

# MICROFEST

may 7, 2000 - an evening of microtonal music

**Dancing with the Dragon** (1998).....William Slye  
Erin Barnes & Eli Shapiro, Just Intonation Marimba

**Sonata for Harpsichord** (1999)(First Los Angeles Performance)...Lou Harrison  
Allegro Moderato • Adagio, arioso • Estampie (1917- )  
Linda Burman-Hall, harpsichord

## Just Strings

**Song & Dance** (First Performance).....Garry Eister  
Rebecca Raff, just harp Gene Sterling, percussion John Schneider, just guitar

**Letter From Hobo Pablo** (1943).....Harry Partch  
John Schneider, adapted guitar I Rebecca Raff, kithara (1901-1974)  
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**'Cinna' - Suite for Tack Piano** (1956).....Lou Harrison  
Medium Fast • Slow • Fast • Medium Slow • Medium Grand  
Philip Bush, just tack piano

• intermission •

## Viklarbo

**Trio** (1982).....Ben Johnston  
Amanda Walker, clarinet Rachel Purkin, violin Sebastian Toettcher, cello (1926- )

**Ponder Nothing**(1989).....Ben Johnston  
Amanda Walker, clarinet

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(First Performance)

from **The Tavern** [Rumi-12th century Persian] (1998).....Ben Johnston  
Prelude • Who Says Words With My Mouth?  
John Schneider, just guitar/voice

**Suite for Microtonal Piano** (1977).....Ben Johnston  
Alarum • Blues • Etude • Song • Toccata  
Philip Bush, just concert grand piano

**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. All of this evening's music uses pure or "just" intonation, regardless of the differing styles used by these three generations of American composers.

***Dancing With The Dragon*** is in the form of an estampie in 3/4 time, consisting of seven strophes or 'puncta', and is performed on a special just intonation marimba that was built by the composer. The inspiration for this piece is "...the internal struggle that we all have with our 'inner dragons' that present themselves as obstacles to achieving our ideals: it is a reminder and a celebration of that dance". **William Slye** studied guitar with Guy Cantwell & William Coulter, instrument construction with Bill Hardin, tuning theory with Lou Harrison, & composition with David Jones, Paul Nauert & Lou Harrison. He has just completed a custom degree in Just Intonation at UC Santa Cruz.

**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." After being given a copy of Harry Partch's *Genesis of a Music* (1949) by Virgil Thomsen, Harrison bought a tuning hammer, and "...has never looked back!". The brand new *Sonata 1999* was written to be played on the eve of 2000 by Linda Burman-Hall. It presents three contrasting moods based on modal scales: a bustling energetic opening with inner-voice trills, a warmly lyrical central meditation and a flamenco-tinged 'Estampie' dance accented by exuberant cluster chords. The harpsichord is tuned in Kirnberger's second temperament (1779) which uses eleven pure fifths & one very flat fifth to create a range of key colours. This century's first piece for re-tuned piano is tonight's Suite of incidental music for Corneille's *Cinna* that was first performed in 1968 at the Old Spaghetti Factory in San Francisco and uses what Partch would call 7-limit just intonation, with scale notes being tuned to the 3rd, 5th & 7th partial of the harmonic series of several key centers.

**Garry Eister's** compositions have been performed by the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, the USC New Music Ensemble, Daniel Lentz's ensembles, glass armonicist Dennis James, the Cuesta Master Chorale and Orchestra, the San Luis Obispo Symphony & others in Holland, Sweden, Norway, France, & Belgium. His "Quintet for Glass and Strings" was recorded this past Fall with the Emerson String Quartet for the Sony Classical label with Linda Ronstadt singing Eister's chamber version of Faure's *Pavane*. He writes: "My *Song and Dance* might have been named 'Not Really A Song; Not Really a Dance'. The 'dance' is straightforward in it's sectionality and its steady beat. The harp provides the backbone of the piece's ritornello with a repeated 10 bar phrase in 6/8. The shifting accents of the guitar's melodic details turn the meter from 6/8 to 3/4 and back again. The percussionist plays the bongos with thimbles on his fingers in order to be able to play rim shots on the bongos and to play a small suspended finger cymbal. (This micro-trap-set seemed appropriate for a microfest.) Likewise, the 'song' movement is not really a song. It fails to meet the minimum requirement of songs, which is that they are sung. Instead, the "singer's part" is whistled through a microphone, which sound is processed by an electronic echo box. This piece comprises several chapters in a larger set called *The California Dreambook*.

**Harry Partch** is truly the father of this century's fascination with the pure intervals of just intonation. He has inspired generations with his dozens of unique handmade instruments, his writings, and his highly original chamber & dramatic repertoire. Of his Americana pieces from the 1940's, *The Letter* is perhaps the best known, but only in its later version for adapted guitar, kithara and marimbas. Having re-written the work several times, he admitted in his last decade that tonight's original version for adapted guitar & Kithara was his favorite. Special thanks to Danlee Mitchell and the Harry Partch Foundation for the loan of Partch's original Kithara, a plywood instrument made in an Adult Education woodshop here in Los Angeles in 1938.

**Ben Johnston's** musical training was truly extraordinary, having worked with Darius Milhaud, John Cage, & Harry Partch, all before the age of thirty. While in his second decade, he attended a lecture showing the influence of Helmholtz's theories of overtones on the modern harmonies of Claude Debussy. Johnston never forgot the experience. Later in life, having written in jazz style, and using European serialism, he turned to Just intonation composition as the mainstay of his musical voice. The lack of instruments to perform this type of music did not lead him down Partch's path of creating his own: instead, he has created repertoire for traditional instruments that are asked to play with acoustic purity. Sometimes this means retuning a piano: with stringed instruments it means learning new notes 'between' the notes, exactly notated with a system that Johnston has developed, or using new fingerings - as in the case of the seemingly iron-bound equally tempered clarinet. Ben Johnston and his artist wife Betty live in South Carolina, where they moved when he retired from teaching at the University of Illinois in the 1980's.

## The Artists

**Eli Shapiro** is a percussionist and composer currently pursuing his masters degree at the California Institute of the Arts. Recent performances include the LA Phil's Green Umbrella Series & the '98 International Computer Music Convention in Ann Arbor, Michigan where he is a founding member of the Brave New Works Series.

**Erin Barnes** received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Cal Arts in 1997. She has studied Western Classical Percussion as well as drumming traditions of India, Ghana & Indonesia. Her performance credits include the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Southwest Chamber's RADICAL P.A.S.T. Her obsession with resonant metal led her to the music of Anaphoria Island, where she has since become a regular musician in the People's Orchestra of Anaphoria. Erin is a regular performer at MicroFest.

Although perhaps best known as a performer of historic keyboard work, **Linda Burman-Hall** regularly performs a wide range of music, from works of the medieval mystic Hildegard of Bingen to world premieres of experimental works and new music. During 1999, Linda Burman-Hall was invited to collaborate with 9 other former Artists of the Year for Santa Cruz County in the presentation of a special First Night event, collaborating with composer Lou Harrison by offering the world premiere of his new Sonata for Harpsichord. Linda Burman-Hall's premiere of the new Harrison sonata will be distributed nationally in televised form by AT&T; her collaboration with Harrison is also highlighted in a forthcoming documentary film on Harrison's late work by Eva Soltes.

**JUST STRINGS** is a unique ensemble that specializes in the performance of music in Just Intonation. 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. **Rebecca Raff** works as a folk, classical & ethnic harpist here in Los Angeles where she has trained at Cal Arts & Pierce College.

**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 & a BFA degree in music at Cal Arts. **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 twenty 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. He has performed in Europe, Japan & throughout North America, and has been featured soloist at New Music America, and on NPR's "Performance Today" and PRI's "New Sounds". Most recently he has been featured in New York's American Festival of Microtonal Music, Denver's Microstock '95 & '97, California's annual Mozart Festival, the DaCamera Society's Chamber Music in Historical Sites and Southwest Chamber Music's Radical P.A.S.T. He works as a music Professor at Pierce College in Los Angeles, is a music critic for *Soundboard* magazine, and the artistic director of MicroFest, an annual festival of microtonal music in Los Angeles. His radio program *Global Village* can be heard on KPFK- 90.7fm every Thursday from 10am-1pm.

One of the most bold and versatile chamber groups in the country, **VIKLARBO** Chamber Ensemble has performed throughout the United States, from the shores of the Mississippi Delta to the beaches of Waikiki. Critically acclaimed for passionate and dramatic performances of solos to quartets, this ensemble of violin/viola, clarinet, cello, and piano brings both spontaneity and polish to traditional classics and 20th century classics in the making. National Public Radio's Jim Svejda says of the group, "Passionate, adventurous, hugely intelligent, and deeply musical, Viklarbo is one of the finest chamber ensembles in the country." Viklarbo Chamber Ensemble has been Ensemble-in-Residence at the University of Southern California (1992-95), Loyola Marymount University (1988-91), and "Sundays at Four," Los Angeles County Museum of Art (live radio simulcast KUSC 91.5 )(1995-96). Viklarbo Chamber Ensemble has been on the California Arts Council Touring Roster since 1992, and is on the Utah Performing Arts Tour. Viklarbo and its members' recordings are featured on the Bay Cities Music, Varese Sarabande, Colosseum and Raptoria Caam Labels, and Celestial Harmonies. Their most recent release, "Songs and Romances" features soprano Anne Marie Ketchum in vocal chamber music by Franz Schubert, Dmitri Shostakovich, Aurelio de la Vega, and Maria Newman. In the Fall of 2000, Viklarbo will appear on Grammy-nominated composer Morten Lauridsen's newest CD of chamber music on the RCM label.

**Phillip Bush** is a graduate of the Peabody Conservatory, where he studied with Leon Fleisher. He also studied for two years at the Banff Centre School of Fine Arts in Canada. He can be heard on the Virgin Classics, Epic/Sony, CRI, Point, and Albany recording labels. Mr. Bush was awarded the NEA Solo Recitalists' Fellowship to present a series of concerts entitled "Fine Tunings" featuring works for alternatively-tuned keyboards. The Village Voice called the New York concert at Merkin Hall "a program almost as perfectly executed as it was brilliantly conceived." He is a rarity among new music solo performers in that he has never been bound exclusively to any one style: the New York Times commented that Phillip Bush is "one of the few pianists who can play both [Elliott] Carter's music and [Philip] Glass' with equal persuasiveness." Recently awarded grants from the Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, the Aaron Copland Fund, and the National Endowment for the Arts, his recording of solo piano works by the American composer Ben Johnston was released in 1997 by Koch International Classics, to critical acclaim.

