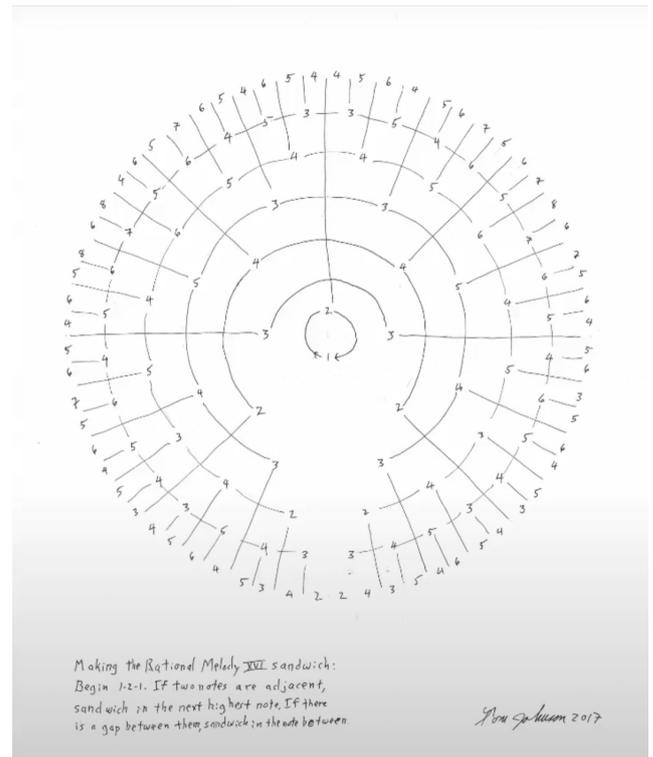


CURATOR'S STATEMENT

When John McCaughey invited me to curate some concerts for **Astra**, I knew that my first project would involve **Tom Johnson's *Rational Melodies***. Johnson is a key figure in that first generation of minimalist composers to emerge from New York in the 1960s. Over 50 years, he has written an original and intriguing body of work based on numerical and logical systems. His most celebrated work is *Rational Melodies* (1982), and I am excited that Astra will be bringing this landmark work to a local audience for the first time in its Australian premiere.

I will arrange the 21 *Rational Melodies* for the collection of keyboard instruments that Astra has gathered over the years (instrumentation of *Rational Melodies* is not unspecified). The concert will feature many keyboard instruments - including early musical keyboards such as harpsichord, portativ organ, regal to toy piano, accordion, and kalimba thumb piano – providing a glittering palette of sounds. Recordings of *Rational Melodies* have been made for solo flute, amplified band, chamber ensemble, and even string instruments from around the world but never for such a battery of keyboard instruments. I have been in touch with Tom Johnson, and he is enthusiastic and intrigued to hear what it will sound like.

Finally, I have invited key figures from the local experimental-minimalism



Tom Johnson's diagram of Rational Melody 16

community to write pieces responding to *Rational Melodies*. These composers span over three generations, from Warren Burt and David Chesworth, both leaders at the Clifton Hill Community Centre, a hotbed of experimental activity in the 1970s and 80s, to younger composers reinventing the experimental-minimalist impulse for today. Involving local composers not only creates a unique and uniquely Australian colour to the event but also acknowledges and celebrates these intrepid Melbourne artists who have contributed so much to our vibrant local musical scene.

- Andrew Byrne