



INTERVIEW GEORG VOGEL FOR MALDITO PIANO

Today at Maldito Piano we have been able to interview an entire innovative and revolutionary in the field of pianos and keyboards: Georg Vogel. Discover with this interview his motivations to create these amazing instruments, as well as his way to understand the music.

Hello Georg and thank you so much for talking with us.

Can you introduce yourself? Who is Georg Vogel and How were your musical beginnings?

Thank you Cristina! I'm a pianist, keyboardist, composer and instrument maker based in Vienna.

I started playing piano. With the aid of friends, colleagues and teachers I came in contact with music and music making I wanted to pursue more detailed.

I worked on following interest and passion, as they are great help at limiting yourself in order to grow.

I was looking for basic techniques, working with small elements and developing an emotional connection to what I create conceptionally and vice versa.

Additive rhythms for instance, the possibilities of creating rhythms consisting just of *short* and *long* elements like 2 & 3. Working on both rhythmical aspects, horizontally and vertically- additive and divisive- I developed studies, just rhythmically as well as using keyboard instruments which later on developed to compositions.

Concerning playing I was happy to learn from friends and colleagues and got involved in bands beside my own projects.

I came in contact with hexachordal theory, which is a little similarly to additive rhythm a combinatorial approach to tonality via a functional view on combining tetrachords in unlimited ways. I started developing studies for improvising with these smaller harmonic/melodic elements.

After some work on basic music parameters I started investigating and transcribing recordings of various origins, mostly field recordings and Jazz and related.

Interpretation can be done in many different ways. I like doing this starting from certain standpoints, like how does this piece exemplify hexachordal tonality or can this melodic phrasing be based on complex n-tuplets?

At the same time I needed to tune my Clavinet, which is an electric clavichord. First, as a pianist you don't do piano tuning, since a special profession developed some time ago because of the high complex and high tension instrument piano. At the Clavinet it's different: low tension and you just need a screwdriver. I've tried to find a way of tuning the twelve keys and first worked on pure fifths and the pure thirds. Then I looked for a way to combine both, the approach of fifth-based tonality and the just intonation of the pure third $5/4$, which is different to the 12EDO-third purely resonating in every register, especially well in the lower range.

A basic temperament that combines both is *quarter comma meantone tuning* with beating fifths and pure major thirds.

I worked on calculating all intervals and since it's open chain, meaning not closing the octave after 12 fifths, this was my entrance to tonalities with more than 12 notes per octave, starting from having different pitches for *d#* and *eb* and so on. So I reached the microtonal level through intonating basic intervals like fifths and thirds. Then I discovered the connection to septimal intervals, the seventh harmonic via the enharmonic change. I did some field recording analysis, where I analysed pure fifths, thirds and septimal sevenths which I now could visualise in the context of extended quartercomma meantone temperament. This was the beginning of *Claviton* instruments and the band *Dsilton*.

Do you have any strong influence?

Not really. I like to work on musical elements and I'm happy to find inspiring music and theory aspects of wide spread origin.

We can see your invention on your web and in some videos playing with it on YouTube, but, Can you explain us what M-Claviton is?

Thank you for your interest in this new instrument. The M-Claviton is part of the different types of Claviton instruments I build, all based on split sharps. This means having different pitches for e.g. *c#* and *db* because of the basic temperament: quarter comma meantone, which features pure major thirds and tempered fifths.

Like the 12-key piano keyboard it is based on stacked and retransposed fifths- in just intonation. This creates the so called 3-limit Pythagorean tuning with pure fifths, which then gets transformed to a different target ratio for a flattened major third $5/4$, reached then by tempered fifths.

It doesn't close the octave symmetrically like 12EDO, it's an open chain tuning that involves more than 12 notes per octave. When doing enharmonic change the pitch is sharpened or flattened. This involves different prime number categories of the harmonic series to a tonality, that can be looked at, like pyth. tuning, as consisting of compound tetrachords (*diatonism*).

By widening the chain of fifths, the number of tones between the tones grows, first from *c do d* adding a *c#*, then *c c# db d* then *c dbb c# db c##* and *d*: Five steps to the next whole tone.

After 31 fifths the chain can be closed with just a tiny comma. This also enables to tune to 31 equal steps in the octave. Now all structures, motives, melodies, harmonies can be

transposed identically through all 31 'keys' of 31EDO, like for instance the fifths:
c, g, d, a, e, b (h), f#, c#, g#, d#, a#, e#, b# (h#), f###, c###, g###, d###, a### => cbb, gbb, dbb, abb, ebb, bbb (bb), fb, cb, gb, db, ab, eb, bb (b), f and c;
or the major thirds:

c, e, g#, b# (h#), d### => fbb, abb, cb, eb, g, b (h), d#, f###, a### => cbb, ebb, gb, bb (b), d, f#, a#, c###, e### => gbb, bbb (bb), db, f, a, c#, e#, g###, b### (h###) => dbb, fb, ab, c.

Instruments of this type were built as harpsichords and organs about 500 to 400 years ago, then fell in oblivion. The M-Claviton is one of the contemporary attempts to renew this tradition. It is the first digital enharmonic instrument with a special new piano keyboard design and a weighted action. Since it's MIDI, it can be used for all possible sounds and other tunings.

<http://georgvogel.net/INSTRUMENTE.htm>

What advantages does it offer for your musical performances?

At the 31-tone Ensemble *DSILTON* I now can play all enharmonic pieces with just one instrument, since more than 12 pitches per octave are required. The pieces of David Dornig, the 31-tone guitar player of *Dsilton*, and mine were initially played on adapted 12-keyed instruments with either having 24 notes of 31 available via a special pitch-changing playing technique using multiple layers of velocity or were differently tuned each octave like the Rhodes used in the repertoire and the grand piano I could use at the last moers festival 2018 on which I also recorded the latest solo album *GEORG VOGEL SOLO PIANO live at moers festival* (<https://georgvogel.bandcamp.com/releases>).

All different selections out of 31-EDO can now be played on one Instrument without retuning. Improvising within the frames of each composition is now possible having all opportunities of expanded 31-tone diatonism merged with modulated intonations.

Since now the M-Claviton was also used for other tunings like 24EDO quarter tone or 36EDO sixth of a tone as well as for a 7-limit just intonation.

How was your experience at the MICROFEST 2018?

I had the great opportunity to present the M-Claviton 147 at the last miCROfest 2018 in Zagreb, thanks to Zoran Šćekić and Andrijana Filipović. I played a solo recital presenting music of the new solo cd *live at moers festival* first time using the M-Claviton and it was great to meet, exchange ideas and play with saxophonist Philipp Gerschlauer.

Tell us a bit about your present projects.

I play 31-tone based music with *DSILTON*. That's David Dornig on 31-tone guitar, Valentin Duit on drumset and myself on M-Claviton, Rhodes and Clavinet.

We play the compositions of David Dornig and myself, which are diverse in musical form but they all share a common metric modulation system based on whole number ratios and the tuning of 31 equal steps per octave or related just intonations.

Dsilton refers to target tone as well as to tonalities that can be found on similarly written instruments.

Recompositions out of transcription processes were standing at the beginning of the duo of David Dornig and mine, which later grew to a trio with Valentin Duit.

Currently Dsilton is recording an album, that will be released end of 2019, beginning of 2020. So far results of our work are documented at:

Dsiltons Youtube Channel

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmzn7wDBp_H3N0diqakaRvg

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Musician/Dsilton-403952869956016/>

<https://georgvogel.net/PROJEKTE-DSILTON.htm>

Furthermore I'm very happy to be involved with the following projects:

Duo with Elias Stemeseder, a keyboard/piano ensemble, which lately featured Cory Smythe as a special guest at Busoni Festival.

<http://georgvogel.net/PROJEKTE-ELIAS-STEMESEDER-GEORG-VOGEL.htm>

The Trio *TREE* with Andreas Waelti and Michael Prowaznik which currently releases its debut album *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* on Boomslang records

<http://georgvogel.net/PROJEKTE-TREE.htm>

With Gerald Preinfalk and Matheus Jardim the trio *GEOGEMA*, playing Gerald Preinfalk's compositions. The enlarged ensemble *Prinezona* lately was recorded at Jazzfestival Saalfelden.

<https://jazzwerkstatt-records.myshopify.com/collections/catalogue/products/prine-zone-live-in-saalfelden-2017>

And the trio *FLOWER* with Raphael Preuschl and Michael Prowaznik with whom I recorded two albums, *FLOWER* and *DUFT*.

<http://georgvogel.net/CDS.htm>

Can you tell us about future projects?

In the near future a new Claviton type will be presented. It is going to be featured on Dsiltons next studio album.

I'm also working on a treatise about fingerings for split sharps instruments, that includes hexachord based improvisation within extended meantone temperament.

Finally, We always ask our guests the same three questions:

Do you think that some musical styles are better than others?

To define a style or not can be helpful or not. It can be useful for communication, everytime having a broad range of possible imaginations when talking about a word. So there are no general definitions by nature and very often defining a styles characteristics start after the formative creative process. This sum is then analysed as style or era. Comparing these results then means to summarise all subjectively analysed components, which can be interesting.

I like to view on different music examples in different layers, like the impression of the mixture of all components I can or can't identify or just single elements I can find and are interesting independent of everything else happening.

And of course every new piece of music heard is comparing to examples consciously or unconsciously experienced beforehand. So often I try to listen, if this was the first time to come in contact with music of ,that kind' to find single elements of it I can have an emotional and/or rational connection to. Meaning I do think there aren't any better styles.

Do you feel that you need a good training to play whatever?

Training helps and influences experiencing and working on music. Depending on the specific kind of practice, it enables to dive into a field deeply but at the same time it's connected with an unavoidable loss of other possibilities.

A good thing is to define and redefine the rules of the training and to compare targets with results.

What do you think about the popular belief that musicians should play for free?

Of course there should be given a remuneration to support working on the art.

Thank you so much for accepting our invitation. It was awesome to spend this time talking with you about music and your career. Thank you and We hope to see you playing on a concert soon!!

Thank you very much!

