

NOR > McLaren p2 93-11-15

McL=P.2==ID==Mon 15 Nov 93 **

The second conductor was thus permitting some expression. Since these were large pianos with the lids taken off, the noises of twenty loud pedals being operated at once and 1760 dampers being allowed to fall, and the efforts of those 4200 strings to keep on vibrating even if those dampers were trying to stop them--the frustration of those strings, resenting their dampers was magnified to tremendous proportions. The Martinet's performer team did synchronous thumps and bumps, while the more liberal conductor's team venerally went diddelywiddely-bump and buddathump and the not quite synced pedals going down were not so noisome. But in either case, I nor the other members of the audience were not complaining--the admission to the Auditorium for either of those events was only a fraction of attending a real Portland Symphony Orchestra Concert, so that somewhat made us not demand so much of the evening. For the really soft passages, only four or five of the twenty pianos would play.

What a boresome chore it must have been for the piano tuners!

And the husky guys they would have needed not only to MOVE ALL THOSE PIANOS, but take all those lids off, store them, and put them back on again the next day.

I understand that at the L A Olympics last event, they had a team of 40 pianists, but those were uprights I understand.

I didn't hear it--didn't have the TV on at the time.

That's another thing: playing a piano is exercise. It does take some energy to perform for two hours even though it's Wooden Machinery.

My Educated Guess is that one or both events were ideas of the national piano manufacturers' association of that time, promoting the sale of lots and lots of pianos, otherwise why would they have lowered the admission prices to a mere Song?

A lesson for me on the value of Timbre.

By the way I understand that there have been, I believe in the fifties and sixties, ensembles of Hammond Organs and of other makes of electronic organs--probably smaller home models. These piano ensemble things were part of the background that inclined me to study timbre and then to put a bee in my bonnet about What If we could play all the instruments of an orchestra from keyboards, and of course that dream has come true.

But my entire life-story has been one person after another trying to dissuade me from every thought I ever put up.

Maybe some day you can write The Decline And Fall of the Pianofortific Empire. Meanwhile, look how skewed Carrillo's thinking was because of the domination of the piano throughout his life.

During most of my lifetime of course, the economic forces holding the piano and its manufacturers and teachers and concert performers in place seemed as immutable as the rocks and valleys of our fair land, but today with younger generations and portable keyboards those same economic forces are now on our side forcing changes. There is some hope. It's not so much whether that new Yamaha thing is locked into 12; it is rather that recording and playback machines are not locked into 12. The Hammond Organ WAS locked into 12 by its gearing and its Synchronous Motor. The Novachord could have been modified to permit bending, and then newer keyboards sported bending levers. If the makers had determined to lock to 12 forever, that bending lever and the design changes that permitted its installation could have been suppressed about 1946, but then the cat was out of the bag.

Mundy 15 November 1993

B. McLaren Corvallis OR 97333

Greetings *****

I better hurry up and acknowledge the big package with Sci. Am. issue and the Patricia Ann Smith Thesis with the translation of Sonido Trece and her comments.

It arrived late afternoon too late for me to try crossing the 805 River and trying to mail anything.

So what I have been doing for a weekend has been going through drawers and boxes to see about other reports. I have a short Year-end report that I could xerox later, and some earlier things that are relevant. Did I say that some time back Tom Reed sent me some pages from Gardner Read's book on microtonal notation, so I have enough of that to be a good reference thing in the filing cabinets.

---It's half-past five and dark already--had to go to the front door and put on the porch light. Got cold last night, had to close the side bedroom window down to a chink and put on another blanket.

As I said before, good thing that Partch didn't read Spanish enough to have a big argument with Carrillo. The fur would fly.

Must have been difficult to keep one's composure if one had been a piano-tuner for Carrillo. Glad I didn't have to. So, as I glance at the Thesis you just sent me, that unhappy phrase "just temperament" leaps to the eye. One more reason for me to concentrate on recording and keep out of notation arguments. I had to keep real quiet around Larry Hanson when he was here because he is not using the same nomenclature for 17 and 34 that I have been using. So I may ignite somebody's quarrel if I send 17-tone stuff to them.

Although Hajdu wrote me back without complaining of the 17 nomenclature I was using. 62 years since I took up the cello and ran into notation quarrels in various books. It will never be settled.

Will continue searching through boxes--may be other passages of mine relevant to what I did Back When.

Late in my Glendale stay, Chalmers and I ran into something written by Harry Conviser, so he wrote a few testy and argumentative letters most of which were fiery condemnations of the Seventh Harmonic and his just-intonation terminology was based on the EARLY edition of Ellis's translation of You-Know-Whom. Xeroxes of that Early Edition with daggers and stuff rather than Ellis's later super- and sub-script numbers. And yet another instance when I sent a cassette to somebody who claimed his machine was out of order.

He might have heard a 7-ratio which to him was anathema. =====Now about that Piano Ensemble. No, I didn't attend a 36-piano Bash, but at the Portland Auditorium back in 1930 and 1931, there were at least two piano ensembles, about 20 pianos in each case if I remember correctly. Two different conductors, and therefore different results. One conductor was a rigid martinetting metronome-worshipper--let's call him a Quantizer in today's lingo. Simultaneous attacks and they--forty people at 20 pianos with the lids removed, sounded like a humongous player-piano. Two-piano two-person at each arrangements of symphonies. The other and later