miCROfest

EAST / MEETS WEST

4TH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF MICROTONAL MUSIC

Dear visitors, friend and colleagues,

As all of you know, this year was very specific in many ways considering the Covid-Richter scenario but despite all restrictions, and cancellations, it is my pleasure to welcome you at 4th international festival of microtonal music in Zagreb!

These years, in many ways reduced edition is one day happening featuring only Croatian musicians and lectors for the reasons mentioned above but beside that, what makes **miCROfest 2020** specific in relation to first 3 editions is the topic – **EAST meets WEST**.

Microtonal analyses and synthesis of Eastern traditional instruments (Tibetan singing bowls), European classical instruments (strings) and modern technology (synthesizers & samplers) is the main subject of this year festivals concerts and lectures aiming to invite composers and instrumentalist to join this specific microtonal method in writing and performing music.

Zoran Šćekić, Artistic director

PROGRAM

05.12.2020 | Prečko 2A

2 — 3 PM

Opening of 4th international festival of microtonal music miCROfest 2020 - introductory speech

1st CONCERT „determination"

"Evening Bells & Morning Bels" (8 min.)
"Echos of Ivan & Strong Man" (10 min.)
— **Ana Žgur** / solo piano

"9 fragments for alto saxophone" (15 min.)
— **Antica Berislav** / solo saxophone

"Ad formam spectralem"* - (11 min.)
— **Jurica Petar Petrač** / Conductor
— **Terezija Cukrov** / Keyboard I
Ana Žgur / Keyboard II
Marija Anđela Biondić / Keyboard III
— Violins / **Joško Stojanov** | **Georg Draušnik** | **Eva Šulić** | **Matea Kasaić**
— Violas / **Filip Kojundžić** | **Marta Balenovic**
— Cellos / **Josip Boštjančić** | **Janko Franković**

LECTURES

5 — 6 PM
„The Art of Spectral Groups" / Zoran Šćekić

6.15 — 7.15 PM
„Microtonal Hacking " / Lovro Hrust

8 PM

Closing of 4th international festival of microtonal music miCROfest 2020 - short speech

2nd CONCERT „improvisation"

„Compression – Decompression"
„Construction 3.1"
„Construction 2.4"
„Construction 1.3"
„Free Session"*

— Ensemble **„Abstract Construction Collective"**:
Pavle Jovanović / Electric Guitar & Live Electronics
Zoran Šćekić / modified slide guitar
Damir Prica Kafka / Tenor & Soprano saxophone
Dani Bošnjak / Flute
Borko Rupena / Drums, Percussion & Tibetan singing bowls

* World premiere
(All compositions written and arranged by **Zoran Šćekić** except for „Free Session" written and arranged by ensemble ***Abstract Construction Collective***)

1ST CONCERT „DETERMINATION"

"EVENING BELLS & MORNING BELLS" "ECHOS OF IVAN & STRONG MAN"

All four pieces written for solo piano are aiming to explore the harmony of non-tempered microtonal system based on integer harmonics, also called Just intonation. All music intervals used in these compositions are built on prime numbers 2, 3 and 5, which are usually called the five limit intervals. Comparing with 12 tone equal tempered scale, among many other differences, just intonation features far stronger contrast between consonant and dissonant intervals, which is the main subject of this compositions. That is the reason why the tones B and F sharp are omitted from piano register in order to gain two different pitches for tones G and B flat. "Evening Bells & Morning Bells" are inspired by traditional music and together with the original composition "Strong man", they all share the same goal - presenting strong consonance of Just intonation. Unlike the already mentioned composition, the main subject of exploration within composition "Echoes of Ivan" is strong dissonance within Just intonation – still within same piano tuning! Inspiration and dedication for this composition goes to Russian microtonal composer Ivan Wyschnegradsky.

All four compositions are from the CD album "Just music" published by Ravello Records 2015 and distributed by NAXOS. Album is among the BEST of 2015 in the USA based on the Grammy award winner John Schneider choice, next to the Harry Partch and Brad Mehldau.

"The beauty of his music is not only found in the mathematical structures imposed, but in the space between the notes and in the dynamic progression within the pieces. Works like 23.10 and Strong Man bring to mind Erik Satie s piano pieces, film music, and minimalism. Šćekić masterfully crafts pieces that on the surface portray often lyrical, placid, and harmonic gestures, yet are richly calculated and complex in their construction."

PARMA Recordings
NH, United States

"This is a very different sort of album in which the piano is presented in very subtle and peculiar ways. The tracks on Just Music show just how beautiful the tones of the piano can be. It's a world in which the sound of the individual notes is much more important than the speed or complexity of the pieces. This album is... simply beautiful. One of the most impressive piano albums we've ever heard. Recommended. Top pick."

Babysue:
Comics, Poetry, and Reviews by LMNOP

"9 FRAGMENTS FOR ALTO SAXOPHONE"

Nine fragments for alto saxophone is a piece inspired by Madonna's Weeping (Croatian: Gospin plač), a traditional chant from the island Hvar, that forms a part of the traditional ceremony of the Holy Week, the procession Following the Cross, that takes part in the night from Holy Thursday to Holy Friday. The tradition dates back to the year 1510 and the first writings about the procession date from 1658. The focal point of the procession is the Madonna's Weeping, octosyllabics passion text from the 15th century, sung by previously chosen singers, kantaduri. The chant recorded by the Faroski kantaduri, used as the basis for this piece, originates from Vrbanj (sung by: Andro Matković, Mili Matković and Jakov Stipetić). An extensive work done by the composer and the performer of the piece included field work, studying the chants, analysis and transcription of the recording, designing a music writing method that would successfully connect the material with the nature of the instrument and ultimately fitting it all into the composer's poetics. Through the use of many possibilities provided by the non-tempered microtonal traditional music, the composer expands his spectrum of possibilities for composing, using the elements of the chant as a starting point, but also as one of the tools in his own compositional technique. The transcription showed that the chant has 13 different tones in the interval of a fifth, so the odd numbered fragments are based on a non-tempered 13-tone division of a fifth, while the even numbered fragments, written in the tempered system, are centred around three short melodies that are based on two chants from the Lamentations of the Virgin Mary/Gospin Plač.

"AD FORMAM SPECTRALEM"

This microtonal composition is written for specially selected 36 Peter Hess Tibetan singing bowls, two keyboards and strings. Tibetan singing bowls produce many different harmonics – all of them are irrational and many of them are random. In order to achieve consonant intervals based on harmonic structure between the singing bowls themselves, spectral analyses followed by extrapolation of singing bowls groups was necessary. For this composition I've extrapolated 15 singing bowls groups and constructed 15 different microtonal 12-tone scales tuning (this process is described in detail in my study "The art of spectral groups – irrational random intervals harmony doctrine – nine steps before composing"). Each keyboard player must have an assistant to change the tuning along the performance using the key-switch function placed on the lowest 15 keys. 36 Peter Hess Singing Bowls are divided in 6 groups among 6 percussion players.

The main idea of this composition is to present the possibilities of the method described in the study "The art of the spectral groups", to present and popularize the richness of the sound of Tibetan singing bowls, to show how wonderful they can blend with classical western instruments tuned according to microtonal analyses, to presents beautiful and completely new harmony based on the structure of Tibetan singing bowls tones and to invite other composers and musicians to explore the endless microtonal possibilities of the irrational random intervals harmony by writing new pieces for selected 36 Peter Hess singing bowls.

Unfortunately, two months before the premiere, The Peter Hess Institute from (Sustedt, Germany) and Peter Hess® Akademija Adria Grupa (Zagreb, Croatia) have cancelled the collaboration. That is the reason why the composition premiere will not feature original 36 Peter Hess Tibetan singing bowls but instead there will be the 3rd keyboard player performing parts of all 36 singing bowls by using the samples of the singing bowls recorded in studio at University of Zagreb Academy of Music.

LECTURES

„THE ART OF SPECTRAL GROUPS" / Zoran Šćekić

Musical harmony, as we know today draws its roots from 3 basic major triads – tonic, subdominant and dominant. This structure of musical harmony is not invented by a man but discovered by a man because it simply comes from the physical structure of the ton itself! ("Harmony I"; Fran Lhotka) The ton that we here speak about is a ton with integer harmonics, which means that the harmonics are integer multiples of the lowest frequency in the ton spectra, also called the root frequency. This kind of the ton, with integer harmonics is produced by any vibrating bodies with fix points on both of their ends (vocal cords, line of air in the tube or any type of string). Vibrating bodies with one or no fix points produces tones with irrational harmonics (all type of percussive instruments including bells, bowls, cymbals etc.).

If the harmonic structure of this instruments is too far away from the tuning system of those with integer harmonics, they are mostly used as dissonant effect like tubular bells are used in orchestral scores for example. Or completely new kind of music is produced by the use of instruments with irrational harmonics where the main subject is not the harmony but rhythmic, like in traditional music of some parts of Indonesia called Gamelan for example.

But is there a completely new type of musical harmony based on irrational harmonics...?!

This lecture is presentation of an exhaustive study that I did in order to create a practical method for writing microtonal consonant (in broader sense) music for specially selected 36 Peter Hess Tibetan singing bowls. The method consists of 9 steps and it can be applied to absolutely any type of sound but I created it especially for tones with random irrational harmonics. The chapters of the study are listed below:

THE ART OF SPECTRAL GROUPS
(Irrational random intervals harmony doctrine)
Study by Zoran Šćekić

CONTENT
"9 steps before composing"
step 1# — spectral analyses
step 2# — table of harmonics
step 3# — mathematical comparison
step 4# — all unis and near unis connections
step 5# — unis and near unis harmonic compatibility
step 6# — all unis centralized groups & scales
step 7# — all unis and near unis centralized groups & scales
step 8# — group selection and 12 tone scales construction, tuning and notation
step 9# — mutual tones within each pair of selected twelve-tone scales and individal singiong bowls

„MICROTONAL SOFTWARE" / Lovro Hrust

Composing and performing music in unconventional music scales at the present moment, although there is significant progress in this field, can be described as an "exotic" and laborious activity engaged by a small community. Because of that, instruments for performing such music are often made individually or in small series, and performing "by ear" is difficult if a newly created scale is played, that has not yet entered the "inner ear" of the performers. Experimenting with new scales and performing can be made easier by using software instruments that provide the ability to quickly "tune" software instruments and the software can even be used to create new music scales by specifying the algorithms by which the scale is generated. Due to the little interest and popularity of such music, products in the field of software music aids more often than not do not provide such tuning capabilities, or computer programming knowledge is required to achieve them. The lecture will provide an overview of frequently used tools and possibilities for creating music of unconventional music scales by means of computer software. Steps on how to get from the idea ofa musical scale to its realization in a virtual musical instrument will also be briefly presented.

2ND CONCERT „IMPROVISATION"

As a contrast to 1st concert of the miCROfest 2020 program which features highly determined harmony based on the method of spectral groups where every note of the music is interpretated as it's written, 2nd concert brings out almost an opposite approach on how to create music for specific palette of tones, clearly defined by its spectral structure where almost every note of the music is improvised and written in the same time..! This approach could be described as more intuitive one. The idea is to bring together other excellent instrumentalists experienced in improvised music and let them to build musical texture that would support the physics of the sound presented by Tibetan singing bowls. A means to an end, beside the experience in improvised music can be a graphic notation as well. Here is excerpt from the introduction of Zoran Šćekić Master thesis „Graphic and hybrid scores as a synthesis of written and improvised music":

„For today's musicians, the mention of improvisation mostly entices associations with jazz, blues, funk, rock, folk, etc., but one should not forget that improvisation had a vital role in the music of the Renaissance and Baroque and still has one in contemporary music.

A spontaneous and convincing performance as a trait of improvised music is clearly audi-ble even to audiences without any musical education. Complexity of form and richness of arrangement are another pair of attributes typical for writ- ten music equally easy to detect.

Graphic and hybrid notation as possible ways to synthesize these two characteristics of written and improvised music is a topic almost as old as music itself. The hypothesis is that all graphic or hybrid scores can be quantitatively and qualitatively classified. The most common method of approaching this notion is to define the similarities and differences between improvised and written music, determine the level of their synthesis in order to organize a classification and yield an analysis of some of the works of an author according to the newly-created classification.

According to the experience of the author of this thesis, all works, this author's own included, can be classified according to two different criteria and each can be divided into 3 separate categories.

Selecting differences between written and improvised music, finding the differences and similarities between different types of improvised music and classifying the synthesis of these two kinds of music will lay the foundation for analyses that form the main part of this thesis."

IMPRESSUM

Artistic director and producer: Zoran Šćekić

ORGANIZED BY:

CAMA – croatian association of microtonal art

The association has been founded at the beginning of the 2015 with a following goals: to promote, develop and advance traditional and contemporary microtonal music; to initiate systematic and detailed research of traditional microtonal systems as an important part of the cultural heritage; to initiate and promote composition and interpretation in microtonal systems for further development of the music in general; to promote objective connection between science and art. Since its founding, association has delivered few relevant projects: Panmonism premiere in Zagreb was its first project - this was also the first official participation of Croatia at European Festival of Microtonal music - EUROMicroFest 2015. With support from Croatian Composers Society 2015 International award, CAMA published "Just Music" - CD album of Zoran Šćekić microtonal compositions. In 2016 CAMA launched its project dedicated to the research of traditional microtonal systems "ADRIA Microtonalis" dedicated to the research of Istria scales and its specifics in cooperation with "Ivan Matatic Ronjgov institution". In 2016 first miCROfest is organized followed by miCROfest 2017, 2018 & 2020.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT:
Republic of Croatia Ministry of Culture City of Zagreb
Croatian Composers Society

IN COOPERATION WITH:
University of Zagreb Academy of Music
Centar for culture Trešnjevka – CeKaTe