

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.

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 #17.2

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. This new auxiliary wallows in the gamelan, trips into stretched percussion and then slides helplessly into exotic byways.

01. Playlist

00:00 Gregorio Paniagua, 'Anakrousis', 1978

00:04 Lou Harrison speaks (excerpt), 1987

Source recording of an interview with Lou Harrison kindly provided by long-time announcer and producer with WNIB, Classical 97 in Chicago, Bruce Duffie. The full interview is at www.bruceduffie.com/harrison6.html

01:55 Philip Corner, 'Gamelan Adagio' for quartet of angklungs (excerpt), 1981

Corner studied with Henry Cowell, Otto Luening, Dorothy Taubman and Olivier Messiaen and became a founding member of Fluxus. He has written extensively for gamelan and has been a member of Barbara Benary's Gamelan Son of Lion ensemble since 1976.

02:30 Philip Corner, 'Gamelan II: Number Measure Increase Downward' for bonangs and voicing (excerpt), 1975

03:09 Philip Corner, 'Gamelan Concert! 0' for harpsichord, gambang and gamelan ensemble (excerpt), 1981

04:05 György Ligeti, 'Galamb Borong' (excerpt), 1994

Taken from Ligeti's landmark *18 Études*, written between 1985 and 2001 to explore techniques and work through problems and new concepts for solo piano. Ligeti said 'Galamb Borong' was inspired by the gamelan, and is the seventh in the series, which appears at the head of Book II.

06:15 Balinaises Chahutations, 'La Java des Grenouilles' (excerpts), 2007

During a trip to Bali in 2002, Hélène Marseille and Bertrand Baker discovered the gamelan and shipped sixteen of the instruments back to France, where they used them the following year in a street theatre show. In 2006 they ran across the Marseillaise Grand Ruckus collective at a benefit concert, and the two groups decided to try to work together, mixing western, eastern, electronic and acoustic resources.

08:14 Henry Cowell, 'Pulse' (excerpt), 1939

It was Cowell who, in passing, introduced the gamelan to a number of composers, including Lou Harrison and John Cage, through his pioneering 'World Music' course in the thirties. A seminal figure in twentieth century experimental music, Cowell innovated in many fields. 'Pulse', dedicated to Cage, was written while Cowell was an inmate of San Quentin prison (on 'immorality' charges). In 7/8 throughout, it mixes pitched and unpitched, oriental and occidental percussion.

10:49 Dede Aldrian, 'Sudanese Metal Gamelan' (excerpts), date unconfirmed but relatively recent

Dede Aldrian is an Indonesian guitarist, arranger and song-writer, as well as audio engineer at Pyramid Post Studio in Jakarta.



[Philip Corner]

13:05 Jon Myers, 'Diffusion' (excerpt), 2013

Of this exquisite piece Jon Myers says (personal correspondence) '...four metallophone players each play and repeat the same 20 beat cycle at slightly different speeds. The ratio of their tempi is 6:7:8:9. Each time one of the four cycles restarts, a corresponding gong is struck. Over the course of the piece, rests are gradually added into each player's part, which serve to decrease the rhythmic density while allowing for more chaotic and, ideally, beautiful melodic abstractions. I had in mind here the concept of "irama", in Javanese music, in which the same cycle can gradually and freely move between many different speeds. Also, of the inevitable increase in entropy, of the winding down of a music box, of the body's push toward final repose, and the fading of love's first bloom. "Diffusion" was premiered at the Freer Gallery of Art at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. in November, 2013, and was recorded in May, 2014 at Mills College in Oakland, CA. The piece is dedicated to Emily Pontecorvo.'

15:19 Daniel Patrick Quinn, 'In Nem' (excerpts), 2011

We have already encountered a number of interpretations of Terry Riley's pivotal 'In C' and here's another, this time for gamelan, overseen by the (retired at 29) British composer Daniel Patrick Quinn and recorded in Jakarta with eight leading Javanese gamelan players. It follows the method of 'In C' rather than the letter of the score.

16:55 Jo Kondo, 'Under the Umbrella' (excerpts), 1976

Born in 1947, Jo Kondo studied with Yoshio Hasegawa and Hiroaki Minami in Tokyo, then strongly influenced by Cage and the New York School. Working in the contemporary music world, he wrote often for unusual instruments. 'Under the Umbrella' was commissioned by Toru Takemitsu for 25 untuned cowbells and was premiered by the five-member Canadian percussion ensemble Nexus.

18:28 Chico Hamilton, 'No Speak No English Man' (excerpts), 1959

An American jazz drummer and bandleader who paid his dues with Fred Astaire, Gerry Mulligan, Lester Young, Lena Horne and Count Basie before founding the famous Chico Hamilton Quintet in 1955 with the unusual instrumentation, for the time, of cello (the legendary Fred Katz), flute (Buddy Collette), guitar (Jim Hall) bass and drums. An imaginative and thoughtful drummer, Hamilton was more interested in the timbre and structure of his solos than getting faster and faster and ending up hitting all his cymbals as hard as possible. On this 1959 recording he restricts himself largely to the rims of his drums.

19:55 Walter Perkins, 'Cymbal Bending Drums Solo' (excerpt), 1963

An American jazz drummer from Chicago who played with Ahmad Jamal, Sonny Rollins, Art Farmer, Rahsaan Roland Kirk, Charlie Mingus, Gene Ammons and countless others. This is just a very unusual technique involving bending what must have been a pretty thin cymbal during his solo at a gig with Art Farmer.

20:51 Gerry Hemingway, 'Solo for Cymbal' (excerpts), 2011

Another American drummer, Hemmingway has worked across the contemporary jazz spectrum. He spent eleven years with Anthony Braxton and has led a series of his own ensembles. Here he's seeing what he can coax out of a single cymbal.

21:59 Siegfried Fink, 'Ritmo' (excerpt), 1971

Born in 1928, Siegfried Fink was a German percussionist, teacher, and head of the renowned Studio für Perkussion in Würzburg. He wrote many student and concert works. This one, for seven players, uses only Latin American percussion.

23:05 The Rhythm Devils, 'Street Gang', 1979

Convened by Francis Ford Coppola to create atmospheres for the film *Apocalypse Now*, the Grateful Dead percussion section, Mickey Hart and Billy Kreutzmann (aka The Rhythm Devils) invited various other participants (not all of them percussionists) including Airtó Moreira, Michael Hinton, Flora Purim and Phil Lesh, to respond in real time to screenings of the film using whatever took their mood out of a vast array of accumulated and specially constructed percussion instruments, grouped according to sound colour and set out in 'maze-like pathways' around a huge live studio. An exercise in timbral composition.

24:02 00100, 'Shizuku Gunung Agung' (excerpt), 2013

Japanese band formed by Yoshimi P-We (Yokota) of The Boredoms in 1997,



[Yoshimi P-We]

currently working with a Japanese gamelan ensemble. This is from their CD *Gamel*.

26:44 Takeshi Terauchi and the Bunnys, 'Sabre Dance', 1967

One of the great pioneers of the electric guitar and of the guitar instrumental, Terry (as he was known) swept all before him in the fifties and sixties, though he was never accorded the mainstream attention and respect he deserved outside of his home country. Not only a great guitarist with a killer rock sensibility (while most of the rest of the guitar instrumentalist world was rather more polite) he evolved his own virtuoso style, based in part on traditional shamisen techniques, making albums that ranged from rock versions of Japanese minyo folk music to covers of the Western classical repertoire – to both of which he took roughly the same approach. This is an example of the latter. He is still active.

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 remegacorp@dial.pipex.com with subject: Probe Me.

03. Credits

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

04. Acknowledgments

Thanks to Jon Myers, Jonas Vognsen, Bruce Duffie, Per Tjernberg, David Petts, Yannis Frier.

05. Copyright note

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