



## 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.  
[www.ccutler.com/ccutler](http://www.ccutler.com/ccutler)

# PROBES #3.2

## 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 third programme continues to explore probes into pitch, this time through its effective obliteration through ceaseless movement, sliding tones, and radical portamenti which defy all quantisation.

### 01. Playlist

#### 01 Programme icon

Gregorio Paniagua, 'Anakrousis', 1978

#### 02 Léon Theremin demonstrates his instrument, date and source unknown

#### 03 Joseph Schillinger, 'Melody', 1929

For piano and theremin. Played by Lydia Kavana, granddaughter of Léon Theremin's first cousin – and his last protégée. Schillinger, born in the Ukraine, founded the first Soviet jazz orchestra and, in 1928, emigrated to the USA, where he developed a mathematical compositional method and became advisor and muse to a number of American composers, including George Gershwin – who studied with him for four years – Earle Brown, Burt Bacharach, Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey and Henry Cowell. An early evangelist for electronic instruments, Schillinger worked closely in the twenties with Léon Theremin. 'Melody' is extracted from a piano and theremin reduction of his *First Airphonic Suite*, which was premiered by the Cleveland Orchestra in 1929, with Léon Theremin as the soloist.

#### 04 Percy Grainger, 'Free Music No. 2', 1937

Written after his meeting with Léon Theremin, this is for six theremin voices, all played here by Lydia Kavana.

#### 05 John Zorn, 'Memento Mori' (excerpt), 1992

#### 06 László Moholy-Nagy, 'Möglichkeiten des Grammophons', 1923

A reconstruction by Miguel Molina and Leopoldo Amigo for the *Noises and Whispers in the Avant Gardes: Early Sound Art Works (1909-1945): a remake* exhibition, of experiments made by László Moholy-Nagy and Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt at the Bauhaus in 1923. Moholy-Nagy had already theoretically investigated the possibilities of using the gramophone productively, as an instrument, in his 1922 essay 'Production – Reproduction'.  
[monoskop.org/images/8/82/Moholy-Nagy\\_Laszlo\\_1922\\_Production-Production.pdf](http://monoskop.org/images/8/82/Moholy-Nagy_Laszlo_1922_Production-Production.pdf)

#### 07 Denman Maroney, 'Double Zero' (excerpt), 2008

Taken from a live improvisation at Roulette, New York. Maroni uses a wide variety of preparations and extended techniques. Here he's playing the keys with one hand and the strings associated with them with the other using first a copper bar, and later a steel cylinder – somewhat after the manner of Hawaiian or steel guitar. [www.denmanmaroney.com](http://www.denmanmaroney.com)

#### 08 'Singing saw'

First, Natalia Paruz playing part of Ady Cohen's soundtrack for the Israeli animated short 'Strings', by Lior Golan and Tal Arbiv. And then...



[Yuichi Onoue performing a ribbon controller]

**09 'Ave Maria'**

...as attempted by 53 singing saw players at the 7th annual Musical Saw Festival in New York, July 2009, led by Natalia Paruz.

**10 Monique Pierrot and Jean-Claude Welche**

An improvisation for ondes Martenot and saw. This is fairly recent, but I have been unable to discover the exact date and location of the recording.

**11 Yuichi Onoue, 'Soft Rime', 2011**

A ribbon controller, as the name suggests, is a ribbon, stretched over a flat surface, whose electric potential varies from one end to the other. It is used to control pitch and is played with a finger pressed down on it, moving along its length. Its origin lies in the principle underlying the theremin (1922), evolving through the ondes Martenot (1928), in which a ring and wire are used, and the Trautonium (1929), where finger pressure was established as the controlling impulse. It was then adapted, as demonstrated here, to control pitch (and sometimes other parameters) for various synthesizers and audio software applications.

**12 Bebe and Louis Barron, 'Krell Shuttle Ride and Power Station', 1956**

Taken from the soundtrack of *Forbidden Planet*, the first Hollywood film soundtrack to use a completely electronic score. Louis Barron built his own electronic equipment and the couple ran an independent studio at a time when such things were vanishingly rare. Made long before any commercial synthesizers appeared on the market, these recordings use, for the most part, ring modulation, reverberation, tape reverse and tape-speed variation to achieve their effects.

**13 Deepak Kshirsagar 'Raag Durga', 2011**

Indian classical guitar at Bhavnagar.

**14 Sindhu Bhairavi**

A carnatic raga played on Hawaiian guitar.

**15 Gloria Coates, 'Time Frozen, movement 2', 1988-94**

I have already extolled the many and great virtues of Gloria, whom I regard as one of the great living composers of our time.

**16 This Heat, 'Graphic Varispeed' (excerpt), 1980**

This Heat, one of the key British independent groups of the late seventies, put this uncharacteristic work on the B-side of a 45 RPM single *Health and Efficiency*. It works only with timbre and portamenti (though since it is based on very slow transformations over 11 and a half minutes, it's impossible to do it justice with such a short extract).

**17 Van Shipley, 'Kaise Koi Jiye (Badban)', source and date of recording unknown.** Van Shipley is often credited as being the first electric guitarist in India... Well, he was certainly one of the first, designing his own eight string solid body electric steel guitar with extra drone strings in the forties. He made numerous recordings, especially for Bollywood, of an inspiring blend of Eastern and Western music.

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## 02. Credits

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

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## 03. Acknowledgments

With thanks to Bob Drake and Jon Leidecker.

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#### 04. Copyright note

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