

Review of the beFORe JOHN composition series

We made a final decision to launch a series of pieces for percussion instruments in 1996. Our goal was to connect traditional percussion cultures to prominent twentieth century movements and to assert, save, assimilate and possibly expand certain results in this.

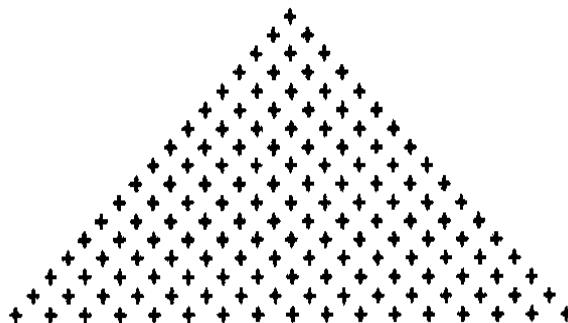
The man of traditional cultures always thinks responsibly about the instrument, the instrumentalist and the music. The simple reason for this is that he is both the subject and the object of the world surrounding him; he is the instrumentalist and the instrument of everything: the music. These three items are tightly knit and the lack of any component produces music of no value in a cultural sense. From this perspective, the outstanding results and successful moments of the twentieth century could only derive from the connection of these aspects.

The series beFORe JOHN consists of nine different pieces. Each of them is in a way related to the number, which – in it's own time – represented philosophical and mathematical perfection and absolute world order and was therefore highly respected. This number is 153, which used to have a very important numerological role in ancient civilisations and even earlier traditions. (It may be familiar from Pythagoras and Jesus.)

For us, the importance of the figure lies in the symbolic power of the number 153 that was once a living, everyday reality, a kind of icon of spiritual wealth. In the language of percussion instruments beFORe JOHN series attempts to express the abundance of different things that surround us. In these pieces we attempted to transform the world of percussion (a wide range of materials, a multitude of tools) into a „percussion cosmos” (recognized order, regularity).

Those determining individuals who were devoted to passing on their own knowledge (i.e. the cosmic order), while bringing out the pre-existing talent of their students, were once adorned with the name „Master”. As times changed and new role models replaced the old ones, the images of the old masters did not fade within us. On the contrary, as experiences get settled one after the other inside one's mind the result is a „face” that belongs not to one individual but to many that have inspired us. In this instance, the title name JOHN refers to (symbolises) the embodiment of many „masters” in one grand image.

The ars poetica of the composers of beFORe JOHN is: the noblest gem lets light pass through, the clearer it is, the more light it permits through, but does not shine itself.



*„ and drew the net to land full of great fishes,
and a hundred and fifty and three:
and for all there were so many,
yet was not the net broken.”*

(St. JOHN 21: 11)

153 = the sum of the first seventeen successive numbers (The Pythagoreans called this the „triangle number”, because if 153 points are arranged into a triangle, each side contains the same amount of points.)

$$153 = 1 + (1 \times 2) + (1 \times 2 \times 3) + (1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4) + (1 \times 2 \times 3 \times 4 \times 5)$$

$$153 = 1^3 + 5^3 + 3^3$$

153 = the sum of the component numbers is 9 (1 + 5 + 3), which is regarded as one of the „holy” numbers

153 = in reversed order also (351) the numbers of triangle

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