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 they do. This first programme sets the scene and investigates early reconsiderations of pitch: probes that postulate new scales to be constructed.

02. Playlist

01 Gregorio Paniagua, ‘Anakrousis’, 1978
02 Mozart, ‘Fantasia 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 Fluminia Babylonis’, composed ca. 1584
14 Guillaume Machaut ‘Hoketus David’, 1364
15 Edgar Varèse, ‘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 Hazából’, 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
26 Julián Carrillo, ‘Horizonte’, 1950
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

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

PDF Contents:
01. Summary
02. Playlist
03. Selected bibliography
04. Selected links
05. Acknowledgments
06. Copyright note

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 Ianu Dumitrescu and Ana Maria Avram. He is a permanent member of The Bad Boys 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 Ianu Dumitrescu and Ana Maria Avram. He is a permanent member of The Bad Boys Orchestra, Co-founded a series of mixed national groups: Art Bears, News from Babel, Cassiber, The (ec) Nudes, The Science Group 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

http://rwm.macba.cat
03. Selected bibliography


04. Selected links

American Festival of Microtonal Music
www.afmm.org

Dutch Microtonal Society
www.huygens-fokker.org/dutchmicrotonalsociety/microtonality.html

Foerster piano Company: quartenote pianos for Hába and Wyshnegradsky
www.august-foerster.de/cms/en/20/Quartertone-Grand-Piano

Huygens-Fokker site on microtonal music with sections on Hába, Carillo, Wyshnegradsky, Ives, Fokker and more
www.huygens-fokker.org

More on memory systems and paradigm changes in music
www.macba.cat/quaderns-audio-chris-cutler

05. Acknowledgments

With thanks to Bob Drake, Udi Koomran, William Sharp, Charles O’Meara, Jack Vees and Giovanni Venosta.

06. Copyright note

2012. All rights reserved. © by the respective authors and publishers.

Ràdio Web MACBA is a non-profit research and transmission project. Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders; any errors or omissions are inadvertent, and will be corrected whenever it’s possible upon notification in writing to the publisher.

http://rwm.macba.cat