 20, 2014).
- 20 Bauermeister narrates the entire episode in colorful detail in Bauermeister, *Ich hänge im Triolengitter*, pp. 159–73.
- 21 Reinhard Spieler, ed., Worlds in a Box:

  Mary Bauermeister and the Experimental

  Art of the Sixties, exhibition catalogue,

  Wilhelm-Hack Museum (Ludwigshafen

  am Rhein, 2010), p. 70. See also

  Bauermeister/paintings and constructions,

  exhibition catalogue with an introduction

  by Alan Solomon (New York: Galeria

  Bonino, Ltd., 1965).
- 22 See Bauermeister/paintings and constructions, exhibition catalogue (New York: Galeria Bonino, 1967).

  The impressive list of shows at the back of this catalogue bears witness to the rapid and impressive success

  Bauermeister achieved between 1965 and 1967 in the United States.
- 23 Maconie, Other Planets, p. 257.
- 24 The idea of cutting something open to reveal another layer of activity finds its way into a later Stockhausen work, *Musik im Bauch* ("Music in the Belly," 1975). Towards the end of this remarkable piece, a suspended life-size doll is split open, revealing three of the aforementioned *Tierkreis* music boxes, which are then wound up and played for the audience.
- Stockhausen, *Texte zur Musik*, vol. 4,p. 59 (author's translation).

- 26 A general introduction can be found in Richard Toop, Six Lectures from the Stockhausen Courses Kürten 2002 (Kürten: Stockhausen Verlag, 2005); also see Gregory Rose and Simon Emmerson, "Stockhausen's Stimmung," in Contact no. 20 (Autumn 1979): 20–24.
- 27 Toop, Six Lectures, p. 39.
- 28 An example of Bauermeister's one-line drawings is *Unsere ménage-a-trois* oder die goldene und die verlorne Generation (1963), Bauermeister, *Ich hänge im Triolengitter*, plate 13. Hardly unique to her, single-line drawing (or "continuous line drawing") was earlier explored by Andre Masson (1896–1987), a surrealist artist who executed several such drawings "automatically." Masson's son Diego has performed many of Stockhausen's musical works.
- 29 Leopoldo Siano, "Mary Bauermeister and Karlheinz Stockhausen: Between Music and Visual Art in the Sixties," lecture given at the 2011 Stockhausen Courses, Kürten (unpublished manuscript).
- 30 Bauermeister, *Ich hänge im Triolengitter*, p. 283.
- 31 Ibid, p. 290.
- 32 The icon is a derivative of the Michael symbol mentioned in the *Urantia Book*, Paper 53:5:4.
- 33 See Theodor Adorno, "Art and the Arts," tr. Rodney Livingstone, in *Can One Live after Auschwitz: A Philosophical Reader* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003) and Larson Powell, "The Modulated Subject," p. 1, *Search* 7 (summer 2010) at http://www.searchnewmusic.org (accessed August 13, 2014).
- 34 Heather Roche identifies these characteristics as important in collaborative relationships between composers and performers in her short essay "Intimacy in Performer-Composer Relationships: The Dynamics of Collaborative Space," at http://www.academia.edu/248968 (accessed August 14, 2014).