

Sunday 7 November 1993

Brian McLaren Corvallis Oregon 97333
Greetings.

Hassles. the new plastic panels roofing over part of the back yard so I had to take advantage of this by bringing stuff into that space so it won't get rained on when the storms come.

That will free up space elsewhere in the back yard.

Searched around to see if I had the 1985 report in a copy, but nope so I will have to go and get an or the original xeroxed again. Soo for another back report that can be copied.

There was at least a third report that I did in Glendale before the dredadful forced move.

Going over the archives to make sure that worthwhile items will be copied and copies sent here and there.

Discove-red that the tape you sent me quite some time ago of the Illiac string quartet and an Ussachevsky thing that the box was labelled but the cassette itself didn't have a number so I had to put the number on it to be sure I don't mix up cassettes and boxes or file them in the wrong place.

David Hill sent me an 8 minute passage from Palestrina -- two mass items, and they are done by this analyzing voices and then re-synthesizing and in this case it is a just intonation affair and done in six parts. The Palestrina examples have many instances of parts crossing.

He is trying to study vocal timbres by taking them apart and then seeing how close the synthesis comes.

First response from Bart Hopkin's journal--fellow in Oklahoma wanted to know about elastic tuning, apparently for some not quite musical purpose, though. I sent him a copy of the Elastic Tuning article before enetering in any serious discussion.

Everything is so far away, and nothing here in San Diego. Now there is another possible way to get responses. After Melnechuk sent me some items from the new magazine Q WIRED, so did Clyde Corson in Lqn Lawndale near Torrance. So now I have some indication of the mind-set of the San Francisco-publishers of WIRED--looks like they are favoring the Futurists like those fellows buildn building the stuff out of heavy machinery and then computer controlling it. Not the kind of thing I could easily take somewhere to perform or rent out to somebody for them to use it, and not the kind of thing if I were to make it and leave it behind, that anyone would save--it would end up in a dump or be sold for scrap metal.

The dreadful throwaway attitude here.

So I have to keep plugging away and finally get some evidence that my copy cassettes are reached most of their destinations.

The table on which the 19-tone tubulong set has been resting, began to look sleazy so I repainted it the other day and late today I had time to put the tubulong set back on, after dusting off the wooden railings. Much more presentable. After all this has been the most photographed of the tube sets.

Contradictory weather forecasts today--one suggests there might be some rain or drizzle Tuesday and the other one did not so forecast.

Buzz Kimball having sent in an illustrated article on 13-tone instruments to the Experimental Musical Instruments affair, I have to find some way to take advantage of this. For quite a while the 13-tone bars have sat in a box. There was no room to leve them set up.

While Brink wrote something about moving to a smaller place, he didn't know shere to, at the time.

(D) BML.

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Wenzdi 10 November 1993

B. McLaren Corvallis OR 97333

Greetings ****

Some progress in getting things in the yard covered against probable rain. Went downtown yesterday for a while to make those xeroxes, and it took quite a while the previous day finding the 1985 report and other stuff. There are two other reports that maybe you don't have--can't be sure.

HEard last night about a possibility of some publicity by February or January.

Ran across some copying I did while still in Gendale--Haba and Gesualdo and so forth--Probably you haven't seen it all. David Hill sent me his recent tape of 8 minutes of Palestrina. Just intonation or very very close, but on the other hand this is mostly major chords. 6 part counterpoint and rather strict. The parts cross but very little idea of movement.

His aim at the moment is getting as close as possible to additive synthesizers of vocal timbre.

Chalmers sent me another of those optimistic articles about speech recognition. Claims about using it in financial transactions. But when I hear the accents and weird pronunciations of the various kinds of people in San Diego, or different kinds of people I encountered in my lifetime, I have to be skeptical about a speech recognition system dealing with it all. So I ran three copies of the article to collect more opinions. In a recent issue of Computer Edge, a pessimistic article about speech recognition. Didn't get that copied but I will try to next time.

The Robots Right e people are as bad as the Animal Rights people who put a dog's right to bite everybody against the right of any human to defend himself.

Wondered if I had missed anything--yesterday at the library the first time I got to look at The Music Trades (magazine about instruments and selling them) and it was rather dismal. They are pushing pianos and now the hi-tech version of the Player-Piano--bellyaching--one company was--about having to get around another company's patents.

The contraption in question, a competitor of Disklavier, and how many people are going to buy one of those instead of five or more synthesizers you could get for that price?

One thing brought out, though, the schools all cutting drastically on their bands and other musical affairs, so that is really hurting the musical instrument stores.

I have to walk long distances here in this neighborhood and frankly I don't hear many pianos being played in many homes. Live piano sounds from two homes so far in the eight years I have been in San Diego.

So I haven't missed anything.

*** sidelight--I was working back in 1971 on an issue of my news bulletin which did not come out because of the forced move in Los Angeles back then and all the forced moves since that time. I was reviewing two books about pianos that were in the libraries then: MEN WOMEN AND PIANOS and the older BASIS OF PIANO TONE AND C TONE. The unfortunate thing about Men, Women, & Pianos was that it had absolutely NO PICTURES, NO DIAGRAMS, NO LINE DRAWINGS--when there were jillions of such graphics and pictures available. Proof that writing ABOUT something where the readers cannot possibly have any mental referents is a horrible and expensive waste of time.

Especially now that we are in the TV Age, bombarded with Images day and night.

Yours

Saturday 13 November 1993

B. McLaren Corvallis OR 97333

meetings =====

The noise that NEVER STOPS. Very loud, now that my left ear has cleared up and returned to normal after two months of stuffiness.

The i 805 freeway of course, as I cross it on the way to the library branch postoffice, and one of the big markets. Then the huge jointed busses that go by so close to the narrow sidewalk across that bridge.

However, a few new busses of that size and pattern which have far less noise. Recently introduced.

Played several cassettes yesterday again because of my ear clearing to normal.

I. e. the stereo effect restored.

A year ago it was the right ear that had gone through being stuffed tight and later clearing.

Phone rang yesterday--Richard Koerner is somewhere in California after over a year that I heard nothing about him. I will know more soon.

Turns out that he has an Atari computer. But lost a lot of his instruments. And hurt his foot. So I have to await the rest of the news.

Went last week to the library and saw some magazines -- I seldom see THE MUSIC TRADES, a magazine primarily for stores that sell pianos or band instruments and it might as well have been the November 1923 issue or no more than 1953 with all that emphasis on pianos. This time, about a competitor or two to the Disklavier and the special mechanisms they had to design to get around several companies' patents.

The price of course is astronomical because of the grand piano which has to be modified to accept solenoids and other things stuff added to its cumbersome innards.

Hidden cost in that it doesn't play piano rolls but some special kind of disk which cannot be the same as that of the Disklavier and so there must be a limited repertory for it. I don't know how they get around that. I wonder if they have access to Ampico roll libraries? (Unlike cheaper piano rolls, those controlled pedals and volume.)

Now how many of those things are they going to sell? During the current Recession?

Very little in that magazine of what the synthesizer magazines advertise and other such stores carry. So I guess wonder.

I can understand nostalgia for real antiques, but in this case we have fake antiques.

Mausoleum for Dead Composers, but they must not be dead more than 200 years. Bach is somewhat too early, for example. Schubert or Schumann or Liszt would be about right. Then this week's Reader--all the pop groups and their weird ads making for incredible confusion.

I can see what might be the cause of those new kinds of player pianos: the dying out of virtuosi. That is, who today would have time to practice all the finger exercises and the standard concert repertoire, when it's all on the records now and thus there would be at least subconscious feeling on the part of piano students that it was futile to try to emulate the present edited and corrected and re-edited recordings with all the wrong notes excised and replaced with right ones. So some of those wealthy enough to be patrons of the symphony concerts would now have fewer such events to go to and less time to go even if they could afford it, and thus this kind of thing as Status Symbol *** well the rest is obvious.

I still wonder about the cost of converting, say, Ampico rolls for 1920s player grands into whatever disks these new things run on.

It becomes a sociological puzzle worthy of Veblen's Ghost. Yuppies romancing about 1923 when I felt oppressed as a little boy who had to live through 1923.