

## INTERVIEW WITH JOHNNY REINHARD

*Anton Rovner: Can you tell me about your concert activities with the microtonal festival? What cities have you performed in the United States besides New York, as well as what other countries?*

Johnny Reinhard: I started my musical activities as a bassoonist. During my graduate studies in bassoon at the Manhattan School of Music and in ethnomusicology at Columbia University, I began to be interested in microtonal music, which I decided to devote my full time to. In 1981 I founded the American Festival of Microtonal Music, which has been in existence since then. The festival has held performances of numerous musical works incorporating microtones and alternate tunings by many composers throughout the world, both contemporary and from earlier times. In addition to that, I have performed with recitals on the bassoon and with concerts of microtonal music in most European countries, different cities across Canada – St. Johns, Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Toronto – and last summer in Monterrey, Mexico. I have played the bassoon throughout the United States, including Los Angeles, Denver, Seattle, and Winston-Salem. I performed as a vocalist in New York, Venice's La Fenice, at the Barbican in London, and Bergen, Norway's Viking Castle. I came to Russia three times, where I performed in different festivals in Moscow, Kazan and St. Petersburg. In August 19-21, 2014 I made a trip to Knin, Croatia, where I co-directed and performed in a four-day festival of microtonal music, which was a great success. In addition to performing, I have also given musical lectures in the United States and various other countries. I have visited Germany eight times, not for performing or lecturing, but to carry out research work in musical libraries, as the result of which I wrote a book, *Bach and Tuning*. In 1995 I visited the Netherlands and gave several recitals at Amsterdam's Ijsbreker, so I have a certain reputation in that country. In Paris, I conducted a new work by Edgard Varese in

the Pompidou Centre. I have held important concerts of microtonal music in Switzerland, for which I took eight people from New York, where we introduced the music of Harry Partch for concerts in Zurich and Kreuzlingen, and a Zurich Radio broadcast.

*AR: Can you tell about your microtonal festival, how it began, where do you perform and what kind of music do you perform there?*

JR: In 1980 I received my Master's degree from Manhattan School of Music, and I learned to play quartertones on the bassoon, so composers began writing pieces for me. I enrolled in the Music Department of Columbia University, where I studied ethnomusicology, and I started to learn that different types of music of different peoples of past ages had different tunings. As a result, I came up with the idea of a festival of microtonal music, which would be inter-stylistic, where I would put together on one stage such diverse types of music as Middle Ages and rock and roll on one concert, along with some poetry and musical improvisation. At that time I did not compose any music for fifteen years, but only improvised. In this context, the festival became a personal laboratory for me to study microtonal music of the most varied kinds and to develop my virtuosity. As I was studying and performing this rare type of music, everybody who joined ended up being immersed in it as well. The process continues to this day, and quite powerfully, too.

*AR: What musicians are regular performers at the festival? What kind of music do they play?*

JR: At the American Festival of Microtonal Music we have had some remarkable musicians play regularly in our concerts, in a sense, forming a sort of musical ensemble. One important musician is pianist Joshua Pierce. He has played a lot of noteworthy pieces for piano, including works by Charles Ives, Ivan Wyschnegradsky, John Cage and others. Rock guitarist Jon Catler has been in many of our concerts, including the very first one, and played refretted guitars. Violist Anastasia Solberg has played many

notable microtonal pieces, from the very first concert to the latest festival. In April 2014 she took part in the performance of my string quartet “Seventh Heaven,” where she was the most active and initiative player who coached the other musicians in the quartet, teaching them how to play the microtonal tuning. As a result of that, three out of the four musicians already knew how to play in that tuning – they only had to learn to play the notes. We had seven rehearsals, none of which I had a chance to hear, but they played excellently. It was very important for them to play this music right. Skip La Plante on homemade instruments and flutist Andrew Bolotowsky were also important players. Mexican guitar player Angelo Blanco [Quetzalcoatl], a virtuosic performer of music by Julian Carrillo on the instrument, has become a regular performer at the festival, having come to New York three times to perform in the festival, and also having hosted me when I came to Mexico to play. Numerous other musicians have successfully taken part in the concerts of the American Festival of Microtonal Music with more or less regularity of their appearance.

*AR: You mentioned that the festival has always been inter-stylistic and has performed music from various time periods and styles. Could you highlight some of the composers that have been performed at the festival?*

JR: The first type of music the festival focuses on features works by present-day microtonal composers. The festival has performed music by present-day contemporary composers from the United States and from many countries of the world for example Toby Twining, John Eaton, Gloria Coates, Svjetlana Bukvich, Skip LaPlante, Manfred Stahnke, Julio Estrada, Georg Friedrich Haas. There has been a focus on the microtonal legacy of early and middle 20<sup>th</sup> century composers, pioneers of microtonality, such as Alois Haba, Ivan Wyschnegradsky, Julian Carrillo, Harry Partch, Mordecai Sandburg, Percy Grainger. We have presented early music, from the Medieval to the Baroque periods, performed in authentic historical tunings and temperaments. There has

also been microtonal ethnic music, folk music, jazz, and rock music. The festival focuses on different musical styles at different stages of its development. There was a period of time when we focused on early European music in historical tunings, especially Baroque music. At that time Bach was a feature for me for a long time, because we wanted to perform him in Werckmeister III tuning, invented a generation before his to make a full circle of 12 major and minor keys, but with 29 different musical intervals. There are certain tunings and temperaments which work well when applied to music of some composer and do not work in the least when applied to others. In our work of presenting microtonal music of different styles and traditions our goal is to push the boundaries of music further on. We are doing it in ways that no one else is. By now we have, in a sense, become an informal institution. We are well-known enough that we are attracting people from all over the world. At a certain period, the New York State Council of the Arts suggested that we spend less time on early music and standard repertoire and more time on contemporary music, even encouraging me in my own compositions. So I perceived that in a positive light, and we switched to contemporary music. At certain times we concentrated on ethnic music, but, as a rule, that was when a certain noteworthy musician playing ethnic music in alternate tunings was visiting New York. One example was Babukishan Das, an Indian musician from Bombay, currently residing in Canada. He is a representative of India’s Baul culture, a tradition over a thousand years old, which mixes different religions and has its own music and musical instruments, which only they use.

*AR: How is the festival organized? Do you have a board of directors or do you decide and organize everything yourself?*

JR: The festival does indeed have a board of directors. It consists of composers and performers who are devoted to preserving and disseminating this rare and intriguing type of music. We meet together and discuss the

repertoire we plan to perform, the funding we have to apply to different grants for and the venues we plan to perform in. One devoted member of our board of directors was composer Joseph Pehrson, who in the late 1990s and 2000s began composing microtonal music at my instigation, which were performed at my festival. We had regular board meetings at his apartment. Some of our frequent performers are also members of the board of directors. One of our newest members is Michael Hafftka, who is an internationally recognized painter. He is also an excellent fretless guitar player, who mastered improvisation in pure high harmonic tuning, who has his own studio, in which we have recorded two CD's and plan to record two more CD's. All of these people contribute to organizing the concerts of the festival in different ways.

*AR: What kind of mission does the American Festival of Microtonal Music have in presenting this music of various styles and traditions? What are its long-term and short-term goals and strategies?*

JR: Presently I feel that the American Festival of Microtonal Music has a new mission, having accomplished the old mission. The old mission was to create a setting for performance of microtonal compositions, which was not existent. That was the situation in New York, when I was completing my studies in the undergraduate at the North Carolina School for the Arts, and Master's program at Manhattan School of Music. Now it is possible to set up an entire orchestra of performers who can play microtonal music together. For us it was a harder battle to win in terms of years, the budget and the organization. Presently this is no longer the case. New times require new strategies. Presently there are microtonal festivals existing all over the world. We started it. The new mission is to get a better sense of where we really are and what is really important. It is important to define the main stylistic and aesthetic parameters of microtonal music in its many manifestations, as well as the role that it plays or should play in present-day

society. Sometimes it feels that there are more performers, than there are listeners. One gets the impression that this is a wrong development.. But I know that this is a proper turn of events. If we are able to attract advanced musicians, if we have the right type of magnetism, then we are on the right track.

*AR: Microtonal music, as well as most contemporary music of the classical academic type, unfortunately, receives much less financial support and much less reception and appreciation from the general public than it deserves. It is amazing that you were able to do so much, obviously, without receiving payment for it. It is a sad but accepted fact that composers must take all sorts of tedious menial jobs to make a living, and reserve their compositional and concert-organizing activities for their spare time.*

JR: I have devoted 100 % of my time to microtonality and microtonal music, and I have done this on a voluntary basis. In addition to this, because of the intensity of my musical activities, I have never had a full-time job. I have had a number of jobs, which helped pay the bills. Now I am a substitute teacher in a school. Before that I was a temporary worker for pharmaceutical companies and legal firms. Prior to that, I was a waiter and a dishwasher. As a child, I also sold eggs on a truck, sold newspapers, and handed out brochures in Brooklyn.

*AR: Can you tell us, how did you decide to finish Ives' Universe Symphony, and how was the premiere organized in June 1996, and what was the response?*

JR: I have always esteemed Charles Ives and his music highly. His Three Pieces for Two Pianos in quarter tones have been performed numerous times at the American Festival of Microtonal Music by Joshua Pierce and Dorothy Jonas, who have also recorded them on the CD "Between the Keys" released by the festival and the "PITCH" collection of CDs. I had heard of Ives' plans to write the Universe Symphony and the fact that he had never completed the work, and was greatly impressed by it. It was a series of eventual things that happened, the result of

which was my completion of the work. The first was the discovery of a photocopy of the sketches of Ives' Universe Symphony on a bookshelf at the home of composer Lou Harrison. While Harrison was wonderfully generous, letting me copy everything he had, this was the only thing that he could not let me have a copy of. I had to go through a whole series of rights with lawyers before the sketches of the Universe Symphony were given to me freely thanks to the Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. First, I was told to wait and not to start work on the sketches because somebody else had already started working on them and had to finish them first. This turned out to be composer Larry Austin. Following the lawyer's advice, I stopped and did not do any work until Austin finished his version of the symphony, after which I completed mine.

*AR: Where were you able to get the sketches of Charles Ives' Universe Symphony to complete this project?*

JR: I had some luck with this. Ellis Freedman was the chief lawyer for the Ives Society and the American Academy of Arts at that time. He knew who I was – a person who finishes compositions by others – so he figured out that I was the perfect person to do this. I gathered the entire orchestra for the performance of the work, which took place on June 6, 1996. I did all the hiring of the musicians. It was a shock for the Musicians' Union, since they did not think it possible that an unknown person would come and gather together so many musicians to form an orchestra to perform in New York City at Lincoln Center with little money. They protested the fact that, according to them, the musicians were not paid sufficient amounts of salary for playing in the orchestra, even though the musicians in the orchestra themselves had no objections to the amount of honoraria they received. The event was a great success, and Alice Tully Hall was completely full, although we had to take out some seats from the first row to fit the orchestra.

*AR: What was the response to the performance by the critics? Was it successful, or was there criticism of it?*

JR: One of the signs of success of a performance, in my opinion, is to hear remarks by critics that are completely different from each other. Some people liked it immensely, while others criticized the work and questioned whether it pertained to classical music at all. The appreciative reviewers' comments contributed to the success of the performance, while the critical reviewers' remarks have added to the controversy surrounding the work. This is similar to the way critics have always assailed great composers who had come up with new stylistic traits in their works, questioning the right of this music to exist and be performed – at the end it is usually the composers and their innovative works of art that survive, not the vitriolic criticism. We even had a situation where some of the listeners and music critics were questioning whether the “Universe Symphony” was Ives' composition or mine. Any cursory listening to my music and comparing it to my realization of the Universe Symphony makes it clear that they are completely separate. I did not write the Universe Symphony at all – I did not add a single note to it. I followed Ives' own instructions in completing the work in a way which would have been in accord with the composer's own wishes.

*AR: The Universe Symphony is, indeed, a most unusual piece of music. Unlike most of Ives' other works, it does not include any tonal musical fragments or their juxtaposition with chromatic, atonal fragments. In addition, and includes microtones – the only other work by Ives to include implicitly, besides the Three Pieces for Two Pianos in quarter tones. Can you tell us about the overall structure, technique and philosophical concept of the Universe Symphony?*

JR: Ives himself called his Universe Symphony a “painting of creation.” I hear it, feel it and believe it to be a complete piece. The entire huge composition, all the 74 minutes of it – as long as Beethoven's Ninth Symphony – was conceived of entirely by Ives, who left plenty of sketches and instructions for me to realize it following the composer's

wishes. The Symphony does not have separate movements – instead it has three sections, three “preludes,” performed by three orchestras – “Earth,” “Cosmos” and “Heaven.” There is an initial fragment of the Symphony, less than a minute long, where string and brass instruments predominate, called the “Fragment of the Earth.” Next comes a long section, about 27 minutes long, played entirely by percussion instruments. The percussion orchestra, consisting of 13 players, is called the “Pulse of the Cosmos.” Different percussionists beat out different rhythmic pulsations on their instruments at a slow tempo, while the main pulse for the section is called the “BU” or “Basic Unit,” and it bears the metronomic mark of 30 to the quartertone. The “Pulse of the Cosmos” in reality presents the Big Bang extended to 3 cycle at 27 minutes. Ives thought of it 50 years before anybody mentioned the Big Bang. The second section is called “Cosmos,” which is very telling, since there are multiple universes in a “cosmos.” The question arises of whether Ives was aware of the universe being part of a larger cosmos. The other parts are not really called anything. I gave them names, but I really had to pick them from out of the material in those particular sections. One is called the “Earth”. The “Heaven” comes soon, and between those lies “Chaos.” There is even the idea of “Past, Present” and “Future.” There are three significant fragments present in the symphony. The third and final fragment is called “Heaven,” which is placed at the nadir, at the lowest point between cycles 2 and 3. There are ten cycles, which may represent ten different multiple universes, each one with its own individual Big Bang. I just realized that it fits with the modern perception of the cosmos – not the universe, but the cosmos. The overall program supplied by Ives describes humanity being born from the cosmos, as depicted by the initial section of the Universe, evolving historically, as portrayed in the middle section, and then transfiguring to a higher, spiritual state, which is shown in the final section.

*AR: Can you tell us of the recording of the Universe Symphony on CD? When was the*

*composition recorded, and how many musicians took part in the recording of it?*

JR: In 2004 a CD of the Universe Symphony was released in the series of CDs of the American Festival of Microtonal Music. It featured the sessions not from the live concert in Alice Tully Hall, but from a series of studio sessions, played by 20 people, instead of 77, on 120 tracks, each direct to disc. In this recorded performance I played many of the percussion parts, including gong, bass drum, and the bassoon and contrabassoon parts, and I also performed as the conductor.

*AR: You have had a lot of CDs released, in addition to that of the Universe Symphony – of contemporary microtonal music, as well as early and classical music performed in historical tunings. How did you decide to publish this CD series, where does it get distributed, and what kinds of listeners appreciate it?*

JR: We have come to realize that there are different stages for artistic demands. There has been a stage for video recordings of everything. We are almost leaving that stage now. There are stages for live concerts and audio recordings. Unfortunately, very often concert performances do not get the attention they deserve, and there are not enough people in the world for the quality of the music produced. So in order to find greater distribution of this unique trend in music for listeners across the world, we came up with a new project. We created a new CD label, called PITCH, largely out of dissatisfaction with other companies, which treated us poorly. We have released a number of CDs, each one devoted to a particular kind of microtonal music and bearing a short and concise title, describing the music most aptly. An album called “Bassoonist” featured contemporary microtonal music for bassoon and, either as a solo instrument, or with. It had my bassoon compositions, as well as those by composers Joseph Pehrson’s “One Small Step for Man,” Anatol Vieru’s “Trio in Sixttones,” Louis Babin’s “Mellow Tones for Johnny, along with Giacinto Scelsi’s “Maknongan” and a “Duo

for Kaval and Bassoon” featuring Theodossii Spasov. Another title was called “Chamber,” and it featured works by early and middle 20th century composers, including Charles Ives’ Second String Quartet, performed in Pythagorean tuning, Lou Harrison’s “At Ives’ Tombstone” for chamber ensemble, Harry Partch’s “Finnegan’s Wake Settings” for soprano and small instrumental ensemble and other pieces. One album, called “Early” included works by Bach and lesser-known 17th and 18th German composers, performed in the Werckmeister III tuning, just intonation and other tunings existent prior to the advent of equal temperament hegemony. Another CD album, called “Ideas”, featured unusual works, mostly by early 20<sup>th</sup> century composers, which had interesting concepts lying behind them. One such piece was the “Prelude in Quarter-Tones” by Georgy Rimsky-Korsakov (grandson of the famous Russian composer Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov), a notable theorist of quarter-tone music and the founder of the Society for Quarter-Tone Music in Leningrad in the 1920s. This piece is the only surviving microtonal piece by the composer. Our very first album was called “Between the Keys,” and it featured music by Ivan Wyschnegradsky, Charles Ives, Harry Partch and John Cage, played by myself on the bassoon and Joshua Pierce on the piano. It was really successful internationally and sold out twice. We were not even told about this, but the printing company rereleased the stock, because they sold out so fast, only to sell it to Sony Classical. Albany Music Distribution is our distributor throughout the United States. They made a hundred copies of each CD to sell, and gave us 20 copies each to give away. There have been reviews published of our CD’s from all over the world, including such places as Thailand.

*AR: Can you tell us about your music, about the different types of microtonal scales, systems, tunings and temperaments you use in it? Your compositions are notable for their imaginative approach to musical texture and their rich sense of improvisation and innovation. Can you*

*tell us about the microtones used in your music, as well as the general stylistic element of it?*

JR: All of my works incorporate microtones in one way or another. I have used the most assorted microtonal scales and temperaments to my music. I have even applied “polymicrotonality,” which means using several tunings and systems in a single composition. Instrumental texture plays an important role in my music, including using non-standard sounds created by musical instruments individually or in ensemble with each other. Improvisation is another important element for my compositions, most of which include sections with music improvised to various harmonics. Many of the latter compositions or sections of works feature verbal instructions of what kinds of music to play and how to play, without indications of a single pitch. I took full advantage of a phenomenon, wherein a musician can play any note wanted, and it works! My studies in ethnomusicology at Columbia University have led me to incorporate various elements of ethnic music from the most varied countries from the globe, including microtonal scales of various countries, instrumental textures alluding to folk instruments, and sometimes even making use of exotic instruments to my music. Elements of musical theater can also be found in my music, and this is manifested by musicians walking, talking, singing and making various dance-like movements while performing.

*AR: Have you made any important discoveries in recent years regarding any new tunings or temperaments? It is quite obvious to anybody who has followed the evolution of your musical style, that you have never repeated in a static way the same features of your musical style, but have always come up with new discoveries. What have your recent discoveries produced?*

JR: Recently, I have come up with an entirely new and unusual tuning, consisting entirely of harmonics, which incorporate a significant amount of upper harmonics. It is the tuning of 128 notes per octave. One must bear in mind that this is by no means

an equal-tempered scale, like the quarter-tone scale or the 31-note-per-octave scale, so I call it a “tuning,” not a “temperament.” I have concocted a way of writing every note of this 128-note scale. Also, I have written an essay about this new tuning, called “8<sup>th</sup> Octave Overtone Tuning,” which includes a chart with all the pitches listed: by harmonics, including cent value and a name, of how to call each interval, comparison to the established traditional names of intervals – for instance, “eleventh harmonic,” “tiny tritone,” “just minor sixth,” “sixth-tone high minor sixth,” etc. This presents a new territory in music. This new tuning is 100% melodic and consonant, as I have been finding from the evidence of all the music we have performed. In just intonation they mostly incorporate the notes in a static way, holding onto them. In this new tuning there is much less inclination for a composer to hold on to notes or intervals so statically, since the tuning generates a completely new aesthetics. The fact that the inclination to dwell on various notes statically is absent here makes the new tuning a lively system – because, essentially, the entire tuning is all one single chord. All the first 128 harmonic pitches stemming from a fundamental, in theory, comprise one chord, also called “eighth-octave overtone tuning.” This brings in the feeling of the last breath of our collective musical awareness. I always speak of the 128 tuning, which consists entirely of high harmonics, as “another universe.” This new tuning does not have any dissonance, since it is all consonant, as it stems entirely from natural harmonics of a fundamental tone. This is how I think of it; if I put two fingers on two adjacent keys of a piano, the result will be dissonant. If I add a third, fourth or fifth, the result continues to be dissonant. But if I use my whole arm or two arms, I do not think the term “dissonance” applies any more, since, in this case, the resulting cluster is like a color, and not as a set of intervals to which laws of diatonic harmonies may apply.

*AR: Can you tell us of some of your most recent works, written during the past few years?*

*How do you incorporate microtonality and all the other relevant musical elements in them?*

JR: In describing my latest music, I would start with my most recent composition, – my String Quartet No.2, “Seventh Heaven.” Unlike many of my other works, this piece does not contain any elements of improvisation. This is because the material which I have been working with for the last three years is new and needs to be developed thoroughly. The work was written in 2013, during my trip to China. It makes full use of the 128 note tuning, exploiting its many contrasting features. It also elaborates the sonorities of the string quartet in a new way, at times even alluding to elements of texture found in traditional Chinese music.

“Odysseus” is a concerto for solo cello and chamber ensemble, written in 1997. This 45-minute work is, in a sense, is an opera, which is acted out by the instrumental performers, instead of being sung by vocalists. It is poly-microtonal, since in an instrumental ensemble of 55 people, each instrumental part is composed in a different tuning. It was performed by cellist Dave Eggar, for whom I wrote it for, and an ensemble of instrumentalists that I gathered, and released on a CD album of our “PITCH” label. The recording of the work can be found on Youtube, fully titled. This composition does not have “dissonant harmonies” in the sense that I expected it to have, although it does have harmonic and intervallic “dissonances,” since it is not diatonic, and yet not written in the 128-note tuning. The result of incorporating poly-microtonality in musical composition is that it cancels out the angst of the so-called wrong note. In “Odysseus”, in all the 45 minutes of music, there is not a single wrong note. The work is based on the story of the wanderings of Odysseus. In fact, it features the only narrative of the story that is entirely chronological, presenting all the events from the fall of Troy to the return of Odysseus to Ithaca. Thereby it is different even from the original narrative recounted in the “Odyssey” by Homer, where the story shifts between the different time periods, as well as between the episodes featuring gods

and human beings. The dramaturgical structure of my musical composition “Odysseus” needed to have a chronological story. On my bassoon I played the role of Homer, who was writing down the entire story. However, my musical score does not incorporate entirely notated pitches, but shifts between notated music and improvisation guided by verbal instructions.

My first String Quartet “Cosmic Rays” was an important piece in my development. It was written around 1994. More important was my piece “Zelig Mood Ring” for solo bass trombone. It was written for Dave Taylor, perhaps the greatest bass trombone player in the New York area, if not the whole world, who has a great skill in playing exact pitches of the tunings that I write for him. I have written five compositions for him. Dave Taylor considers “Zelig Mood Ring” his favorite of the pieces I wrote, and he has played it all over the world. My composition “Adam and Eve” is in a sense a pedagogical piece, addressed to an elementary school audience. It was written for different flutes, guitars, English horn, cello, gong, bassoon, African drum, double bass, “long-tubed” didjeridoo, and piano, the latter played only inside.

I have written three bassoon pieces which I consider to be especially representative of my work. “Dune,” which was inspired by the science fiction novel of *Dune* authored by Frank Herbert, incorporates a variety of exotic, non-standard sounds for the bassoon, and involves taking the bassoon apart and blowing through different parts of it, to achieve exotic noises. However, all of these sounds are ordered together to produce a coherent dramaturgy. “Dune” was for a long time considered to be my signature piece, until I wrote “Zanzibar.” The latter piece develops some of the ideas of “Dune” in an even more radical and experimental way. In “Zanzibar” the bassoonist must morph the bassoon, which means, take it apart and use its constituent

parts to produce exotic noises, depicting the noises of an African jungle – the call of elephants, the beating of wood from bamboo trees. The performer also pronounces the words “Zanzibar,” “Africa” and “Tanzania,” bounces a ping-pong ball on the floor and does an assortment of other theatrical gestures. My bassist Jeroen Paul Thesseling told me that he came here especially from Amsterdam largely to hear me play “Zanzibar.” It was my intention not to repeat what was successfully used in “Dune.” A third piece for solo bassoon is called “Urartu,” and it involves improvisation and the participation of the audience. I performed “Urartu” at the festival “Europe-Asia” in Kazan, Russia, and the audience participated as part of my performance and recited numbers in an ancient language. I played it only once after that, in New York, for a large audience at an all-day Microthon in 1999.

Another piece of mine is called “Talibanned Buddhas,” which is a very philosophical work, composed for an ensemble of four instruments: contrabassoon, cello, bells and gong. It was conceived after the destruction of the Buddha statues in Afghanistan in 1997, four years before the tragedy of September 11, 2001. I formed the main conception of the piece in my mind, and there was not a single note written on paper, since it is entirely improvised and involved verbal instructions for performers. It presents a coherent structure, which an audience may easily grasp. And it presaged, ominously, what came afterwards. It is virtually impossible for me to perform it again – it is a case where it is appropriate to give a musical composition only one concert performance. At the same time, it was recorded on my CD album titled “Bassoonist – Johnny Reinhard” (PITCH P-200214) on which I perform contemporary microtonal music featuring bassoon and contrabassoon.

*Interview prepared by Dr. Anton Rovner*