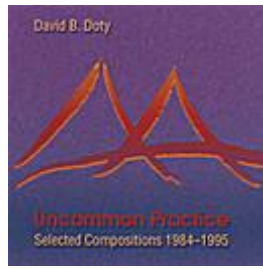


## Mp3 David B. Doty - Uncommon Practice



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Eclectic electronic music in just intonation, from fractured pop tunes to extended orchestral movements. 7  
MP3 Songs ELECTRONIC: Experimental, WORLD: World Fusion Show all album songs: Uncommon  
Practice Songs Details: ABOUT THE COMPOSER David B. Doty (born 1950) is a primarily self-taught  
composer, theorist, and synthesist. He is a leading authority on Just Intonation, having composed  
exclusively in just tunings for over twenty years, and is the author of *The Just Intonation Primer* (1993,  
'94). He began building instruments and composing in 1970, inspired, in part, by the work of the late Harry  
Partch. Prior to this recording, he has been known primarily for his work with Other Music, the San  
Francisco-based experimental music ensemble he cofounded in 1975 with Henry S. Rosenthal and Dale  
S. Soules, and as a founder of the Just Intonation Network and the editor of the network's journal, *1/1*.  
During the late 1970's and early 1980's, Other Music built and performed on its American Gamelan  
ensemble of mostly aluminum percussion instruments tuned to a fourteen-tone just scale designed by  
Doty and Soules. Doty composed extensively for these instruments, and his compositions were featured  
at performances by Other Music throughout northern California. Some of his compositions from this  
period can be heard on Other Music's L.P.s *Prime Numbers* (1980) and *Incidents Out of Context* (1982).  
Since the demise of Other Music as a performing ensemble, in 1983, Doty has devoted his attention to  
composing for MIDI-controlled instruments in Just Intonation, exploring a variety of tunings, historical and  
novel, and creating works in diverse styles, a selection of which are offered on this CD. OVERVIEW The  
selections on this CD were composed between approximately 1984 and 1995 and recorded in 1998. All of  
them use some form of Just Intonation. I will not attempt a detailed explanation of Just Intonation here, as  
I have done that elsewhere (*The Just Intonation Primer*. San Francisco. Just Intonation Network, 1993,  
1994, 2002). Let it suffice for the moment that Just Intonation refers to any tuning system in which all of

the intervals can be represented by integer frequency ratios, with a strongly implied preference for the smallest numbers compatible with a given musical purpose. This method of tuning is commendable for its inherent beauty, its variety, and its long history (it is as old as civilization). This is in distinction to twelve-tone equal temperament, the tuning system in general use in the West for the last 200 years, in which all intervals other than the octave are represented by irrational numbers. In other words, all of the intervals of equal temperament, except the octave, are intentionally mistuned to varying degrees, for the sake of convenience. As a result, consonance is compromised and the intervallic palette is impoverished.

**BUT WHAT KIND OF MUSIC IS IT?** This music is the result of a long and slow learning process about synthesis, sampling, and MIDI, which technologies were evolving rapidly during the period of this work; about Just Intonation; and about what compositional styles and techniques are suited to various just tunings. Taken collectively, there is no conventional name for the music that resulted from this process, other than the highly overused eclectic. It is computer music, in the sense that it was produced with digital instruments under MIDI control, but it does not involve algorithmic composition, artificial intelligence, or the more arcane techniques beloved of academic computer-music composers. All pieces are through-composed in the laborious, old-fashioned way; The composer is solely responsible for all aesthetic decisions. This is definitely not experimental music, in the Cageian sense-I am more interested in result (aesthetic response) than process. It is tonal music (with a lowercase t), music in which hierarchic relations of tones are important and in which melodies, phrases, periods, and movements have clear tonal centers. It is world music, in the sense that it is inspired and influenced by many musical cultures. It is unapologetically derivative. I have drawn on the resources of most of the musics I have played, studied, or merely listened to and enjoyed. Gamelan, the predominant influence in much of my earlier work, has retreated into the background, but may still be detected in certain structures and styles of elaboration. More prominent are styles of polyphony from the Western European middle ages and renaissance, garage rock from the 1960s, Balkan instrumental dance music, the ancient Japanese court music gagaku, Greek rebettika, and traditional and contemporary Irish music (and probably two or three others that I have forgotten). Some of the shorter pieces use fixed scales, traditional or otherwise, whereas the longer, more complex pieces use some form of "extended" Just Intonation; these more extensive pitch sets were not predetermined, but evolved in the process of composition, as demanded by the growth of melody, harmony, and counterpoint. Information on the tunings of the individual pieces is

included for the benefit of listeners who already have some knowledge of the subject. For the rest, I suggest you listen to this music as you would any other, experience whatever you experience, and not be overly concerned with these technical issues.

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**Dithyramb--6:37** A dithyramb is an ancient Greek lyric poem and/or choric dance celebrating the birth of Dionysus. This piece owes nothing directly to ancient Greek music or poetic meters, but simply tries to evoke a "Dionysian" mood or ethos, albeit a rather languid one. This piece was originally composed for American gamelan with solo English horn. The version recorded here preserves only the English horn melodies and elaborations and the drumming, in the manner of the Balinese kendang, from that composition. The tuning is a fixed scale, a seven-limit version of the ancient Greek chromatic genus proposed by the medieval Arabic theorist Al Farabi (872-950 CE).

**Fake Irish Music--8:28** For my Irish friends, Matthew, Geraldine, Nora, and Helen Stout. In three sections: 1. Slow Aire/Chorale; 2. Reel 'n' Rock; 3. Rant. The tuning is mostly five-limit, with occasional comma-shifts as required by the harmony, and harmonic sevenths in cadential seventh chords.

**Fake Greek Music--3:58** A group of rebettika musicians from the opium dens of 1930's Piraeus somehow get mixed up with a 1960's Los Angeles garage band. The scale material is the harmonic series segment 8-16 on C without 13 (in the opening and closing sections) and with 17 added (in the middle sections). (A version of Fake Greek Music was included on the compilation *Tellus 14: Just Intonation*. This is the same composition, in a new realization and recording.)

**Paradigms Lost--4:39** Fantasy-world-garage-band music my fantasy of where the music of the psychedelic 60's might have gone if musicians hadn't been coopted quite so soon and so thoroughly. Chord progressions and melodies characteristic of 1960's pop music are imposed on additive rhythms similar to those used in Balkan dance music. Each of the three major sections uses a different, unconventional twelve-tone just scale (described in detail in 1/1 5:1). These tunings are mostly five-limit, with harmonic sevenths added for blue notes and dominant seventh chords. (A version of "Paradigms Lost" was included on the Just Intonation Network cassette compilation *Rational Music for an Irrational World*; this is the same composition, but a new realization and recording.)

**Contrapunctus 1.01 (Excursions Around the Lattice)--14:57** This piece, in two sections, employs varieties of polyphony (counterpoint) characteristic of Western Europe in the late middle ages, renaissance, and early baroque (roughly 1350-1650), while exploring changes of tonal set (mode change; modulation) that are possible only in extended Just Intonation. The first section contrasts subminor tonality, based on the primes three and seven, with the more conventional five-limit minor. The second, longer section makes

use of extensive modulations around a five-limit lattice, and, on occasion, between five-limit lattices separated by a factor of seven. Almost by accident, this section came to structurally resemble a classical sonata allegro form, with an exposition, development, and recapitulation. Bodhisattvas in Berkeley?--Mu!--6:14 (In memory of Jim Horton [1944-1998]) This is the most overtly microtonal composition on this CD, and one of my most radical intonational experiments to date. The underlying idea is a simple one: to place the microtonal intervals that inevitably result from voice leading when consonant chords in Just Intonation progress by simple intervals in the musical foreground. The choice of a slow tempo and extensive use of portamento (gliding tones) to emphasize these small intervals, along with the prominent role of flute and reed sounds, produces a texture with a certain resemblance to the Ancient Japanese court orchestra, gagaku, although the harmony is Western in origin and nothing in the structure of the piece is derived from Japanese models. The tuning was freely constructed with the composition and involves intervals based on the primes three, five, seven, and eleven. Rituals and Ceremonies--11:46 An extended piece mixing polyphony based on cantus firmus techniques with sections of freely composed heterophony or polyphony. Elements and techniques from medieval European polyphony, Chinese chamber music, and Javanese gamelan freely mix, suggesting, perhaps, the music of some lost civilization in the mountains of central Asia or some uncharted island in the western sea. The tuning was freely constructed as the piece was composed. The cantus firmus that, with variations, underlies and structures much of the piece, uses a hexatonic scale based on the prime numbers three and seven. Additional pitches based on three, five, and seven were added as required by melody, harmony, and counterpoint, for a total of eighteen. REVIEWS Keyboard July 1999 Doty is a leading light in the rather arcane world of just intonation, and it's often enlightening to hear how a theoretician puts his theories into practice. But that's not enough reason for me to write up a CD. I like two things about Uncommon Practice. First, the intervallic relationships are often refreshing, even startling. If you've never experienced the subtle colors of just intervals and don't have a synthesizer handy that can produce them (or wouldn't know where to start), this is a good chance to hear what you've been missing. Second, the music isn't trying to impress me; it just is what it is. The vibe is vaguely Renaissance, vaguely ethnic, and definitely cerebral rather than emotional. The recording was done with obsolete synthesizers (mostly FM) and a discontinued sequencer. The production values are minimal—no big reverb, no compression, no aural exciters—just music. There are no sampled loops or sound effects—not a single one. Every note was

composed. That shouldn't be remarkable, but it's a lot less common than it used to be. Jim Aiken Chroma (#26/27), the Newsletter of the Australasian Computer Music Association David Doty is well known in the world of alternative tuning as the editor of "1/1The Journal of the Just Intonation Network." What may not be known is that he is a deeply serious composer of considerable talent, with unusual harmonic and melodic gifts. This is a CD of melodic and tonal music made with various computer music systems over an 11 year period. Computer systems were used for their ability to change tuning instantly, and to make available ensembles that would otherwise be impossible to get together. As he says, "This is music that, in the best of all possible worlds, might be performed on acoustic instruments by highly skilled performers." Now that we've scared off the "granular synthesis (pick your own technique here) or nothing" purists, let me say that this is an extremely engaging album that draws on many sources - world music, folk music, garage bands, etc., but that its main interest is tuning. That is, it investigates the harmonic and melodic resources available with extended just intonation. In some cases, such as "Fake Irish Music", the result can hardly be heard, on a casual listening - the music is just purer sounding than it would be on 12 tone instruments. In other cases, such as "Fake Greek Music" the result is immediately hearable, even to the casual ear the extended harmonies of that piece having a piquancy that's simply not possible with normal tuning. And the polyrhythms of the neo-prog rock (I love inventing descriptive terms, don't you?) "Paradigms Lost" set my toes tapping more than once. In most of the pieces, just intonation is used to make very pure "normal" harmonies which then twist, turn, and modulate in the most unexpected ways. This is music to be listened to carefully, savouring the quality of a sudden harmonic twist, the feeling of being subtly and gently launched into an unsuspected harmonic territory. In "Bodhisattvas in Berkeley?Mu!", Doty reverses his normal hierarchy here the intervals of modulation are foregrounded, making a quite dissonant and striking texture, at times reminiscent of Japanese Gagaku. This piece, a memorial to Jim Horton (one of the unsung heroes of small systems computer music) is my favourite piece on the CD, but all of them are well worth hearing, and savouring, especially for those with a taste for gourmet intonation. Warren Burt 1/1 10:3 (Fall 2000) An email correspondent recently referred to something called the "California School" of just intonation composers like Harry Partch and David Doty in a mock-academic way. To me, the reference seemed to suggest that using harmonic progressions in a fixed JI style is another form of impractical utopianism of the type for which California is well known (perhaps an attitude born of beaches, sunshine, and Jerry Brown), while it is up to level-headed East

Coasters to bring harmonies within the realm of practical reason through adaptive schemes and temperament. David Doty's *Uncommon Practice* provides a musical retort (the best kind) to theorists who shake their heads at the folly of comma shifts and the purported awkwardness of unequal melodic steps. Doty's CD is an eclectic tour of musical styles brought into the realm of extended JI, taking us on a harmonic progression toboggan ride over the supposed bumps of comma shifts and "anomalous" pairs of tones. As described in his article for *1/1*, Doty's term "anomalous pairs" refers to pitches separated by some kind of comma, that is, pairs that would collapse to the same nominal pitch in a 12-tone system. Far from subverting a tonal sense or confusing modal perception, these context-dependent tweakings provide for succession of clear harmonies that convincingly support the melody and structure in these musical contexts. Doty's *1/1* article used for his example a version of the fourth track on this CD, *Paradigms Lost*. As suggested by the title, this cut, like others on the CD, considers what might have happened had an earlier musical style been enriched through extended JI (as well as other possibilities, such as complex meters and progressions). The style under consideration in this case is that of psychedelic 1960s garage bands, which, in Doty's utopia, have evolved an art never coopted by pabulum-pushing megacapitalists. As in all the pieces on the CD, this speculation is made possible by sequencing Yamaha FM synths, an Ensoniq sampler, and an Alesis drum machine. One of the most immediately engaging parts of *Paradigms Lost*, though, is the complex meter and rhythm. The rollicking melody slides gracefully through Balkan-like combinations of 5, 6, 7, and 8 while coloring the 5-limit rock progressions with occasional 7-limit blue notes. The same sorts of meters are used in the track named *Fake Greek Music*, a piece based on an otonal tuning of harmonics 8-16, with an occasional 17. The additive Greek meters (progressing from 6 to 8 to 12 for example) nicely mirror that walk up the harmonic series. As Doty says in his insert notes, the garage band of *Paradigms Lost* seems to have joined a "group of rebettika musicians from the opium dens of 1930s Piraeus" in this piece, so if you like the sound of a saucy, 11-limit bouzouki jamming with rock drummer (who is somehow more metrically sophisticated than any I have ever met), this is the work for you. A companion track to this faux world music is *Fake Irish Music*, complete with FM uilleann pipes and Celtic harp and a much more restful 5-limit tuning, though with harmonic sevenths at the cadences and comma shifts. The rock drummer seems to have sneaked into the last section of this track (subtitled "Rant") as well. Given the right musical context, the "anomalous pair" reinterpretation of scale degrees can have a musically satisfying effect in itself, as Doty demonstrates in *Bodhisattvas* in

Berkeley?Mu!. This is the most "microtonal" piece on the CD and leaves no doubt that Doty is unapologetic about the presence of tiny intervals. In this piece he presents them in the foreground and invites us to contemplate their musicality like the Zen koan of the title. Taking us into that state are the synthesized hichiriki double reeds and ryuteki flutes that lead the Japanese gagaku orchestra, but here slip-sliding their way through a playful microtonal labyrinth. Meditation on this piece's success brings one answer to mind: Mu! One of Doty's most interesting utopias is the application of 7-limit JI to European counterpoint, which happens in the most extensive piece on the CD, Contrapunctus 1.01. The tour through the implications of extended JI to medieval, renaissance, and especially baroque counterpoint demonstrates much more thorough treatment than the modest introduction implied by the title. Now that harpsichords and winds are endowed with many more than 12 tones per octave and theorists have admitted the seventh harmonic as consonant, European counterpoint takes us into some very intriguing territory one in which sevenths are not dissonant and may be used to "complete" a triad instead of the third; one in which startling modulations and contrasts between 5- and 7-limits flow with ease. Indeed, another approach to the existence of commas is to simply sit back like dharma bums and have them escort you through the lattice as they will, and the second large section of this piece provides a journey of that Ben Johnstonian sort. However, the largely consistent textures, tempo, and rhythmic density do not sustain enough variety for me through this piece's nearly 15 minutes. My main complaint with this CD concerns not its use of just intonation, which is well worth the price alone, but with the timbral element. Though Doty has in many instances coaxed surprisingly human sounds out of his humble collection of synthesizers, the CD is still often marred by harsh electronic timbres. Electronic winds and bowed strings with their characteristic unchanging waveforms and vibratos are especially problematic, as are the obvious drum machine snares and cymbals in the "fake music" tracks and Paradigms Lost. However, in his defense, any composer who treads into new intonational territory as Doty does faces real musical challenges about realization. The relative low cost and easy control of electronic instruments means that those of us without carpentry skills or whose budgets are not as extended as our visions for JI now have a chance to hear their work. The fact that Lou Harrison had to wait over forty years for to hear a realization Doty's of his Symphony in Free Style demonstrates the importance of this practicality. Moreover, if we'd had to wait for Doty to find a psychedelic guitarist, bouzouki player, etc. capable of playing in JI and Greek meters, we would have had a long time to wait to have the pleasure of listening to

these pieces. Writing about the final, eclectic track on the album, Rituals and Ceremonies, Doty gives us a hint to where such musicians might be found: "Elements and techniques from medieval European polyphony, Chinese chamber music, and Javanese gamelan freely mix, suggesting, perhaps, the music of some lost civilization in the mountains of central Asia or some uncharted island in the western sea." Or perhaps in California, where schools of such civilizations are rumored to exist, and, hopefully, will continue to inspire Doty and other composers of such varied, expressive, and thoughtful music. Bill Alves

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