

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 #19.2

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 auxiliary we meet more repurposed African instruments in several fields, and take one glimpse at the reverse traffic. Interestingly, for the first time, there's hardly any adoption in contemporary classical circles. Answers on a postcard, please.

01. Playlist

00:00 Gregorio Paniagua, 'Anakrousis', 1978

00:06 Randy Weston, interview with Brian Pace (excerpt), 2010

Pace is a broadcaster, journalist and mediator of The Pace Report (www.thepacereport.com). This interview was made on the occasion of the publication of Weston's book *African Rhythms*.

01:35 Sun Ra Arkestra, 'Love in Outer Space' (excerpt), 1973

Taken from an unreleased live recording made in Paris in 1973, this is typical of the Ra drum orchestra interludes that had been a regular part of his programmes since the mid fifties.

03:06 Pharoah Sanders, 'Bailophone Dance' (excerpt), 1971

Farrel Sanders (dubbed Pharoah by Sun Ra, who found Sanders –literally– on the streets of New York and offered him a better home in the Arkestra) joined John Coltrane in 1965 – when free jazz and the 'africanisation' of jazz were the cutting edge, and never looked back. The mutual cross-influence of the two players changed the music of both and Sanders went on, in the early seventies, to release a series of exceptional records under his own name, which included a wide range of African (and some other) instruments. (A bailophone is an mbira or thumb piano)

04:08 Terry Riley, 'In C' by Africa Express (excerpt), 2014

Africa Express is a project founded in 2006 by Ian Birrell (media executive, reporter, broadcaster, columnist and sometime Tory speechwriter) and Damon Albarn (multi-instrumentalist, singer songwriter: Blur, Gorillaz, etc) to organise and support collaborations between Western and African artists. On the 50th anniversary of the composition of Riley's classic, 'In C', they organized this version played by African musicians on African instruments, in Bamako, Mali.

05:57 Luciano 'Chano' Pozo, 'Cubana Be, Cubana Bop' (excerpt), 1947

An Afro-Cuban percussionist who, in 1947, emigrated to America where almost immediately he was invited to work with Dizzy Gillespie – then a champion of Afro-Cuban jazz. 'Cubana Be, Cubana Bop', a major hit at the time – anticipating Weston, Warren and others by many years in its 'African' ambiance – was composed especially for Gillespie by the very unAfrican jazz experimentalist George Russell – whose 1953 book *The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization* had a deep and far-reaching effect on the avant-garde jazz community and, in fact, on the whole of Western music theory. A year after its release Pozo was shot and killed a bar in Harlem.

07:40 Rufus Harley, 'Queens' (excerpt), 1970

The great jazz bagpiper here playing an amplified chanter accompanied by Nadi Quamar on 17-stringed Madagascan harp.



[Secret Chiefs 3]

08:59 Talking drum (excerpt), unknown date, but recent

Gleaned from YouTube and included because, unintentionally, the combination of a microphone close to the talking drum and the general chaos of the recording makes this an accidental gem.

10:15 Pharoah Sanders, 'Summun, Bukmun, Umyun' (excerpt), 1970

Filled with African and Latin percussion, which was played by every member of the eight strong band. The title is Arabic for 'Deaf, Dumb, Blind' and was taken from the Sura Al-Baqara of the Quran. Sanders said the album was 'predicated on spiritual truths and to the future enlightenment of El Kafirun or The Rejectors of Faith'.

12:01 Herbie Mann, 'Incense' (excerpt), 1967

An American wind player, who quickly adopted the flute as his main instrument and became an early and active exponent of cultural mixing. He sought out Cuban, Brazilian, Middle Eastern, Indian and Japanese musicians, learning about their musical traditions and not just appropriating superficialities. He also made a fair number of pop hits, forming his own label (Embryo) in the early seventies, which didn't restrict itself to jazz releases. Both schlocky and innovative, Mann navigated a far from path through the jungles of taste and reputation. Chick Ganimian plays the oud on both tracks.

13:17 Herbie Mann, 'Uskadar' (excerpt), 1967

See above.

14:12 Secret Chiefs 3, 'Ishraqiyun: The 15' (excerpt), 2014

A flexibly constituted band founded by Mr. Bungle guitarist and composer Trey Spruance, usually including the Bungle rhythm section with other members who come and go, according to the project at hand. They scoot between oriental, middle-eastern, death metal, electronic and surf music, using many and various exotic instruments. Spruance himself is variously credited with electric, bass, baritone microtonal and pythagorean guitars, piano, clavinet, organ, celesta, exotic percussion, santur, rebab, bajo, mandolin, zither, tar, cumbus, saz, carillon, dulcimer, autoharp, trumpet, sheng, electronics and voice. This track features, inter alia, saz, sarangi, rebab, kinno, table, esraj (an Indian string instrument, similar to the sitar, with sympathetic strings).

15:38 Five-octave Array mbira (excerpt), probably 2008

Played on an Array mbira (Array is a brand name that describes their system of note placement). These are adapted from the Zimbawian mbira but are three to five octaves in size and differently laid out.

16:54 Pharoah Sanders, 'Sun in Aquarius' (excerpt), 1969

See above.

18:20 Sun Ra, interview with the Detroit Black Journal (excerpts), 1981

19:52 Ahmed Abdul-Malik, 'E-Lail', 1959

An American-Caribbean bassist and oud player who in his youth taught Sudanese in junior high school, and improvisation to students at New York University. He played bass with Art Blakey, Randy Weston, Earl Hines, Herbie Mann, Thelonius Monk and others, but in his own work he blended the instruments and styles of both jazz and middle-eastern music into a successful hybrid form.

21:47 Marshall Allen, 'Kora Solo' (excerpt), unidentified recording, date unknown

Born in 1924, Allen studied clarinet at school, alto saxophone in the army and then music at the Paris conservatory, before returning to Chicago to set up his own band in the early fifties. In 1958 he joined Sun Ra's Arkestra, which today he leads. One of a tiny cadre of truly great and innovative sax players coming to prominence in the fifties and sixties, he also plays oboe, bassoon, flute, piccolo, percussion, morrow (a reed instrument of his own invention) and on this recording, somewhat unconventionally, the kora, which he appears to have introduced into the Arkestra in the late sixties.

22:54 Dorothy Ashby, 'For Some We Loved' (excerpt), 1970

Perhaps the most notable (and least recognized) of all the jazz harpists, certainly one of the earliest – active from 1952 – who played with Ed Thigpen, Richard Davis, Stanley Turrentine, Louis Armstrong and Woody Herman, as well as in her



[Dorothy Ashby]

own trio before forming the Ashby players – an African-American community theatre group for which she wrote all the music and played piano and harp. She made eleven exceptional records under her own name between 1957 and 1984 adapting the harp to jazz, bebop, soul and r&b styles. In the late sixties she settled in California where she worked pop sessions with the likes of Stevie Wonder and Billy Preston. This excerpt is taken from her 1970 LP *The Rubaiyat of Dorothy Ashby* on which she also plays the Japanese koto, an American jazz first to the best of my knowledge. The mbira solo is played by the great jazz cellist and composer Fred Katz.

24:37 Stelvio Cipriani, 'A Strange Symbol' (excerpt), 1979

An Italian accompanist and pianist (he studied with Dave Brubeck) who went on to become a celebrated and prolific film composer. This is from his soundtrack to the 1979 horror movie *Un'Ombra Nell'Ombra* (released in the USA as *Ring of Darkness*) with a prominent part for mbira.

25:38 Charles 'Chick' Ganimian and his Orientals, 'Daddy Lolo' (excerpt), 1957

Ganimian was an Armenian-American oud virtuoso and singer who trained as a butcher but earned his living as a professional musician with a mixture of Anatolian, Turkish, Greek, Arabic and Armenian music. In 1948 he founded the Nor-Ikes with a group of fellow Armenian expats, which toured extensively – and made his reputation. He made two hit singles, 'Daddy Lolo' and 'Hedy Lo', in the late fifties, but otherwise left only one (excellent) LP in his own name – although he played intermittently with Rufus Harley, Herbie Mann and others.

27:05 Pamelou Mounk'a, 'N'est Que Ma Secretaire' (excerpts), 1982

Born in Brazzaville, Congo, where he became a successful singer with the Bantous de la Capitale, going solo in the mid sixties and making over 70 hit singles between then and 1980 when the French Eddyson label brought him to Paris. He stayed for six years, and pursued a highly successful solo career there before he decided to return to the Congo and to the Bantous as their chef d'orchestre. Illness unhappily ended his career a few years later. This is here because I'm an enormous fan of this record, and because it's a fine example of African musicians adopting western instruments, turned to their own polyrhythmic musical purposes. Multiple guitars play percussion while the drums bind but don't push; the rhythm is in the interplay and not an expression of individual will. Pamelou Mounk'a &c....

29:28 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. Links

www.randyweston.info



[Pharoah Sanders]

www.thepacereport.com
www.sunraarkestra.com
pharoahsanders.wordpress.com
terryriley.net
www.africaexpress.co.uk

04. Credits

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

05. Acknowledgments

Carve their names with pride Brian Pace, David Petts, Peter Dennet, Jonas Vognsen and William Sharp.

06. Copyright note

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