



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 #6.2

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 sixth auxiliary investigates further preparations of stringed and brass instruments, in the quest for novel sounds.

01. Playlist

01 Programme icon

Gregorio Paniagua, 'Anakrousis', 1978

02 Helmut Lachenmann, interview (excerpt), origin and date unknown.

03 David Bedford, 'Nurses Song With Elephants' (excerpt), 1972

In the early sixties David Bedford was a protean figure, writing for children, orchestras, soloists and small ensembles, usually at the experimental fringe and in particular bringing together people and stylistic materials from the worlds of contemporary music and experimental rock. In the early seventies he was a member of Kevin Ayers' legendary The Whole World, with Lol Coxhill, Mike Oldfield and Robert Wyatt.

04 Paolo Angeli, 'La Pianta del Piede', 2012

For prepared Sardinian guitar, plucked and bowed. This is a real time performance with no overdubs.

05 Jonathan Robinson, 'Prepared Bass Solo', 2009

Jonathan Robinson is a bassist from Berlin. For this piece he prepared his electric bass with two wine corks, three pencils, a paperclip, a plastic clothes pin and a Swissair sleep-mask.

06 Sergey Khismatov, 'Wood with Threads', 2012

Played by Pawel Dudys on a contrabass prepared with a sheet of A4 paper.
www.khismatov.com

07 Dorel Codoban, 'Învârtită', date unknown

Recording by Wim Bosmans for the Brussels Museum of the Higheghe. The Higheghe, from Bihor in Romania, is a direct descendant of the Stroh violin, now made locally and used widely as a folk instrument.

08 'Zbiciu si Nazarius-Polca', 2011

More Higheghe/Stroh violins from Bihor. Unidentified band, recent recording, but accurate date unknown.

09 Matthias Pintscher, 'Study IV for Treatise on the Veil', 2008

For prepared String Quartet. Named for a series of drawings and two large paintings by the American artist Cy Twombly. For this piece the instruments are prepared (veiled) in two ways: firstly the viola's C and G strings are retuned down a fourth and a major third, respectively; secondly, all four players prepare their lowest two (or in the case of the viola three) strings with metal paperclips attached near the bridge.

10 John Rose, 'Tell It', 1984

A snatch of the now lost nineteen-string cello in action, amplified but with no overdubs or studio effects.



[Paolo Angeli. Photo: Nanni Angeli]

11 Johnny Reinhard, 'Dune' (excerpt), 1990

Named for the Frank Herbert novel and employing assorted extended techniques including unscrewing the bell from the top of the instrument while playing; screwing the bocal (that's the curved metal mouthpiece) out and playing on the still-connected reed; popping the end of the bocal into the bell and using a hand like a moving mute to create a wah-wah sound; using only the keys and, of course, multiphonics. Johnny Reinhard is the founder and director of the American Festival of Microtonal Music and... well look here: www.afmm.org/jrcv.htm, and here: www.stereosociety.com/index.shtml.

12 Brae Grimes, 'Balloon', recent

Using a long piece of balloon over the leadpipe of the trumpet creating a 'thwacking' sound of air along with other squeaks and pops. Brae Grimes is an Australian composer and improviser.

13 Duke Ellington, 'The Mooche', 1930

'Tricky Sam' Nanton was one of the great pioneers of the plunger mute, a device initially adopted from trumpeter Johnny Dunn. He later passed some of his mute innovations to Cootie Williams, who went on to become a plunger virtuoso in his own right; but the 'ya ya' sound heard here was unique to Nanton, and he kept the details secret even from his own bandmates. Subsequent speculation and analysis suggest that he used a straight 'non pareil' trumpet mute and a large plumber's plunger, at the same time silently shaping vowels in his mouth cavity – shifting between 'eee' and 'aah' to produce a 'ya'. No one to date has successfully duplicated this unique technique.

14 Josef Anton Riedl, 'Vielleicht-Duo', 1963-70

Tubes and instruments played into and through water with electronic sounds, using a Vocoder, imitating human speech. One of the pioneers of both concrete and electronic music, Riedl (b. 1929) worked with both GRM in Paris, and the electronic studio of NWDR in Köln. The German composer specialises in music for percussion, multimedia and sound poetry.

15 Allan Gravgaard Madsen, 'Schatten Schwartz', 2013

For prepared Saxophone Quartet, using silver foil and other materials stretched over the bells. Performed by the Current Saxofonkvartett.

16 Angharad Davies, 'Tri Swn' (excerpt), 2004

For violin prepared with a plastic peg, a spring and a nail file. Angharad Davies is an improviser now based in London.

17 Francis Miroglgio, 'Insertions', 1969

For harpsichord. Played by Elizabeth Chojnacka, to whom the work was dedicated. Francis Miroglgio, born Marseille, 1924, studied composition with Darius Milhaud and then attended the Darmstadt Summer school. Elisabeth Chojnacka, born in Poland, now resident in Paris is one of the world's foremost specialists in contemporary harpsichord repertoire.

18 Programme icon

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.

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

With thanks to Paulo Angeli, Jon Rose, Jonny Reinhard, Brae Grimes, Angharad Davies, Sergey Khismatov, David Petts, Bill Sharp and Bob Drake.

05. Copyright note

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