

# Julian Carrillo Mexico's

## Microtonal Music Master

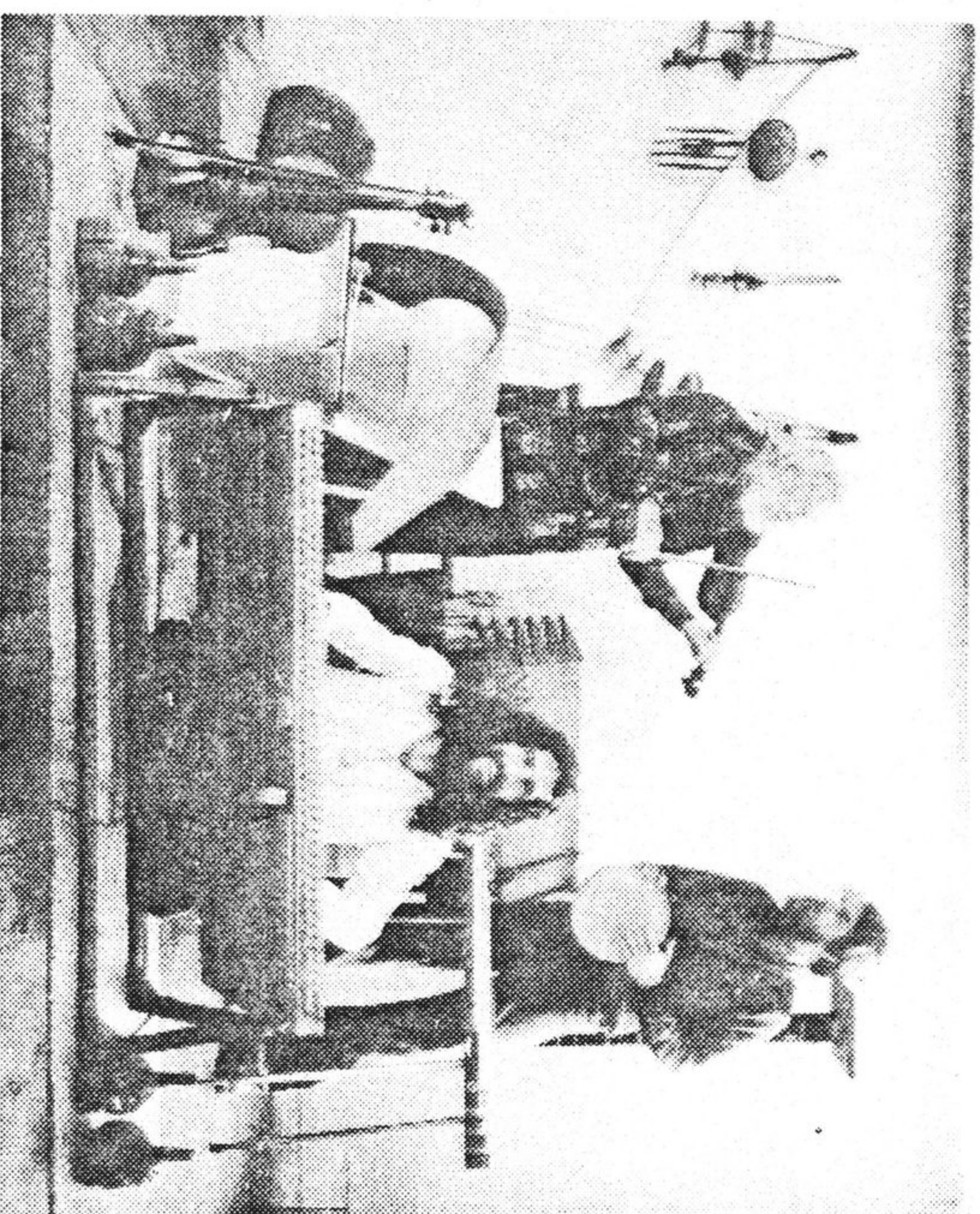
Julian Carrillo proclaimed "Sonido Trece" (the thirteenth sound) in 1895. Thus, he was the first modern musician to lead the way out of the twelve-equal rut. His system held the whole tone (six equal) stable, and divided it into fractions up to sixteenths of a whole tone (96 equal). He had 15 specially built pianos which could reproduce his scales.

In another of his works, *Sistema general de escritura musical*, 1957, he set out a new system of notation which can take care of any equal temperament, even beyond those which are multiples of 6 tones per octave (subdivisions of the whole-tone) to which he confined himself. The idea is to reduce the five-line staff to one line, permitting use of ordinary ruled paper available anywhere. The note-heads are replaced by numerals, so that for the conventional 12 tones per octave, one uses numbers 0 to 11, eliminating all clefs and accidentals. Since the distinction between whole- and half-notes (open) and quarter- and smaller notes (black-ed-in) is abolished, a bent stem is used for half-notes. For quarter-tones the numbers run from 0 through 23; for third-tones, 0 through 17; and so any other equal temperament has its tones numbered, getting rid of all name problems and obviating any need to invent special accidental-signs. The staff-degrees and ledger-lines represent *octaves* so extreme pitches do not require bewildering uncountable ledger-lines. In addition to this, Carrillo had a quarter-tone-marking system applicable to the conventional notes and staff.

One of his essays introduces his system of metamorphosis, through which Carrillo claims any one Haydn Quartet can be converted into 240 quartets, all different. Thus the moribund classics can be revived and their life-span extended. This goes beyond the ideas of the Schilling system which was taken up by Hollywood film composers some time ago.

# Pepe Aton Estevane:

## an interview with Pepe



Pepe Aton and John and Jonathan Glasier

The Southern California microtonal community received a pleasant surprise late last year with the arrival of Pepe Aton Estevane from Mexico City. Pepe Aton comes from the tradition of Julian Carrillo, the microtonal master of Mexico whose logo was "Sonido Trece" the thirteenth sound. Carrillo's proclamation and lifetime of musical pioneering is mentioned in *Four Darrag's translation of "Errores"* (page 13). Carrillo's work is based on dividing the twelve equal whole tone interval into various equal parts, or fractions of a tone from 1/2, 1/3, 1/4, 1/5, 1/6 up to 1/16th of a tone (96 equal).

The Harmony Harp which was invented by Carrillo, but redesigned by the Mexican craftsman/musician Oscar Vargas, represents one of the few non-electronic microtonal instruments available to the public. The workmanship and design are superb. The sound does need amplifying if played in a larger setting, and the best way to do that has not been tested, but the overall effect of the instrument is breathtaking.

Pepe Aton has been traveling with the instrument throughout the Northwest and the Southwest. His style is contemplative and meditative. One hundred equal tones to the octave is enough to make even the most hardened twelve-only debunker reconsider the past and the future of music.

Jonathan Glasier: How did you first discover the music of Julian Carrillo?

Pepe Aton: When I was a teenager in a music class the teacher spoke of Julian Carrillo and "Sonido Trece."

J. G. : Later on how did you connect with the Carrillo tradition?

P. A. : Well, I've always believed that music was infinite and I wanted to find out more about it. Time passed and I was living in a house in Cuernavaca. My neighbors happened to be David Espejo and Oscar Vargas. They had studied with Carrillo in Mexico City the five years before he died in 1965. Oscar is the designer/builder of the Harmony Harp which Carrillo invented.

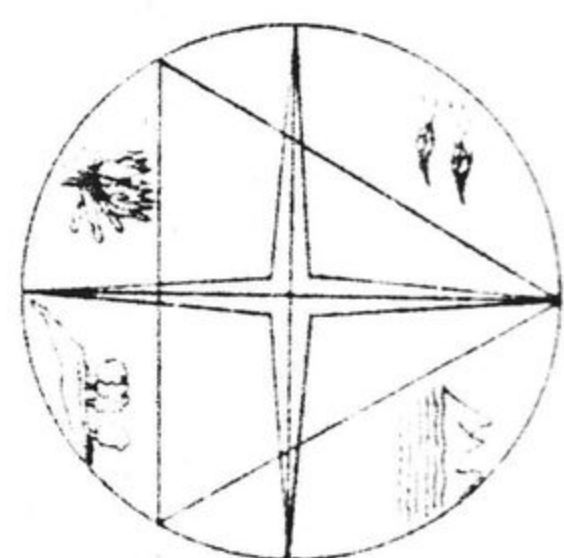
J. G. : Could you go into detail here? You've played in restaurants, churches, and parks as well as concerts. How does the reaction differ.

P. A. : It's interesting. Some people say "I've heard that music before." They come close and try to connect it with past experience, but fail. Other people get scared at first because they say later that they became transported into that space that the music can put you into and they were unfamiliar with it. Once they let the music carry them away to that meditative state, then it becomes o.k. In church it is easier because the people are seeking that state and go into it immediately. Afterwards many people feel that we had all been in the same place, on the same journey. They feel happy, high and full of spiritual energy.

J. G. : You talk of this music as being healing, and it does sound mesmerizing and meditative when you play the harp. What do you mean by healing music?

P. A. : We know that different sounds have different effects of the nervous system of the body. When those sounds are in perfect harmony the affect that is created in the nervous system, I believe, is one of harmony on an inner level. We can release a certain amount of negative energy in the body through meditation. I believe that this music can clean your channels and also help you to open your chakras, the center of cosmic energy in your body. People have exclaimed that they have felt the energy rise up through the base of the spine as I play.

NUEVA



VIDA

# SONIDO 13

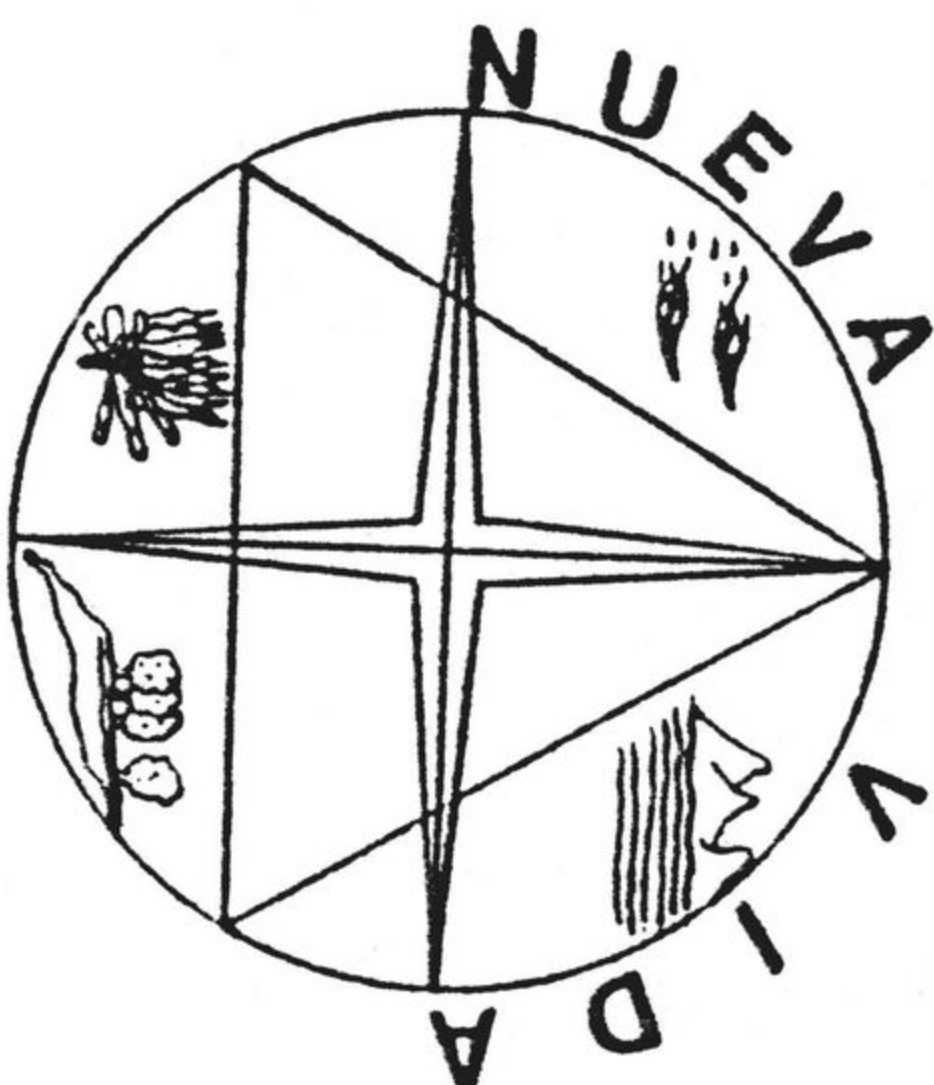
13 Sonido



*Music of the Spheres*

Pepe Estevana

# Harmony Harp



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