



Curatorial > PROBES

With this section, RWM continues a line of programmes devoted to exploring the complex map of sound art from different points of view organised in curatorial series.

Curated by Chris Cutler, **PROBES** takes Marshall McLuhan's conceptual contrapositions as a starting point to analyse and expose the search for a new sonic language made urgent after the collapse of tonality in the twentieth century. The series looks at the many probes and experiments that were launched in the last century in search of new musical resources, and a new aesthetic; for ways to make music adequate to a world transformed by disorientating technologies.

Curated by Chris Cutler

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At the start of the seventies, Chris Cutler co-founded The Ottawa Music Company – a 22-piece Rock composer's orchestra – before joining British experimental group Henry Cow with whom he toured, recorded and worked in dance and theatre projects for the next eight years. Subsequently he co-founded a series of mixed national groups: Art Bears, News from Babel, Cassiber, The (ec) Nudes, The Science Group and p53 and was a permanent member of American bands Pere Ubu, Hail and The Wooden Birds. Outside a succession of special projects for stage, theatre, film and radio he still works regularly with Fred Frith, Zeena Parkins, Jon Rose, Tim Hodgkinson, David Thomas, Peter Blegvad, Daan Vandewalle, Ikue Mori, Lotte Anker, Stevan Tickmayer, Annie Gosfield and spectralists Iancu Dumitrescu and Ana Maria Avram. He is a permanent member of The Bad Boys (Cage, Stockhausen, Fluxus...), The Artaud Beats and The Artbears Songbook. Adjacent projects include commissioned works for radio, various live movie soundtracks, *Signe de Trois* for surround-sound projection, the daily year-long soundscape project *Out of the Blue Radio* (for Resonance FM) and p53 for Orchestra and Soloists.

He founded and runs the independent label ReR Megacorp and the art distribution service Gallery and Academic, is editor of the occasional sourcebook *Unfiled*, author of the book *File Under Popular* – and many articles and papers published in 16 languages. He was on faculty for a while at the Museum School in Boston and lectures irregularly on theoretical and music related topics worldwide. He has appeared on over 160 recordings.

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PROBES #1

According to stave notation there were just twelve notes in an octave; in the real world you could divide an octave any way you liked. As music moved from eye to ear following the invention of the phonograph, composers began to listen to the notes between the lines and spaces.

01. Summary

In the late nineteenth century two facts conspired to change the face of music: the collapse of common practice tonality (which overturned the certainties underpinning the world of Art music), and the invention of a revolutionary new form of memory, sound recording (which redefined and greatly empowered the world of popular music). A tidal wave of probes and experiments into new musical resources and new organisational practices ploughed through both disciplines, bringing parts of each onto shared terrain before rolling on to underpin a new aesthetics able to follow sound and its manipulations beyond the narrow confines of 'music'. This series tries analytically to trace and explain these developments, and to show how, and why, both musical and post-musical genres take the forms they do. This first programme sets the scene and investigates early reconsiderations of pitch: probes that postulate new scales to be constructed through the ever-greater subdivision of the inherited intervals of equal temperament.

02. Playlist

- 01 Gregorio Paniagua, 'Anakrousis', 1978
- 02 Mozart, 'Fantasie in D Minor (K. 397)', unknown date. Performed by Richard Egarr on an 1805 fortepiano.
- 03 Bruce Odland and Sam Auringer, 'Weather', 1955
- 04 Unidentified artist, Burkina Faso
- 05 Swedish Bagpipe, 'Ljugaren', recording date and details unknown
- 06 Salim Al-N & Pearl Divers, 'Haddadi' (Muharraq, Bahrein), 1972
- 07 Anon, South Sudan, recording date and details unknown
- 08 Christina Kubisch, 'La Ville Magnétique', 2008
- 09 Josh Russell, 'Transgenic bacteria freezing in a dry ice/methanol bath', 2003
- 10 Johannes Ockeghem, 'Kyrie', mid fourteenth century
- 11 Hildegard von Bingen, 'Columba Aspexit', second half twelfth century
- 12 John Dowland, 'Lachrimae, 1596
- 13 Giovanni Pierluigi Palestrina, 'Super Flumina Babylonis', composed ca. 1584
- 14 Guillaume Machaut 'Hoketus David', 1364
- 15 Edgar Varése, 'Tuning up', 1947
- 16 Snatch of Bach in Werckmeister tuning
- 17 Anonymous, title and date unknown
- 18 Erik Satie, 'Gnossiennes no.1', 1890-92
- 19 'Elindultam a Hazámból', field recording by Béla Bartók in 1906
- 20 Alois Hába, 'Sonata for quarter-tone piano', 1956-7
- 21 Ivan Wyschnegradsky, 'Prelude no. 5', 1934
- 22 Scott Crothers, 'Quarter-tone Piano Prelude no. 2', 2008
- 23 Quartertone scale
- 24 Charles Ives, 'Quarter-tone studies: Largo', 1925
- 25 Charles Ives, 'Allegro', 1925
- 26 Julián Carrillo, 'Horizonte', 1950
- 27 Julián Carrillo, 'Baluceos, part 2', 1960
- 28 Mildred Couper, 'Xanadu', 1930
- 29 Peter Schat, 'Collages voor 31-toonsorgel', 1962
- 30 Easley Blackwood, 'Suite in Four Movements, mvt. 1', 1979
- 31 Easley Blackwood, 'Lento', 1979



[Mildred Couper and Joachim Chassman]

32 Josef Berg, 'Dreaming', 1970

33 Gregorio Paniagua, 'Anakrousis', unknown date

03. Selected bibliography

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Charles Rosen, 'Atonality', in *Schoenberg*. London: Marion Boyars, 1976.

Curt Sachs, *The Wellsprings of Music*. The Hague: M. Nijhof, 1962.

Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Hanover and London: University Press of New England/Wesleyan University, 1998.

04. Selected links

American Festival of Microtonal Music

www.afmm.org

Dutch Microtonal Society

www.huygens-fokker.org/dutchmicrotonalsociety/microtonality.html

Foerster piano Company: quartertone pianos for Hába and Wyshegradsky

www.august-foerster.de/cms/en/20/Quartertone-Grand-Piano

Huygens-Fokker site on microtonal music with sections on Hába, Carillo, Wyshegradsky, Ives, Fokker and more

www.huygens-fokker.org

More on memory systems and paradigm changes in music

www.macba.cat/quaders-audio-chris-cutler

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06. Copyright note

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