

YESCOLAB #3 (24 June 2021)

Accompanying Thoughts

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Microtonality and Tuning Systems

Idin explained about his usage of non-semitone tunings. We may call these tunings “microtonal”, because our notation depends on the chromatic scale (as twelve equal divisions of the octave), and then we write these “other” pitches as small deviations to the chromatic pitches.

One (not the only) way to get to “other” tunings than the chromatic scale is the series of harmonics (compare <http://www.idin-samimi.com/playable-nodes-on-strings>). As Idin mentioned, this also connects our modern music to the ancient music, perhaps in each culture. These tunings changed in history, because each tuning belongs to a certain music.

Two remarks on this:

1. Each tuning system is based on a conflict, and is a compromise to solve the most painful parts of this conflict. In other words: There is no “perfect” tuning system, or if you allow me this comparison: There is no perfect world, we can only adjust the imperfections.
2. Each tuning system which we use is an open space: Open to our decisions, and open for our developments. These decisions and developments should fit to our musical ideas.

I think it is worth to have an extra session (or one half of a session) dedicated to this very interesting and important subject.

Reductions

Amin showed his radical studies which might get the title: What is possible if nearly everything is removed or made immutable?

I think we all found this approach very interesting and inspiring. Some thoughts from my personal perception and point of view:

1. What is the main question for a reduction. Some possibilities:
 - a) I look for the maximum possible reduction. How far can I go.
 - b) I look for a reduction which closes one door but opens another door. Or, put a bit more accentuated: I look for how to open doors.
 - c) I look for the amount of reduction at which I feel best as composer. Some of us might feel best with no reductions, some with few reductions, some with maximum possible reductions.
 - d) I investigate what is OK to miss, and what not. For instance, perhaps I can live with only one pitch but not without different envelopes.
2. Is the movement (the motivation) only in the direction of reduction, or is it a movement between reduction and extension? (For instance, I reduce pitch, and

then I feel the need to add more timbres.)

3. We have a big difference in what I can call “resistance of the material” when we compare musicians and computers. For a piano player, it is very difficult to play 10:9; for a computer program, it is easy. For a musician it is easy to play “rubato” or “inaccurate” or “swinging”; for a computer it is difficult. Which resistance should we seek in composing — minor resistance, major resistance, or something in between?