RWM
RÀDIO WEB MACBA

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.
www.ccutler.com/ccutler

PROBES #16.2
Auxiliaries

The PROBES Auxiliaries collect materials related to each episode that try to give a broader – and more immediate – impression of the field. They are a scan, not a deep listening vehicle; an indication of what further investigation might uncover and, for that reason, most are edited snapshots of longer pieces. We have tried to light the corners as well as the central arena, and to not privilege so-called serious over so-called popular genres. In this new auxiliary, we wonder how far you can go with banjos, mandolins, balalaikas, jew's harps and ensembles of folk instruments. And it's pretty far.

01. Playlist

00:00 Gregorio Paniagua, 'Anakrousis', 1978

00:05 Valentinas Krulikovskis and Viačeslavas Lukjanovas, TEDx talk (excerpts), 2012
Two actors and serious jew's harp afficionados speaking at a TEDx talk in Vilnius in 2012.

01:04 Bert Jansch, 'The Waggoner's Lad' (excerpts), 1966
Though not a banjo player, this is a rare occasion on which Bert played one, adapting his guitar picking style directly to the five-string. That's his ex-flatmate John Renbourne playing the guitar.

02:50 Ron Geesin (excerpt), 1966
Geesin, a noted improviser on both banjo and piano, was a Scottish maverick composer, performer, sound architect, broadcaster and lecturer – with a background in Dixieland jazz – who resolutely ploughed his own furrow before emerging into (rather specialised) public consciousness in 1967 with his first, extraordinary, solo LP *A Raise of the Eyebrows*. In 1970 he orchestrated Pink Floyd's *Atom Heart Mother* and worked with Roger Waters on the soundtrack for Roy Battersby's *The Body*, going on to score various movies, work with installations, do concerts and publish CDs; a force of nature incomprehensibly overlooked in the mainstream.

04:11 Unknown player, 'Istikhbar Chaabi' (excerpt), 2012
Chaabi is a traditional music of Algiers that has a chequered past but now has the status of a folk music. Someone here found the banjo to be a suitable vehicle. Posted anonymously online with no details attached.

05:24 Bob Drake, 'Study 14' (excerpt), 2015
This is a five-string banjo, with all the strings tuned to the same note in one of two octaves. It's laid flat on its back and the strings are picked rapidly with one hand while the other, holding a glass slide is slowly moved downwards one whole step over the course of two minutes. Eight banjos were overdubbed doing the same thing, two for each octave, over 4 octaves.

07:24 Mark Sylvester, 'Cascade' (excerpt), 2009
An American guitarist, banjo player and composer who is mostly active in folk circles but writes often and convincingly for his instrument in more contemporary and formal settings.

08:34 Duke Davis Banjo Band, 'Introduction', ca. 1926

08:57 Bela Fleck, 'Live at Audio Technica, Akron, Ohio' (excerpt), 2013
Another American banjo specialist and composer – and a tireless advocate for his instrument across traditional and non-traditional, composed and improvised, folk and classical settings.

[Ron Geesin]

10:42 Sandy Bull, 'Triple Ballade' (excerpts), 1965
An anomalous figure of the American folk revival who played a wide range of instruments and essayed an eclectic repertoire that included, just to look at his first two LPs from 1963 and 1964, a five-string banjo arrangement of *Carmina Burana*, baroque pieces by Joseph Byrd and Johann Sebastian Bach, folk and gospel tunes, cross-cultural improvisations with Ornette Coleman's drummer, Billy Higgins – (featured a then highly unorthodox modal tuning), an extended variation on Chuck Berry's 'Memphis Tennessee' and this composition (originally for voices) by Guilliaume Machaut (1300-77) interpreted for oud. Bull was also an early experimenter with multi-tracking techniques and goes, I think, unjustly unsung today.

11:50 Paul Metzger, 'Live in Bruxelles' (excerpt), 2013
An American guitarist with a background in rock and long-form improvisation who took up the banjo for timbral reasons in the nineties, modifying a successive variety of instruments in various ways (the current model has 23 strings) and fashioning his own plectra from coconut shells, coins, and stone – though here he is mostly playing with a bow.

11:48 John Craton, 'Mandolin Concerto No. 1' (excerpt), 2005
An American composer best known for his operas, ballets and diverse works for classical mandolin.

13:47 Sergei Vasilenko, 'Balalaika Concerto' (excerpt), 1929
Born in 1872, a Russian, then Soviet, composer of mystic and folkloristic bent, tutor to Aram Khachaturian and Nikolai Roslavets who referred explicitly in his work to many of the world's more exotic musics. He also composed one of the few substantial concertos for the balalaika.

15:30 Jazz Mandolin Project, 'Jungle Tango' (excerpt), 2003
Not a band but the project name for recordings by American mandolinist Jamie Masefield (with invited partners) that fly mandolins into a wide variety of musical genres: acoustic, improvisational, jazz, rock and multimedia events. This is from their drum'n'bass period.

17:53 Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, 'Concerto for Jew's Harp, Mandola and Orchestra' (excerpts), ca. 1765
With the distinction of having taught both Hummel and Beethoven, the celebrated Viennese composer Johann Albrechtsberger wrote many theoretical works, became Kapellmeister at St. Stephen's Cathedral and composed not only for more conventional forces but also jew's harp, mandola (a tenor/bass mandolin) and (unusual for the time) alto trombone. The mandola listed here is a species of lute.

19:25 Natalia Fedorova, improvisation, ca. 2009
Yakutian, multiple prizewinning, khomus player and author of the tutorial book – and CD – *Khomus and My World*. There are over 160 kinds of jew's harps around the world, but the Yakutian metal khomus can be immediately distinguished by its size (its reed length can be up to 10 cm) – and it's distinctive bass sound. It's a shamanic instrument there, as well as the national instrument of the Sakha people. The republic lists some 7000 stage performers on the instrument.

20:42 Kim Borisov, 'Improvisation' (excerpt), 2007
Chosen at the age of twelve to be the attending khomusist to the First President of the Sakha Republic, Borisov has performed all over the world and was nominated as one of the nine world virtuosi at the 7th International Jew's Harp Congress in the Sakha Republic. Otherwise he works as a diplomat.

22:01 Jew's Harp Trio Aubergine, 'Vergeten Paars' (excerpt), 2009
From Zeeland in the Netherlands.

22:50 Looping Jaw Harp Orchestra, 'Headbanging Harpers' (excerpts), 2011
Sometime project of Austrian journalist and percussionist Robert Koch, with an assortment of musicians whose mission, according to Koch, is to contribute to the diversity of musical species. While guitars are not allowed in the band, three dozen jaw harps, steel pans, marimba, several wind instruments and an overtone and undertone singer are encouraged to roam freely across, and amongst, the musical genres.

[Duke Davis Banjo Band]

24:58 Leonard Cohen, 'Tonight Will Be Fine' (excerpt), 1969
A quiet advocate of the jew's harp, perhaps for poetic reasons, Cohen often discreetly doubles his own voice with it, as here.

25:39 Tony Trischka, 'The Danny Thomas' (excerpt), 2014
Another of the great names of the banjo elite, with his roots in bluegrass. He's the author of numerous instructional books and courses and a player who can, and does, step outside the conventional language of the instrument.

28:29 Astraya, (excerpts), ca. 1981
A live recording from the Davos Festival of an unlikely group formed in 1975 by three Russian composers, Sofia Gubaidulina, Vyacheslav Artemyev and Viktor Suslin, to work experimentally with the extended sonorities of exotic and folk instruments (including kanon, autoharp, tar, dutar, pandur, kemancha, various recorders, zurna, duduk, drums, bells, gongs, guiro, maracas, etc. as well as orchestral cello, double bass and percussion). At first they worked with graphic scores but later simply improvised.

Gregorio Paniagua, 'Anakrousis', 1978

02. Notes

On length and edits.
The purpose of these programmes is to give some practical impression of the probes we discuss. This necessitates for the most part extracting short stretches of music from longer wholes, which, of course, compromises the integrity and disrupts the context inherent in the original works. I have also, on occasion, edited different sections of a longer work together, better to illustrate the points under discussion. So the examples played in the programmes should not be confused with the works themselves. Wherever the word 'excerpt' appears after a title in the programme transcript, this indicates that what follows is an illustration, not a composition as it was conceived or intended. If something catches your ear, please do go back to the source.

For your listening pleasure I have, as always, been cavalier in editing the tracks together, overlapping them, making sometimes hard-to-spot joins, etc. – so, for the sake of clarity, I have prefaced each track with its start time.

Notification
If you want to be notified when a new probe goes up, please mail rermegacorp@dial.pipex.com with subject: Probe Me.

03. Credits

Recorded at Studio Midi-Pyrénées. Engineered by Bob Drake.

04. Acknowledgments

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05. Copyright note