

## Prima Facie Records PFCD153

### Stockhausen: Stimmung



#### **Electric Phoenix**

Nicole Tibbels, Judith Rees, Nancy Long, Daryl Runswick, Michael Dore, Terry Edwards – John Whiting (sound)

Recorded in live performance at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, on 6th April 1997, by John Whiting.

Total Running Time 79:21

#### **Daryl Runswick** writes:

“When Electric Phoenix prepared their performance of *Stimmung* in 1983 there had been many performances (and at least one recording) since the work’s premiere in 1968, not one of them properly improvised. The ideal of assembling (and paying) six singers to live together for weeks memorising 51 sections which might occur in unimaginable possible orders was patently absurd. Every performance this writer knows of had much of the improvisation removed. The ordering of the models was laid out in advance and the interjections planned and rehearsed like any other score. Stockhausen himself partook of this dereliction, issuing a printed version giving a ‘preferred’ order which could be put on a music stand and read as if it were a piece of Schumann. I’m sure he did this to increase the number of performances his piece would get, but in doing so he emasculated the concept.

In 1983 Terry Edwards, director of Electric Phoenix, commissioned an English translation of the poems and nonsense rhymes in *Stimmung* (Stockhausen wrote them in German) and asked me to prepare a version of the work as close as possible to his original intention within the bounds of financial reality. Given Electric Phoenix’s busy schedule memorisation was out of the question, but I was determined the ordering of the sections should be improvised. To that end I cut out the 51 models from the master sheets with scissors (they are printed as blocks of small rectangles, see illustration) and stuck them onto cards which I inserted into a card-index box. Each singer was given a complete set in their own box. When it was their turn to lead, they could riffle through the box, choose a model and start it. The others would quickly recognise the model, find it in their own box and join in.

This simple device ensured an improvised ordering of the models and on this recording, made live in concert in April 1997, that is exactly what you hear, plus the poems in English. Every Electric Phoenix performance of *Stimmung* had a different improvised ordering. The frisson this produced was felt not only by the performers but also the audience, who can be heard here laughing their appreciation.”