

Thursday 26 August 1993
B. McLaren Corvallis OR 97333

Greetings =====

This afternoon about 2 I expect to go downtown to xerox and to look up things at the downtown Library. I guess you didn't enclose your proposed Foreword for the "SHALL WE IMPROVE THE PIANO?" affair, or I would be trying to type something before I leave to xerox. Maybe it's in your next mailing.

- I guess losing this weekend won't hurt.

You were not very interested in the monograph, so I just assumed back in 1990 that my best course was to consult with other people about the plans for S W I P that I had developed over the years since it was published and sent out. First edition 1965 and Second Edition 1967, which latter is now 26 years ago! SWIP was almost my most successful samizdatel'stvo, and that in spite of the horrors of mimeographing 38 pages, but of course in 1967 there weren't all those corner xeroxing stores and computers were still mainframes tended by a very exclusive élite--well let's face it, a Priesthood.

I ran off copies on the mimeo machine till the stencils were reduced to shreds, and did get back my expenses, since postage was affordable in those days. I got the support of the then Editor of PRODUCT ENGINEERING WHICH BROUGHT IN A STACK OF ORDERS. Then I got more moral support clear across the country from other publications that gave me free advertising. If I had been healthy then the way I am now, I could have have made excellent connections, but I was ill and my mother was very ill and no hope of doing anything much for years.

Nevertheless, I am reasonably sure that the issuing of over 250 copies of SWIP back then, exerted quite an influence on the keyboard R&D, which then was in its infancy.

The Musical Establishment of course ignored me completely but some enemies I already had then, made no end of trouble and were extremely nasty.

In particular, nobody born in the US as I was, had the right to be a composer. Nobody who played the piano had any right to know about its history or construction or why and how it got that way. I had the worst reprimands and attacks imaginable most of my life--that was the age of specialization.

Therefore and accordingly: Lots of publicity from the science and engineering field and total suppression from the musical establishment.

No music magazine would acknowledge the existence of SWIP, but some non-musical publications more than made up for this.

I note from what is heard in radio and TV commercials and other places, that the piano industry must be fighting a desperate rear-guard action trying to keep the piano afloat, and of course the various xeroxes that you and Chalmers and some others have sent me, bear this out. With the excellence of recent piano-samples it is of course difficult since 1990 to tell how many piano sounds today are genuine and how many are samples.

On the radio yesterday there was a piano passage that sounded too brilliant to be true. So I must guess: it was an enhanced sample. Fifty-three years of tuning should qualify me to judge I think.

Chalmers just sent me a very recent and well-done history of the Steinway. I have earlier such articles going back for years so can compare them.

During the seven years that I have been in this house (8 years total in San Diego) many developments in the piano's decline and the marketing of replacemenats for the Piano have occurred. I would look awfully foolish to simply re-publish something written back in 1965 & 1967! Especially when you consider how much I have DONE during those 26 years.

And how much I have learned over those years! To get some idea of the new info I have received from you and others, simply look at the enormous pile of xeroxes that you made for me, and add those that Chalmers and some others have sent.

After I got the national magazine coverage in the 1980's and then three TV broadcasts about my instruments were done while I was still in Uptight Narrowminded Glendale (i.e., I was noticed everywhere EXCEPT Glendale--just cross the international Glendale/Los Angeles border or the Glendale/Pasadena or Glendale/Burbank border) I continued to make plans, for what should logically follow S W I P .

Before Glen Prior left Los Angeles and the little cottage next to Erv Wilson's place, the Disney Cable group contacted us, having seen having seen the two NBC programs on TV that were from interviewing me in Glendale, mostly about the Megalyra instruments, by the way. So they came over to Erv's place and interviewed us and put on that cable program which I never saw, but which several of my friends saw in different places about six months later.

So, as I was being kicked out of Glendale and trying to find some place to live in Los Angeles area and couldn't and ended up in San Diego, why all kinds of sequels and revisions and new formats to present my knowledge about the Decline and Fall of the Pianofortic Empire flooded my mind.

Then, just a few months ago about the end of 1992, something marvelous happened: the downtown xeroxing places got in new machines that not only could enlarge and reduce, but could render the gray-scale of nearly all the photos ever taken. Since I had a big collection of pictures and much of this piano- or keyboard-relevant, I am in an excellent position right now to take S W I P and recent affairs like Summery summary and Opening the Door to the Nineties and a dozen other pamphlets and booklets, and bind photocopies right into them--ILLUSTRATE them. This is a tremendous advantage, a most lucky accident that I live to age 76 so that I can take advantage of this opportunity, and not have to go to my grave unseen and unheard.

The present generations have not had access to how real pianos sound, how they are tuned, how they look inside, how the action works, ---no, they have ONLY heard pianos through recording machines and TV audio. channels and various recordings, all of which are EQ modified presented along with something else which changes the viewer's or listener's reaction to them.

So my plans for what to do after the mimeographed monograph of 1967 have included: first, lots of pictures now that I can xerox photos; stock diagrams (especially one of the standard drawings of a piano action), a cassette-course, say two cassettes and a little booklet enclosed with it; and more recently, since several videos of my of my lectures and instruments have already been made and there are two more planned to be done soon, to get a video made which would wrap up the movement from Piano to Keyboard-in-General in a new package.

I have the great advantage over possible rivals or competitors that I am NOT BEHOLDEN. I am not the victim or lackey or property of some corporation, and I did not sign all my rights to inventions away at age 22 or 32 as regrettably has happened to most other R&D people in musical instruments. Almost all development has been for PERFORMERS at the expense of composers, who are supposed to shut up and hurry to to die as soon as possible.

Even my composition teacher back in 1940 demanded that I leave leave all performances to others. Well look what happened to him! Nobody has played his pieces since his death at age 64 in 1946. He lived in San Diego for a while but I could find nobody that knew