

February 16, 2012
UCSD Conrad Prebys Concert Hall
8pm

Wolfgang von Schweinitz
Plainsound Glissando Modulation

Andrew McIntosh, violin
Scott Worthington, double bass

Wolfgang von Schweinitz, composer, born in Hamburg (Germany) in 1953. He studied in 1968-76 with Esther Ballou, Ernst Gernot Klussmann, György Ligeti, and John Chowning. Since 2007 he is living in Southern California, where he is professor for musical composition at the California Institute of the Arts. – Within the last fifteen years, his compositions have been concerned with researching and establishing new microtonal tuning and ensemble playing techniques based on non-tempered just intonation. (Website: www.plainsound.org)

Andrew McIntosh is known for being an avid advocate of experimental music, although he often performs compositions from throughout the last 800 years, sometimes on period instruments as well. McIntosh is a member of the Formalist Quartet, which is also dedicated to adventurous and relevant repertoire and regularly performs around the states. He holds degrees in violin and composition from the University of Nevada, Reno and the California Institute of the Arts. As a chamber musician he has played in festivals, concerts, art spaces, and recordings around the US and Europe with the Formalist Quartet, Tholl/McIntosh duo, Dante Boon, Quatuor Bozzini (Montreal), Rohan de Saram, inauthentica, and Wet Ink Ensemble (New York).

Scott Worthington is active as a chamber musician, composer, and soloist. A frequent commissioner, he has premiered solos and concertos written for him by Robert Morris, Juan Trigos, and numerous younger composers. His own music has been commissioned and performed by big bands, chamber ensembles, soloists, and computers. Worthington has performed around the world at festivals and venues such as the Chihuahua International Festival, June in Buffalo, the Lucerne Festival, Monday Evening Concerts, and the Monterey and Montreal Jazz Festivals. From 2007-2009 he was invited to perform with the Lucerne Festival Academy working with conductor Pierre Boulez, bassist Frédéric Stochl, and other members of Ensemble Intercontemporain.

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Raga in just intonation for violin and double bass, op. 49 (2006-2007)

PART 1: Region 1 – Region 2 – Region 3

PART 2: Region 4 – Region 5 – Region 6

Andrew McIntosh, violin

Scott Worthington, double bass

How can a viable completely microtonal music be made (and function in some graceful way) in which as many different pitches of the glissando continuum as possible are distinguished and tuned harmonically to each other? – How can this vast microtonal pitch repertoire successfully be made accessible by a refined and rigorous application of non-tempered just intonation, so that a wealth of complex harmonic sounds will emerge: surprising new consonances and new dissonances that will immediately make sense to the ear, even if they may have never been heard before? – How can the old performance practice of just intonation be revitalized in a concerted effort of composers and performers to explore and demonstrate its striking brilliance and sonority (that excites us so much in the performance of classical Indian music), so that it may perhaps find new friends within the realm of western music as well? – How can some efficacious tuning and ensemble playing techniques be developed and practiced that will enable us to familiarize ourselves with the specific timbres (“periodic signatures”) of the various microtonal just intervals, so that these sounds may indeed become readily retrievable with an astounding degree of precision? – Which aesthetic and structural concepts can be derived directly from these new virtuoso tuning and performance techniques? – How can the counterpoint and its instrumentation be optimized in order

to support the intonation in each instance? – And how can a continuous melodic flow of sound progressions be generated by meaningful microtonal modulations between these expressive new harmonies incorporating natural sevenths, tuned quartertones and other just intervals with frequency ratios based on the higher partials, like 13, 17, 19, or perhaps even 23?

These are some of the basic questions I kept asking myself while composing the highly demanding intonation studies a few years ago for Helge Slaatto and Frank Reinecke who had commissioned the piece. They produced a stunning radio and CD recording right after the premiere in 2008, and they have performed it half a dozen times since then. Recently two other enthusiastic and radically engaged musicians, Andrew McIntosh and Scott Worthington, have picked up the score and studied these experimental tuning and playing techniques with enormous dedication. I thank them for their wonderful work, with which they are now giving us a chance to experience the power and beauty of truly focused just intonation.

(WvS)