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AMERICAN FESTIVAL OF MICROTONAL MUSIC IN 2014*

On April 12–15, 2014 the American Festival of Microtonal Music took place in New York. This festival is directed by New York-based composer and bassoonist, Johnny Reinhard, who has been a long-time champion of microtonal music and alternate tunings and who has held this festival since March, 1981. Through all these years he has been studying, collecting and performing this music, doing intensive research in libraries, contacting other champions of microtonality in the United States and in many European and Asian countries. He has performed on the bassoon with other musicians and presented his music in New York and other cities in the United States and in other countries, including Great Britain, Russia, France, Mexico, Netherlands, Canada, Norway, Japan and Switzerland. The festival has been held in a variety of locations in New York City, including The Kitchen, Roulette, St. Paul's Chapel at Columbia University, and New York University. The music presented at the American Festival of Microtonal Music is of the most diverse styles and trends. It includes the works of the first innovative 20th century composers from different countries who turned to microtonality for the first time – Alois Haba, Ivan Wyschnegradsky, Julian Carrillo, Harry Partch, Mordecai Sandberg, etc. – mid- and late 20th century microtonal music, as well as present-day composers writing in non-standard tunings and temperaments, early, historical music (Bach, Handel) performed in historical temperaments, as well as ethnic music of various countries, jazz and rock. In addition, Reinhard is a virtuosic bassoon player, who could be compared to a Paganini of the bassoon, and he has performed many of his own pieces, as well as music by many other composers from around the world, both solo and ensemble works. In 1996 Reinhard finished the grandiose project of completing Charles Ives' unfinished *Universe Symphony*, the premiere performance of which took place on June 6, 1996 in Alice Tully Hall. Since 2000, he has been releasing CD's with microtonal music, each of which focused on a particular style or genre of microtonal works or of works performed in alternate temperaments. One of these CD's contained a studio recording of Charles Ives' "*Universe Symphony*." Last but not least, Reinhard is a phenomenal improviser on the bassoon, and his improvisations possess virtuosity, expressivity, character and, frequently, a certain formal coherence, as if they are musical works previously composed. No less impressive are his combined improvisations with other musicians,

where all the aforementioned qualities, including the sense of formal completeness, are no less present.

The concerts of the American Festival of Microtonal Music have been organized in the most diverse venues in New York City. This year, just like during the last few years, they were held in a bohemian loft-gallery on Ludlow Street on the Lower East Side, called the "Spectrum." The informal, artistic setting of the place was very much in tune with the spirit of the festival and the music presented on it. The program of the festival included an assortment of compositions in various styles and genres and for instrumental ensembles with and without voice and featured a generous share of joint improvisations by several musicians, many of them involving Johnny Reinhard's participation. In addition, the concerts included live interviews taken by Reinhard from important composers, champions of microtonality. One particular feature of this festival was the fact that many of the compositions and improvisations in it were in the scale of 128 notes per octave, a tuning recently discovered by Reinhard and enthusiastically elaborated on, both in his own music, in the musicians' joint improvisations and in music by other composers written under Reinhard's inspiration. The 128 tuning is a scale of 128 pitches unequally spaced based on the fundamental "A." These 128 pitches may be found in the 8th octave of the overtone series, which corresponds to the total available pitches to be played in each octave range of a musical instrument.

The first concert, which took place on April 12, consisted almost entirely of interviews with microtonal composers and solo and joint instrumental improvisations. It began with a joint improvisation, titled as "House Band Introduction Music," performed by Vito Ricci playing drums and "wrench" guitar, Joshua Levinson playing trumpet and Joshua Morris on double bass. It featured an innovative form of free jazz style enhanced by microtonal tunings and temperaments and modernist aesthetics and clearly had the trumpet leading and the two other instruments improvising. In his interview, Skip La Plante told about the instruments he himself built, one of which is the Carrillo harp, built to perform the works by the famous Mexican composer Julian Carrillo. He told about the pieces he was composing in just intonation and about his activities of performing works by Carrillo and gave a lengthy demonstration of his instruments by playing improvisations on them.

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Mexican guitarist Angelos Quetzalcoatl in his interview told about the 13-sound system discovered by Carrillo in 1895, his experimentation with this temperament in his compositions and his exposition of the structure of this scale in his book "Two Laws of Physics" and his unsuccessful nomination for the Nobel Prize in 1950. Then Quetzalcoatl performed his improvisation for solo guitar, highly impulsive, emotionally charged and at the same time texturally very imaginative and experimental. Richard Carr in his interview expressed his attitude towards his application of the 128 note tuning in an intuitive, rather than a scientific way, told that his incorporation of this scale into his music changed his perception of music and described certain particular features of performance on certain instruments playing in this tuning. There was a peculiar presentation of the recently released CDs "True" and "Imagine: Quartets in 128," featuring Richard Carr on the violin, Johnny Reinhard on the bassoon, Michael Haffka on the fretless guitar, Angelos Quetzalcoatl playing several guitars alternately, Joshua Morris on the double bass and Yonat Haffka on the theremin. The music played was greatly improvisational in its free and spirited manner of sound, presenting mostly slow and meditative music at the beginning, gradually speeding up and acquiring momentum in the middle and then achieving a mysterious mood closer to the end. The unusual combination of instruments resulted in a rich, colorful blend of timbres, with each instrument contributing in its special way and all of them greatly enhancing the emotional mood achieved by them. The inherent musical qualities of the musicians helped them alternately come in and leave the ensemble at appropriate moments, creating the impression that the music was written consciously by one composer beforehand.

In his interview Cristian Amigo told about his recent turn to microtonality, which was inspired by his knowledge of the guitar, his fascination with instrumental timbre, his involvement with the jazz and blues styles and his interest in ethnic music of various Asian peoples, such as the Persians. He highlighted the 128 tuning for its exceptional harmonic and acoustic qualities. The subsequent improvisation, titled as "Bassoon and Guitar Quartet," performed by Johnny Reinhard on the bassoon along with four guitarists, Cristian Amigo, Michael Haffka, Vitor Ricci (playing the "wrench" guitar) and Angelos Quetzalcoatl, possessed a mysterious, mystical mood and an assortment of most varied, innovative, highly imaginative timbres. The latter were created by the guitar ensemble, ranging from standard strumming to radical percussive effects, joined with Johnny Reinhard's improvising on the bassoon, the latter adding the necessary contrast and the right amount of momentum to create a dramaturgically inspiring sound collage. Composer from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Svjetlana Bukvich discussed the influence of Bosnian folk music, as well as that of the other countries of the former Yugoslavia on the aesthetics

of her music, her avoidance of direct derivation of folk music in her compositions and how her incorporation of the 128 note tuning naturally affected her music in an overall aesthetic sense. The concert finished off with a relatively short and spirited final improvisation, titled as "House Band Close," featuring all the musicians participating in the concert, which clearly followed a jazz style, with Johnny Reinhard's bassoon solo decidedly taking the lead, slightly resembling a jazz trumpet in its sound, and percussion sounds presenting the audible accompaniment.

The second concert on April 13 was a more standard type, since it consisted mostly of original pieces by contemporary composers from many countries around the world, with one improvisation at the end. It began with Johnny Reinhard's new string quartet, "Seventh Heaven," a most impressive and imaginative work, written during his trip to China in the 128 scale. It was composition of moderate length, reserved, philosophical and subtly expressive mood, innovatively sparse and economic texture, sounding almost as if it alluded to Chinese folk music, and extremely non-standard form and dramaturgy. Most intriguing was its harmonic language, ranging from extremely tertial and diatonic to chromatic, yet preserving the sense of continuous consonance, thus verifying in full what the composer himself had repeatedly said about this unique tuning. The composition used only a subset of this scale, 32 pitches that appear for the first time in the seventh octave of the overtone series. Harry Partch's "Lyrics by Li Po," written for singer and viola to the texts of the great Chinese poet, were intoned by Johnny Reinhard and played on the viola by Anastasia Solberg. These four short songs were aphoristic in their length and dramaturgy and eclectically expressive in their mood, being for the most part subdued and introversive in character, unusually distinctive in their textural approach, with a few short outbursts of dramatic motion and sound. Johnny Reinhard brought in a necessary amount of subdued expression into his intonating, while Solberg provided for the appropriately emotionally resonant accompaniment on the viola.

Most impressive was the composition "Lied und Gebilde" ("Song and Image") for viola and vibraphone by one of the leading Armenian composers, Tigran Mansurian, performed by Anastasia Solberg on the viola and Chris Earley on the vibraphone and gong. A very introversive, expressive, meditative piece, harmonically gravitating towards diatonic minor, it consisted of three movements of moderate length, in which it made use of melodies and melodic intonations derived from historical Armenian church chants, spelling them out with microtonal tunings and temperaments. It was very sparsely textured, the main weight falling on the solo viola, with the percussion instruments adding delicate amounts of accompaniment. Julian Carrillo's "Prelude Impromptu," played in a dramatically inspired manner by Angelos Quetzalcoatl (presented by Johnny Reinhard as

Carrillo's cultural ambassador) was a moderately textured, lyrically subdued guitar piece, which combined a partially diatonic harmonic centrality with a decidedly alternately tuned sound, presenting this novel harmony in both chord structures and scalar and arpeggiated motion, resorting to some moderate virtuosic effects towards the end of the piece before returning to the subdued mood at its close.

Next came a most unusual performance of a very exotic piece, "Bassotom" by Iranian composer, Shaahin Mohajeri for bassoon and tombak drum. The most unusual part of it was that it featured a live performance on the bassoon by Johnny Reinhard with a pre-recorded performance on the tombak drum by the composer. It was a very colorful, spirited piece, demonstrating the virtuosity of the solo bassoon and the drum, the former part containing its organically appropriate microtonal tuning. Essentially pertaining to the category of Iranian ethnic folk music, the composition also seemed to reach out into the domain of Western avant-garde influences, combining it with the ethnic musical foundation. The final number of the concert was a joint instrumental improvisation incorporating the 128 note tuning, titled "Ensemble in 128." It was performed by Johnny Reinhard on the bassoon, Richard Carr on the violin, Cush Solberg on the cello, Michael Hafftko on the fretless 6-string guitar, Angelos Quetzalcoatl on guitars and Jeroen Paul Tesselings on the fretless 7-string electric bass guitar. As usual, it was free and spirited with its mood with a fair share of imaginative textures and textural combinations, a contrasting dramaturgical flowing combination of various textures and emotional moods and an organic sense of joint improvisatory playing on the part of the performers. It presented itself in two different sections: after an initially transparent, subdued type of sound world, the music gained momentum, acquiring isolated features of jazz and pop music towards the middle, and afterwards subsiding when reaching a point of repose. Then, after seeming to end, the music started again, this time maintaining to a greater degree its slow, lyrical character, while achieving a greater degree of instrumental subtlety and finesse and even throwing in a few allusions to ethnic music. At the same time, this improvisation felt strikingly different from the several improvised performances of the previous night, blending itself stylistically in a more organic way with this night's program of instrumental compositions.

The third concert on April 14 began with Johnny Reinhard making an opening speech, paying tribute to Passover, which coincided with that day. Cristian Amigo played his piece "Blues Image" on an amplified guitar, which had a strong flavor of the blues style, albeit very improvisatory and rhythmically free and containing non-standard tuning. Johnny Reinhard's composition "Oak" was performed by the composer on the bassoon, Michael Hafftko on the fretless guitar and Jeroen Paul Thesseling on the electric bass guitar. The piece began with the three performers saying the word "oak," and then proceeded

on in the 128 note tuning with music of proportionate duration with a steady tempo, featuring a sturdy melodic line on the bassoon close to diatonic minor, accompanied by an alternation of ostinato lines played by the two guitars. The music had an austere, serious mood, quite fitting for the title, and contained discernible elements of jazz. "Tribute to Van Halen" by Angelos Quetzalcoatl, played by the composer on "quartertone" guitar, was a relatively short piece with an assortment of markedly diverse textures, combining diatonic minor centrality with quartertone microtonal writing, juxtaposing flamenco and other traditional styles with modernist textures and an improvisatory approach.

Jacob Barton performed his piece "Hoprock" on an unusual homemade instrument, the udderbot, resembling a bottle and having a texture reminiscent of woodwind instruments and partially resembling sounds produced by blowing into a bottle or seashell. The piece was very curiously imaginative and innovative and consisted of an assortment of varied sounds for the instrument, including dramatic glissandi, fluttertonguing, two-voiced multiphonics and even some diatonic melodic themes, interspersed with separate words or short phrases spoken by the composer. A most impressive part of the work was when he began to sing while playing the instrument. Then Cristian Amigo and Jacob Barton performed a most extravagant duo improvisation on the electric guitar and udderbot, extracting some far-out exotic sounds. In addition to the highly unusual variety of tones created by the udderbot, the electric guitar was also able to produce a motley assemblage of sounds, ranging from harsh and dry percussive effects to pungently reverberating tones. The cooperative performance of the two musicians created an organically integral composition out of all these unusual sounds.

Angelos Quetzalcoatl performed "Dyzn" by Mexican composer Eduardo Caballero on the metamorphosed guitar (meaning that it was amplified intonationally in a special way). The piece organically combined elements of pop and vernacular guitar music with radically innovative sounds that geared to a great degree towards an abstract sonic sound world, surpassing by far the standard textures of the guitar. The balance between these two opposite trends in music produced a dramatically and texturally accomplished piece. This was followed by an improvisation by Yonat Hafftko on the theremin, Michael Hafftko on the fretless guitar and Johnny Reinhard on the bassoon, titled "Homage to Passover." This performance began with a decidedly meditative, religious mood, achieving greater dynamism only towards the end. All three instruments producing mysterious sounds that frequently reminded of religious incantations and at the same time had a surrealist touch to it. The guitar had frequent repetitions of plucked notes or ostinato rhythmically defined accompaniment, the bassoon brought in diatonically centered melodies, while the theremin presented mysterious sounds in the high register.



The concert finished off with a joint improvisation of all the participants of the concert, titled "Tutti," featuring Yonat Haffka, Michael Haffka, Johnny Reinhard, Jacob Barton, Cristian Amigo, Angelos Quetzalcoatl and Jeroen Paul Thessaling. This performance, obviously, was more diverse in its textural instrumental sonorities and more contrasting in its changes and combinations of altering moods and characters. It consisted of two parts, since in the middle of it the musicians stopped, and then resumed, as if starting a second movement of a cycle, but this ended up being dramaturgically quite justified. Beginning with a subdued, meditative mood, the music quickly gained momentum and became much more rhythmically pronounced and dynamically active, all the instruments blending well together, notwithstanding their great differences of timbres. Subsequent passages included slow and contemplative music, as well as the fast and boisterous kind, the latter presenting both rhythmically unified and dispersed, chaotic motion. As usual, this brought out the important role of the joint improvisations in the festival, being virtually the last one and, thereby, producing an important dramaturgical arch with the improvisations in the other concerts, in itself playing an important role in this arch.

The final concert of the festival on April 15 was decisively different from the previous three concerts in that it featured one performer – trumpet player Stephen Altoft, a British trumpet player living in Germany. All of the pieces he played were in the 19-tone equal tempered scale, one that was advocated by American music theorist Joseph Yasser in the early 20th century (who claimed that the 19-tone scale will be the next scale in musical evolution after the 5-note pentatonic scale, the 7-note diatonic scale and the 12-note chromatic scale). Hence, the concert was labeled "The Yasser Collection – the 19-Tone Trumpet." All of the pieces on the program were either for solo trumpet or for the instrument and electronics, and most of them followed the current European stylistic trends, being avant-garde and experimental in their style, while remaining lively and energetic in their emotional character.

"Upwards in Time" by Elia Koussa was an impulsive, contrasting piece, albeit very disjunctive and varied in its development, though still preserving an organic dynamic integrity. "Shared Frequencies: 2, 3, 5 / 1, 6, 11, 20" by Ephraim Wenger for trumpet and electronics was quite an impressive piece, which featured slow tones for trumpet and the electronic sounds delicately layering one on top of the other, beginning with soft dynamics and gradually getting louder towards the middle section, creating a profoundly contemplative sound world. Later the electronics changed from tones with recognizable pitches to abstract sounds resembling water and background noise, with the trumpet playing grotesque fluttersong noises. "Yiiiiiiiiiiha" for solo trumpet by German composer Gordon Kempe was a short, fast and dynamic piece, consisting for the

most part of non-standard experimental sounds for the instrument, including gurgling, screaming and whistling ones, most of which were disjoined from each other, but worked well to create the momentum. They seemed to imply interjection-type sounds, being quite exclamatory in their character. The piece was written especially for Altoft for his trip to America, which is the reason for the exclamatory character of the title and the sounds in the piece. "Gnossienne" by Eleri Pound was an extremely subdued and subtle piece, consisting of slow and sparse lengthy notes. It began as separate and isolated with unvarying pitch and then gradually introduced constructions of several notes with more varied pitches, even having some resemblances to melodic fragments towards the end.

The next piece was by Donald Boustead, called "Yasser Describes His Polemic (and adds some footnotes)," written in the 19-tone scale as a tribute to Joseph Yasser. It was a short, dynamic piece, which consisted of loud and dramatic sounds with large leaps of intervals, frequently reaching the high range of the instruments, creating pungent sounds there. Slow rhythmic sections alternated with fragments with fast, dynamic rhythms, though likewise connoting separate notes divided by large intervals. "Still Life" for trumpet and electronics by Oded Ben-Tal was based on quartertones (rather than the 19-tone scale, as most other pieces were). It was a spirited piece of moderate tempo and a moderate energy drive, organically combining lively trumpet passages with varied electronic sounds (more varied than in any of the other pieces on the program). The gradual alternation between the fast and slow dynamic motion of the music created a dramaturgical narrative quality, which led the listener through an entire drama of events, albeit many of them were subtle and introverted.

Stephen Altoft finished his concert by playing his own composition "Rasp" for trumpet and rotary valve. It was possibly the most experimental piece on the program, beginning with whispering sounds and continuing with basically one note performed continuously with changing overtones, multiphonics and special sound effects, like fluttersong. It was by no means static, but involved a continuous ascending increase of dynamism. The very ending gesture of the piece expressed a radical contrast to everything that happened before, since it ended with a short, fragmented scalar-melodic passage.

All in all, the American Festival of Microtonal Music presented a varied and motley program, which created a saturating effect on its listeners. The festival in the person of its director, Johnny Reinhard, has demonstrated itself once again as a true champion of this unique and imaginative trend in contemporary music and created a congenial setting for presenting music, which is unfortunately quite seldom heard in concert halls, as well as bringing together an assortment of unique, talented musicians from the United States and many other countries of the world.

American Festival of Microtonal Music in 2014

The article describes the American Festival of Microtonal Music, which took place at the Spectrum gallery in New York on April 12–15, 2014. The director of the festival, composer and bassoonist, Johnny Reinhard, has been a longtime champion of microtonal music. He has given this rare trend of music extensive study and has promoted it in his numerous concerts and lectures. In March 1981 he founded the American Festival of Microtonal Music in New York, in which the works of numerous microtonal compositions by many composers of the most varied styles have been performed. The music heard in the festival has included microtonal composers from the early 20th century to the present day, music from earlier styles – the Renaissance, Baroque,

Classical and Romantic time periods – in pre-Bach tunings, ethnic music of all kinds, jazz, rock and improvisation. Reinhard has also demonstrated himself as an original and inventive composer, as well as a virtuosic and imaginative improviser. The article presents an overview of Reinhard's musical activities, and then presents a detailed description of each of the four concerts comprising the festival, which included performances of works by contemporary composers, including Reinhard, interviews with microtonal composers and joint improvisations by several musicians.

Keywords: Johnny Reinhard, composer, microtonal music, festival, American Festival of Microtonal Music

Американский фестиваль микротоновой музыки – 2014

В статье автор знакомит читателей с Американским фестивалем микротоновой музыки, состоявшемся в галерее «Спектрум» Нью-Йорка 12–15 апреля 2014 года. Директор фестиваля, композитор и фаготист Джонни Райнхард долгое время выступает энтузиастом микротоновой музыки. Вплотную изучив это редкое музыкальное направление, он продвигает его в своих многочисленных концертах и лекциях. В марте 1981 года им организован Американский фестиваль микротоновой музыки в Нью-Йорке, на котором исполнялись произведения множества композиторов самых различных стилей. Прозвучавшая музыка охватила сочинения микротоновых композиторов от начала XX века вплоть до наших дней, а также произведения ренессанса, барокко, классицизма, романтиз-

ма в добаховских температурах и разновидности этнической музыки, джаза, рока. Райнхард проявляет себя не только как оригинальный и новаторский композитор, но и как виртуозный и изобретательный импровизатор. В статье даётся обзор музыкальной деятельности Райнхарда, а затем – детальное описание каждого из четырёх концертов фестиваля, включая исполнения сочинений ряда современных композиторов и Райнхарда, совместные импровизации музыкантов, а также интервью с создателями микротоновой музыки.

Ключевые слова: Джонни Райнхард, микротоновая музыка, музыкальные фестивали, Американский фестиваль микротоновой музыки

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