

intermezzo I (2003)

could a sound be a light? a light, which penetrates a quiet and empty space in the late afternoon. the space brightened expands by the light to the infinite. there is a motion of stay, of moving and disappearing at once. an approach to this kind of motion of sounds is the basic idea of the series of intermezzi for various solo instruments - each of them with 12 pieces.

"12 intermezzi for koto" are dedicated to Harue Nonaka and Ichiro Kajiki. (KS)

enclosed VII: guitar (2007) first performance

The enclosed series is an outcome of a study of the relationship between the thought of William James and the work of composers Alvin Lucier and Michael Pisaro. Simple motions interact with the boundaries and properties of their environment to yield unpredictable results. enclosed VII: guitar confines one string with another. The 6th string is plucked vertically so that it hits the 5th string, causing both to vibrate. The guitarist tunes these two strings within a half step of one another, which may result in audible beating. Because both strings are tuned downward to a slack tension, the resulting pitches are imprecise. (JG)

Natsu no kyoku

Natsu no kyoku ('Ode to Summer') is one of a set of pieces for voice and koto called Kokin no kumi which consists of five pieces: four odes to the seasons, and Chidori no kyoku ('Song of Plovers'). All but one of the waka poems sung in this piece are from Book Three (Songs of Summer) of the Kokin waka shu, a tenth century anthology of poems compiled by imperial command. The maebiki, or prelude, of the present piece is thought to have been taken from the Min-shingaku repertoire of late nineteenth century Japanese adaptations of Chinese Ming and Ch'ing dynasty's popular music. The tegoto, or interlude, like that of the other three seasonal pieces in this set, was composed and inserted by Matsuzaka Shun'ei (1854-1920) of Kyoto, and not by the original composer.

Ukulelevent #6 'Banjolely' (2009) first performance

Ukelelevents is a series of process pieces, improvisations, actions and forgeries for any number of players. (SC)

Raised by feral Essex folk, Stephen Chase began researching advanced microtonal harmony on the violin aged eight. Later, he took up the guitar but had to put it down again as it belonged to somebody else. Settling on experimental music as the route to success he is now composer-in-residence/assistant manager at Little Chef, M1, Junction 12.

Kunsu Shim (b.1958)

kunsu shim was born in korea. since the mid-eighties he has lived in germany as a freelance composer. most of his numerous works are related to the image of space such as internal differences: space of sound in itself, space between sounds and space of silence. he has also written several performance pieces. they show the simple change of physical conditions becoming a human emotion. www.kunsu-shim.de

Jennie Gottschalk

Jennie Gottschalk (born 1978 in Stanford, CA) is a composer based in Boston. She holds a bachelor's degree in composition from The Boston Conservatory (2001), and a master's degree and doctorate from Northwestern University (2008). Teachers have included Larry Bell, Yakov Gubanov, Jay Alan Yim, Augusta Read Thomas, and Aaron Cassidy. Recent performances in Los Angeles (Dog Star Orchestra) and Chicago (Northwestern University Symphony Orchestra and Contemporary Music Ensemble). Her dissertation and current work explore connections between American pragmatist thought and experimental music. Current projects include a string quartet, a children's book, an experimental music blog (soundexpanse.com), and a residency at the Conway School of Landscape Design.

Yoshizawa Kengyo (1808-72)

YOSHIZAWA Kengyo is a representative koto composer of the end of the Edo period and was also conversant with, for example, gagaku, national learning, waka and the study of the Chinese classics. Apart from the 5 pieces of the kokin gumi and the 4 of the kokin sin gumi which represent a new trend in kumiuta, YOSHIZAWA Kengyo also composed several hauta mono. Although both the kokin gumi and the kokin sin gumi are kumiuta, they do not preserve the format of classic koto kumiuta.

The kokinjōshi used in the kokin gumi is adapted from the string tuning for the gakuso (gagaku koto) in banshiki-cho and is a mix of both the "in" and "yo" modes but has only one semitone interval.

Stephen Chase (b.1973)

15 Zwiefache

transzendierte für Gitarre (1979, T2.4 of 'Lokale Musik')

Walter Zimmermann

Each harmonic chord is the result of a transformation process of pitch and duration onto each other, so that the original folkdance melodies which are the basis of the piece become transcended. The dances have changing metres, that explains the name Zwiefache (double metres).

The empty strings of the guitar represent the six diatonic pitches of these dances, without the seventh (the leading tone in c-major). e-a-d-g-c-f. The harmonics 3rd, 4th, 5th, 8th, represent the durations which the dance melodies are made of: Each chord is the sum of pitch and duration projection of one bar. (WZ)

Born Schwabach, Franconia, on April 15, 1949. Early studies of oboe, violin, piano; first compositions at age of 12. Composition studies with Werner Heider in Nuremberg, and pianist in Heider's ars nova ensemble, 1968-70. Briefly attended Mauricio Kagel's New Music Courses in Cologne. Studied simultaneously at the Institute for Sonology (Utrecht) and the Jaap-Kunst Ethnology Centre (Amsterdam) 1970-73. Computer studies in Hamilton USA, 1974; ethnological research, gathering folk music, especially from American Indian reservations, 1975-6. Founded Beginner Studio in Cologne 1977; organised concert series there till 1984. From 1982, composition teacher at the Liège Conservatoire, taught at Darmstadt Summer Courses 1982-84, teaching post at Royal Conservatoire den Haag 1988, from 1990 composition teacher in Karlsruhe, visiting professor at Folkwanghochschule 1992-93, from 1993 Professor of Composition at Berlin Academy of the Arts; he now lives in Berlin and Seidmar (Franconia). Awarded City of Cologne Förderpreis 1980, 'Ensemble' first prize 1981, Villa Massimo stipendium (Rome) 1987, Schneider-Schott Prize 1989, Prix Italia 1990 for Die Blinden.

The most significant work-group of his early period is Lokale Musik (Local Music), which inverts the globalism of Stockhausen's Telemusik and Hymnen (pieces that draw on music from all over the world) by insisting on the universalities embedded in the folk traditions of Zimmermann's native Franconia. The works in this cycle — ranging from a percussion solo (Riuti) to a 45-minute piece for full orchestra (Ländler-Topographien) — reveal some essential and enduring Zimmermann paradoxes: a search for 'simplicity' which yields very intricate and refined results (often making great demands on players — Zimmermann uses the term 'introverted virtuosity'), and a seemingly anti-serialist stance in which, nevertheless, all kinds of abstract constructivist processes play a decisive role.

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Ukulelevent #2 'UKALULI' (2009)

ad hoc players: Naomi Anderson, Angharad Davies, John Lely, Neil Luck, Tim Parkinson, Michael Parsons

Stephen Chase

St Michael's Garden (2004)

This piece was composed for the guitarist Michael Schröder. Despite of the title, the mighty image of St. Michael the Archangel is not quite what I had in mind. Here again the musical materials are limited. The guitar creates a sound-space — for example, by changing from a single melody to a chord and by sudden leaps between the registers. The flow, or rather the path in this piece, is unpredictable, like entering a celestial garden, a garden that you can imagine but one that you have never visited before. (MN)

Makiko Nishikaze (b.1968)

Makiko Nishikaze studied composition in Japan, at Mills College (California) and Hochschule der Künste Berlin. Also active as pianist and performance-artist. Taught at Wakayama University, Japan from 2007-2009. www.makiko-nishikaze.de

Malvina (1989)

Malvina was written in 1989 for Kazue Sawai and her extraordinary koto playing. I knew almost nothing about the koto but had seen Kazue Sawai perform and drew much of my encouragement for writing the piece from that. The music is almost made as a tribute to Malvina Reynolds (1900-1978), one of our national treasures, a singer and song writer of great energy and directness who tirelessly championed oppressed people and especially loved and knew all about children. She lived in California which I think of as on the way to Japan. The music is made out of material drawn from the Malvina Reynolds song "On the Rim of the World", and also from the song "Harriet Tubman" by Walter Robinson. The music is continuous but in six sections, the first and last made up of running figuration, the second is a transcription of a "Snare Drum Peace March" of mine, the third and fifth use sustained sounds somewhat in the manner of chorale preludes. There are a number of tuning changes "composed" into the piece, and the performer is given a certain range of freedom of how she may play. (CW)

Christian Wolff

Christian Wolff was born in 1934 in Nice, France, but has lived mostly in the U.S. since 1941. He studied piano with Grete Sultan and, briefly, composition with John Cage. Though mostly self-taught as a composer, association with John Cage, Morton Feldman, David Tudor, Earle Brown, Frederic Rzewski and Cornelius Cardew have been important for him. A particular feature of his music has been to allow performers various degrees of freedom and interaction at the actual time of performance. The music is published by C.F. Peters, New York, and a good portion of it has been recorded. A number of pieces have been used by Merce Cunningham and the Cunningham Dance Company, starting in 1953.

Wolff has also been active as a performer and as an improviser - with, among others, Takehisa Kosugi, Steve Lacey, Keith Rowe, William Winant, Kui Dong, Larry Polansky and the group AMM. His writings on music, up to 1998, are collected in the book CUES: WRITINGS AND CONVERSATIONS, published by MusikTexte, Cologne.

Do Lado do Dedo (1986)

"Do Lado do dedo" ("On the other side of the Finger") refers to the tactile experience of "touching" the guitar: expanding its limitations as a string and percussion instrument and at times "preparing" it in the "Cagean" sense. The rapid vibrations produced by the microtonal tuning and the slow and continuous percussion seem to bring the guitar closer to the body, while at the same time, producing a sound associated with other instruments such as the berimbau and the viola caipira (a Brazilian folk guitar). The guitar is an extension of ourselves: a leg to stand on, a helping hand and a friend to sing with. One rubs and coaxes, asks a question, and a sound comes out and answers us. (CM)

Some strings (2007)

It seems that we all know what will happen when Cage's "4'33" is performed. It has become predictable music now, though what we hear in this piece is in fact not predictable. It is often said that Cage's intention is to listen to the sound itself? But, in this kind of silence-music, no matter at present whether played by musicians or not, is what we listen to the sound itself? We hear silence every day in ordinary life. It existed before Cage, exists at present, and will exist forever. There are few distinctions, in terms of sound, between the sound of cars I hear now and the sound of cars I will probably listen to in the concert I will attend. Consider what the meaning of "the sound itself" is. It implies, or means perhaps, that there can be the sound that is free from the syntax, free from the theme and the variations, free from pitches and intervals, free from any musical theory. If so, this is not the matter of how to listen but the matter of sound. If we could listen to all kinds of sounds as "the sound itself," why, for example, does this not apply to Beethoven's "Symphony No. 4"? For intervals between pitches, structures, and certain rhythms are not the sound. I think it is impossible for us to listen to the sound as it is. When we listen to music, we not only follow the sound, but are also conscious of the language of music: that is to listen to music. If "to listen to the sound itself" is an instruction, a sort of concept, there is no problem: we can have "Symphony No. 4"—though we fail to catch "the sound itself". Of course, Cage's intention is not this. Eventually what he did at that time seems now, for me, not to invent the concept but claim to have a new kind of sonority: "noise", "the sound itself", "silence", "indeterminacy" and whatever: these are now regarded as methods to invite new sound? "Experimental music" has been in this vein for a long time—though I don't know since when. I think "experimental music" is no longer experimental. To have a new sonority which has never been heard before is the most prior thing. Only in this narrow sense, unpredictable sound is expected. "To make it new" and "to make new sound" is different. Now, how can we make it new, for, given a certain context, any sound can be the sound of music? It is indeed difficult as long as we make or listen to music in the world of music. (TS)

Chico Mello (b.1957)

„My love for music comes from the music and the noises of my big family as well as from records of children stories. Playing the guitar led me to Brazilian Música Popular and the adventure of experimenting to composing, improvising, psychiatry, traveling, sliding and superimposing contexts, feel my sensory perception, my body, and silence.“
(Chico Mello)

Born in Curitiba, Brazil. Studied music and medicine in Curitiba. Composition studies in São Paulo with J. Penalva and H.J. Koellreuter and in Berlin with Dieter Schnebel and W. Szalonek. Experimental, popular, and music theatre; works in Brazil and Germany as composer, instrumental performer and singer.

Taku Sugimoto

guitarist / composer

born in Tokyo December 20, 1965

“an essay in mathematics, not music” (Piero Scaruffi, on Principia Sugimatica)

“either false or profound” (on Principia Sugimatica)

“a kind of cleric of the electric guitar” (David Toop)

“concept sensei!” (Radu Malfatti)

“Jim Hall plays Scelsi” (Keith Rowe)

“Bailey plays Feldman” (Donald Miller)

“reminds me of Robert Bresson” (one of the audience)

“after listening to your music in the concert, I quit playing punk rock” (fan mail from USA)

“I felt like I got raindrops in the jail” (a fellow improviser)

“his composition is similar to the physical model of physics”
(Manabu Suzuki)

“the prodigal son of lowercase music” (The Wire)

“What are you doing here? Are you waiting for someone?”

“No, I just stand” (a conversation with a policeman)

“you are walking as if you have no purpose” (another policeman)

www.japanimprov.com/tsugimoto

Makiko Goto, born in Tokyo, Japan 1963, started playing koto with her mother when she was nine years old. From the age of twelve she studied under Kazue Sawai and Tadao Sawai at the Sawai Koto School where she received the master degree "Shihan". In 1986, she moved to Hawaii (USA) where she was an instructor at the Ethnic Music Department of the University of Hawaii and established a branch of the Sawai Koto School. Since 1992 she has been living in the Netherlands.

Makiko Goto is performing both traditional and contemporary music on koto (13-string) and on modern koto instruments (17-string bass koto and 21-string koto). She is frequently invited to join different ensembles and groups (duo, trio, electronic music ensemble, theatre, dance, etc) world-wide. The duo collaboration with the recorder player Jeremias Schwarzer (since 2003) is one of her actual deep focus, including both traditional and contemporary music for two instruments coming from different cultural backgrounds.

Since moving to Europe, Makiko Goto has frequently participated in the premieres of works for koto instruments by contemporary composers. She has been collaborating with the composers Toshio Hosokawa, Makoto Shinohara, Misato Mochizuki, Bernhard Lang, Gerhard Stäbler, Kunsu Shim, Jimmy López, Rupert Huber, Annette Schlünz, Malika Kishino and others.

Koto concertos have been written for Makiko Goto: "Varem" by Jimmy López for koto-solo (13-string, 21-string, 17-string bass koto) and orchestra, and "Blaulaub" by Annette Schlünz for two soloists (recorder and bass koto), orchestra and Live-Electronic with the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks. She also performed the koto concerto by Maki Ishii "GA-EI", and "Voice of the Phoenix for Koto and Orchestra" by Neil McKay (USA).

Her performances were recorded for international radio and television programs and she appears on several CDs with contemporary and traditional pieces for koto solo, and chamber music with other instruments and voice.

Makiko Goto performed as a member of the Kazue Sawai Koto Ensemble until 1992 for: Ton und Gegenton, Vienna; Bang on a Can, New York; Border Crossing, Toronto; Moers New Jazz Festival, Germany; Kennedy Center, Washington D.C; Conservatory of Moscow; Theatre des Champs-Elysees and Theatre de la Ville, Paris.

Stephen Chase composes, improvises and writes about music. He has performed with Sheffield's epoch-shattering Gated Community, Damo Suzuki, Mick Beck, THF Drenching, The Bob Loblaw Bond, Earle Brown and Lol Coxhill. His music has been played by Apartment House, Exaudi, BBC Singers, Sound Intermedia, SPNM, Tonguestuff, and pianist Philip Thomas with whom he is currently editing a book on the music of Christian Wolff.

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