

anfare

XENAKIS: *Kraanerg*. Roger Woodward conducting the Alpha Centauri Ensemble. ETCETERA KTC 1075 [DDD]; 70:47. Produced by Ralph Lane. (Distributed by Qualiton.)

Kraanerg is not the name of the latest sci-fi movie villain. Nor is it some CIA counterintelligence operation. It is a conflation of the Greek words for "accomplishment" (*kraan*) and "energy" (*erg*). And if there is one thing this big, violent, intricate, threatening, fascinating, seismic piece of color and texture has, it is energy. Composed in 1969, *Kraanerg* is as much a reflection of its turbulent time as is Berio's *Sinfonia*. Scored for only twenty-three instruments and tape, *Kraanerg* is unusual for Xenakis as it combines two media he has usually pursued separately: electroacoustic and orchestral. Tonally conceived and entirely notated by conventional means, its building blocks are relatively simple: staccato brass figures, skittering glissandos, keening, wailing cries, blocks of sound, and long, arching, curves. Acting as an "orchestra in absentia," the tape consists primarily of transformed orchestral sound. It is often difficult to distinguish between live and taped sound, especially in the early going. The tape is subjected to various distortions and amplifications giving it a growling, obstinate dragon-like appearance (echoes of Fafner in his cave, but more menacing). Contrasts of extremes (loud vs. soft, high vs. low) abound, but above all, this is a work of combat and conflict between orchestra and tape, with the battle continuing throughout the seventy minutes. Turmoil is almost constant; spots of repose are few and of short duration, but are all the more effective for it (e.g., the startling periods of complete silence); the slow, arching strings in the twenty-second minute; or the sweet, twittering winds in the fifty-fourth. For all this, the music is surprisingly consonant and flowing. Xenakis's discord is rooted not only in 1968, but also in the Resistance in Athens as well as prophesying the future where he sees a "biological struggle" occurring in a mere three generations on a planet crowded with a population of 24,000,000,000. *Kraanerg's* climax occurs in the sixty-ninth minute. The music continues in a hesitant, almost aimless manner until extinguished.

Recorded at the Sydney Opera House in conjunction with ballet performances, Etcetera's recording reflects a presumably accurate orchestra-pit-size soundstage. Clear, detailed sound; good low end. One band for the entire work; understandable for a work that depends on cumulative effect and would seem impossible or undesirable to excerpt or divide. Interesting essays on Xenakis by Milan Kundera and Richard Toop, and detailed, if occasionally effulgent, notes by conductor Woodward. Strongly recommended.

Benjamin Pernick