

Shrugday Noog 8 Feb 81

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Gelly--going through ribbons like crazy--they wear out so fast because they don't make em like they useta. No more no more.

The same can be said for shoes.

Just cut off a 12-foot length of Alan Levenson's black plastic so now the green Megalyra and the speaker-boxes are all covered over.

Finally got a letter from Karl Berger, now sure of the spelling and answered it -- he wanted amplifying clavichord info so I gave him the most important design ideas, viz.:

Long strings

Heavy tangents for REAL hammers and REAL bridges

Traditional tangents are so flimsy and thin and weak it's
MMMM a poor joke

WHERE the pickups go: $1/15$ and $1/2$; then $1/7$ and $1/3$

Magnetic pickups require steel strings, and should go beneath the strings to lessen attack-noise, as the tangent will lift the string above them for an instant, cancelling out the noise

Might as well build 4 if you are building 1--to share the initial setup and design costs instead of the first
NO SOUNDING BOARD ATTACHED because this is the reason.)

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12- and 19-tone designs differ only in number of holes drilled and keyboard--same size, case, metal frame will do.

I will get another copy xeroxed of my pamphlet THAT OTHER KEYBOARD INSTRUMENT AND WHAT I HAVE DONE ABOUT IT. for him.

But of course all this is no use if he insists on the 18th century or earlier design which has strings running at right angles to the key-levers, as in the square piano, since I insist that it be the straight out parallel with the key-levers as in big harpsichords. One reason is that the pickups would pick up the wrong signals for other neighboring or even crossing strings, ruining the timbres.

I am not willing to try to amplify an existing traditional clavichord. The miserable attempt they made in that basement auditorium for Hacklemann's instrument which almost ruined his demo, should be warning enough to you. It was a shame to risk feedback howl and to amplify all the action noises and that horrible smothered frustrated aftersound of the muting-felt taking effect as the tangents fell.

I better get that point straight with everybody before somebody

The Megalyra is sufficient evidence and proof of the need for a full 7-octave compass in an amplifying clavichord. I know all about the 4- and 4½-octave tradition, but this is 1981.

What have the antiquarians done for me? That letter ah about LEGITIMATE music was the last straw. I don't have to be polite ever again. I was just foolish to let him or anybody else get away with it, although that fellow in San Francisco has known me since 1935. He should have known better.

If somebody wants the antique look and limited compass, let them go and buy a Hohner Clavinet and not pester me. If somebody wants a compact portable, how about the synthesizer clavichord imitation effects?

I did mention to Berger that a portable could be made using standard guitar strings for easy replacement when the performer is on tour, but it wouldn't have the power or impact--I needn't labor the point: listen to a Clavinet.

Non-composer non-musician engineers at Hohner designed most of the clavichords vibrato and personality out of it. One music store in Hollywood that had them back about 8 years ago, preferred the synthetic imitation to this emasculated commercialized design.

Reuschel, 6 years ago, built a Zuckermann clavichord kit for some friend of his. It was feeble since the soundingboard was so tiny and the tangents were paper-thin weak toys. As if cut out of a tin can. No soundhole in the enclosed airspace.

Conviser sent me the Journal of the Acoustical Society 1980 (Nov. issue) paper by Mathews and Pierce--supposedly this is the complete paper which Pierce had copies of to hand out and of course I could never have gotten through that crowd. I didn't want to anyway, because I didn't know about the concealed 19-tone yet, and I would have been resented as taking up time which belonged to the La Jolla people there who might not have been able to journey to CalTech to see him later and get more info. Conviser also sent me one page from another JASA article about stretched octaves. So that takes care of the other things I needed to know before writing Pierce, and fortunately they arrived in time before I attempted that letter.

That exact imitation of the peer tone-quality of the Hammond Organ (early models) was a shameful unconditional surrender to non-musician engineers and anti-musician-and-composer manufacturers. This is a matter of design GOALS and PURPOSES.

If composers and musicians had been in charge of the Hammond factory instead of those disciples of Henry Ford Senior and the idolization of the early 20th century mass production of the Model T, they might have done very differently. Why should I trust such people? What I am driving at here, is that Dr. Pierce, quite innocently and don't blame him for his education and conditioning, took Big Business and huge Factories and Mass Production and the