

MICROFEST

april 19, 1998 - an evening of microtonal music

Three Pieces (1978)..... Lou Harrison (1917 -)
Jahla • Plaint • Variations on "Song of Palestine"

December 1942 [West Coast Premiere]..... Harry Partch (1901-1974)
- Three Settings for Guitar (Adapted) & Voice -
1. Come Away Death (Shakespeare's '12th Night')
2. The Heron (Tsurayuki - Waley Trans., 13th century Japanese)
3. The Rose (Ella Young)

Fratres (1977/1998)..... Arvo Pärt (1935 -)
[arranged j. schneider]

Just Strings

John Schneider, guitars Marcia Dickstein, harp Gene Sterling, percussion

Dune (1987)..... Johnny Reinhard
Johnny Reinhard, bassoon

Tiers of Yearning (World Premiere)..... George Zelenz
I. A length of longing II. A nadir, clearly III. Spectre of Hope
IV. Sentimental trifurcations V. Precision, and perduration, of soul
Chris Bleth, oboe Charlotte Fender, viola Preston Geeting, cello Carl Hyatt, contra-bass
Hannes Giger, contra-bass Erin Barnes, Julian Hintz, Blake Colie, percussion

i n t e r m i s s i o n

Avaz-e-Dashti Esmaeel Tehrani
E. Tehrani, santur

Atom Turning in the Sun of Eternity (1996/8)..... Sasha Bogdanowitsch
Overture : *Wings Across This Way* (Full Ensemble without Voice)
Part I : *Setting Out* (Voice & Full Ensemble without Guitar)
Interlude I : *On Present and Future* (Guitar & Concert Harp)
Part II : *In the Thick of It* (Voice & Full Ensemble)
Interlude II : *Looking Back Before Going Forward* (Flute)
Part III : *Peace Yearning* (Voice & Wire Harp)
Interlude III : *Before Taking Up* (Marimba)
Part IV : *Into the Flame* (Voice & Full Ensemble)
Interlude IV : *Prelude to the New Way* (Concert Harp & Guitar)
Part V : *Amidst It All* (Voice & Full Ensemble)

Johnny Reinhard, conductor Sasha Bogdanowitsch, voice William Skeen, cello
Inga La Rose, flute Marsha Dickstein, harps John Schneider, guitar Gene Sterling, marimba

[special thanks to Bill Sly for his custom marimba & Greg Brandt for his Octaveguitar]

Microtones are quite simply those notes that lie "in the cracks" between the twelve notes found in each octave of the modern piano. These "smaller" notes can be used to fine-tune intonation, (make the music more in tune than traditional equal temperament), or sometimes to create new sounds that have never been heard before by dividing the octave into new divisions. Nothing about these new notes determines the *style* of music, however; they are simply the materials of music, much the way colors are the materials of the painter. Style is, of course, determined by how the colors are used - in what forms, shapes and patterns, etc. This evening's concert will visit many styles, from traditional to avant garde, using both intonational and divisional microtones.

Low Harrison is one of the outstanding personalities of American Music, well known as a performer, calligrapher, artist, ethnomusicologist and instrument builder as well as master composer. Since the 1930's, he has composed for practically every medium, including symphony orchestra, opera and the ballet, as well as such solo instruments as guitar and harp. This rich musical background, coupled with his sensitivity and deep respect for music of all cultures, past & present, is best summarized by his wonderful motto: "Cherish, Conserve, Consider, Create." The effervescent *Jahla* uses an 11½ beat cycle, and the North Indian melodic improvisation style of rapidly alternating melodic notes with a drone. It was written "to please Leopold Stokowski on his 90th birthday". The *Plaint & Variations* was written for solo guitar with switchable fingerboards, but then arranged and expanded for the Kronos Quartet into the *String Quartet Set* of the same year. The original "Song of Palestine" was possibly written for the Crusade of 1228 by German composer W. Vogelweide, its last verse begins with the text, "...Christians, Jews & Heathens all claim this land as their own...the whole world is at war over this land..." Things haven't changed much in seven centuries, have they? Tonight's use of the santur pays tribute to the "heathen" (read Muslim) cultural interests in Jerusalem's deep history.

Composed between his Americana masterpieces *Barstow* (1941) and *U.S. Highball* (1943), **Harry Partch's** little known song cycle *DECEMBER 1942* was written in New York City. He never publicly performed it, and the work could not be recreated exactly until the Adapted Guitar for which it was written was reconstructed a few years ago by the artist. The last two movements may be known to Partch admirers in very different versions Partch make for Adapted Guitar II (10-string slide guitar) & Diamond Marimba that were recorded as two of the *11 Intrusions* (1950), recently reissued on CD (CRI).

Estonian composer **Arvo Pärt's** *Fratres* has mesmerized audiences for two decades since its composition in 1977. Its popularity has inspired many arrangements (8 cello, winds, string quartet, violin/piano, cello/piano, etc), but this will be its first performance for solo guitar & percussion, and in the pure intervals of Just Intonation, a tuning which sharpens the focus and drama of Pärt's haunting harmonies. In order to perform the opening few bars, an especially constructed Octaveguitar, built by LA luthier Greg Brandt, will be used for this performance.

Johnny Reinhard composed *Dune* to showcase the fantastic realms of musical expression possible with the contemporary bassoon. It has since become his signature piece as a bassoon soloist. As one might travel through the special worlds of Frank Herbert's science fiction novel *Dune* series, so performer takes the listener through exotic soundscapes. Another appealing metaphor to the composer is to equate the bassoon with the sands of a beach, both shaped by wind. *Dune* begins with resonance juggling, proceeds with microtonal melody, glissandi, key percussion, and diverse equal temperaments, and often enters into territories rarely visited. Each section corresponds to distinct characters from the series.

George Zelenz tells us: 'Edgard Varèse said, "My music expresses itself", and most other composers have tried to convey or portray emotions in their music. *Tiers of Yearning* is an attempt at "multiple expression". First, I hope the music does express itself. Second, this piece is about yearning, and its inherent optimism (versus depression and its inherent pessimism). Emotion is terraced. The five tiers in this piece are reactions to yearning. Thirdly, this piece, as well as my other work, attempts to express through music, tangible forms that are unnameable.

Esmacel Tehrani will improvise in the *Avaz-e-Dashti* which comes from five secondary systems of Persian music called sub-Dastgah. The microtones of this system of music (so-called "quarter-tones", which are nothing of the sort) are quite different from those heard elsewhere this evening, and are the the legacy of many centuries of tradition.

Sasha Bogdanowitsch wrote his *Atom Turning in the Sun of Eternity* specifically for an ensemble of instruments performing in Just Intonation. He tells us,

"The title represents the life or quest that is continually going on, everywhere and in everything. That quest can be seen as being realized in the commitment and fulfillment of vision, whether represented in the soul who is searching for meaning, the artist searching for beauty, or the lover searching for the beloved. The titles for the parts and interludes give a very general narrative on these themes, hoping to leave enough room for personal interpretation. The entire work was composed for the pure beatless tuning known as just intonation, which meant the fixed pitch instruments, such as guitar and marimba, would have to be modified and built anew.

The libretto sung is in an original language of sounds, rather than so-called 'real' words of any known language. I feel texts sung in specific languages have limited emotional impact and draw the listener into a territory that can only go as far as the words' limited meaning. This technique resonates strongly with my ideal in trying to express the unexpressible."

The Artists

Sasha Bogdanowitsch has a MA from the University of California at Santa Cruz and a BFA from the California Institute of the Arts, where he studied both composition and world musics, integrating the two into multi-movement, interdisciplinary performances. He has studied and performed in Indonesia, India, and Australia as well. During the last four years, while living in the greater Bay area, he has worked with such diverse artists and/or groups as: composer Lou Harrison, puppeteer Kathy Foley, New Music Works and the gamelans: Si Aptos, Si Betty, Sari Raras, Pusaka Sunda and UCSC. Sasha is currently living in New Jersey and completing separate works for guitar, shakuhachi and voice, and vocal quartet. The East Coast premiere of his "Atom Turning..." will take place on May 7th in New York City as part of the American Festival of Microtonal Music.

Chris Bleth is a woodwind wonderkind. He can play competently every wind instrument except bassoon. This piece demands of him intonational subtleties almost completely opposite what normally must be done to play "in tune". His efforts have been tireless, and well achieved.

Hannes Giger, who has studied with Bert Turetzky, is a true champion for his instrument. He has commissioned and premiered numerous works for contra-bass both in the United States, and Europe. He is fearless, and is interested in exploring all possible applications for his instrument.

Cellist **William Skeen** holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music and enjoys performing a range of musics, particularly contemporary & early music. In addition to the cello, William is an accomplished baroque cellist and viola da gambist, and is currently pursuing a Master of Music degree from USC, where he studies with Ronald Leonard.

Born in Hamburg, Germany, **Inga La Rose** grew up in a musical family and played recorder from early childhood. She studied historical recorders and flutes with Peter Holtslag at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater, Hamburg, and participated in many workshops throughout Europe. She has been featured in solo performances and period instrument ensembles in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Denmark, and the Netherlands. Ms. La Rose concretizes with *LA Musica Viva*, *South West Chamber Music Society*, *The Winthrop Fleet*, *LA Baroque Orchestra*, *Musica Angelica* and can be heard on recordings with the *Ensemble de Medici*.

Esmacel Tehrani attended the National Conservatory of Music in Tehran where he studied santur, piano, cello and tonbak. He has also studied composition at the Vienna Academy of Music, where he also performed with the *Shiraz Ensemble*. In 1985, he came to the US at the invitation of the *Oshagh* ensemble where he has been occupied with preparing compositions and santur performances. He has composed many pieces for the santur, for tonbak & percussion, music for children's movies & stories, two tasnifs on Omar Khayyam poetry, and nine metric pieces in different dastgahs (classical music).

George Zelenz is a composer, fine woodworker, educator, sculptor, painter, and budding architect/ builder, whose composition *Moment Condensate* (1996) was featured at last year's Microfest.

Johnny Reinhard is the director and founder of the American Festival of Microtonal Music, as well as a conductor, composer, and bassoon soloist. Mr. Reinhard conducted the premiere of his realization of Charles Ives's "Universe Symphony" in Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center in 1996. That year he conducted the premiere of his realization of the Edgard Varèse "Graphs and Time" in the Centre Pompidou in Paris with the *2e2m Ensemble*. Other composers realized and premiered by Reinhard include Terry Riley ("In C in Just Intonation"), Harry Partch ("December 1942"), Percy Grainger ("Free Music"), La Monte Young ("Vision"), and many of his own (e.g. "Raven", "Odysseus", "Atlantis"). Last year, Reinhard was the conductor for the First International Theremin Festival in Portland, Maine.

Just Strings is a unique ensemble that specializes in the performance of music in Just Intonation. This ancient system of tuning system produces acoustically pure intervals which results in much sweeter consonances and more disturbing dissonances than in our modern system of tuning called Equal Temperament. In a musical world that has foregone tonality in search of new means of expression (atonality and electronic music, etc.), the pure intervals of just intonation provide composers with a refreshing new palette which can include the musical styles of the past as well as new possibilities for the future. Since their formation in 1991 to perform the music of Lou Harrison and Harry Partch, they have gone on to commission and premiere works by Larry Polansky, Mamoru Fujieda, John Luther Adams, Mari Takano, Sasha Bogdonawitsch and others. In 1995 they toured Japan under the auspices of the American Embassy's prestigious Interlink Festival, giving three weeks of concerts and lectures on new music. Their CD *Just West Coast* was *CD Review's* "CD of the Year" in 1994, and their recording of Sasha Matson's *The 5th Lake* was released by New Albion Records in January 1997. Besides her busy schedule of teaching and recording for the entertainment industry,

Marcia Dickstein is a founding member of the internationally recognized chamber ensemble *The Debussy Trio*, named "1990 Young Artist of the Year" by *Musical America*, which has commissioned, performed and recorded works by such American composers as Donald Crockett, Daron Hagen, Michael Kibbe, Ian Krouse, Robert Kyr, Augusta Read Thomas and many more. The Trio has performed over 500 specially designed concerts for inner-city and rural school children, "Musical Adventures" for families, and concerts for seniors. They have recorded four CDs for the Sierra Classical label.

Gene Sterling's musical career has spanned 25 years of performing such diverse styles ranging from Jazz, R&B, Pop, Rock & Roll and Classical. As a drummer and percussionist, performing & recording with artists such as The Don Ellis Band, Johnny Otis & Lainie Kazan, Sterling spent 10 years traveling extensively throughout the U.S., Europe & Canada. He also recorded with the Harry Partch Ensemble in the late 1960's. Later tours to West Africa and Japan stimulated an interest in ethnic percussion playing. Since 1982, he has been composing music for film and TV using the latest technology.

John Schneider is an internationally recognized guitarist, composer, author and broadcaster whose weekly television and radio programs have brought the sound of the guitar into millions of homes for the past fifteen years. He holds a Ph.D. in Physics & Music from the University of Wales, music degrees from the University of California and the Royal College of Music [London], and is past President of the Guitar Foundation of America. A specialist in contemporary music, Schneider's *The Contemporary Guitar* (University of California Press, 1985) has become the standard text in the field. He has performed in Europe, Japan & throughout North America, and has been featured soloist at New Music America, and on NPR's "Performance Today". Most recently he has been featured in New York's American Festival of Microtonal Music, Denver's Microstock '95 & '97, and the California's annual Mozart Festival. He works as a music Professor at Pierce College in Los Angeles, and is music critic for *Soundboard* magazine.