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Dear Ivor:

I went to a seminar by Barry Truax of Simon Fraser U, in Burnaby (a suburb of Vancouver) B.C. He has an article in one of the recent CMJ's. His training was at the Institute of Sonology in Utrecht and there he came under John Chowning's influence too. He spoke for some two hours on timbral composition and his PODX system which consists of a computer, a digital signal processor, and software. His basic technique at the present time is "Granular Synthesis," a method which avoids the ear-fatiguing steady state timbre of so much electronic music. It operates in 3 modes: additive synthesis (simple waveforms such as sine, square and triangle), FM, and stored sampled sounds. In each case there is moving window 8-50 msecs wide with an adjustable envelope and an adjustable delay before the next "open" time. Between 8 and 20 such grains are summed and sent to the 4 output channels.

The musical and acoustic results are very impressive. Modern digital processing chips such as the Motorola 56000 will permit this to be done with a microcomputer rather than a VAX.

Truax made the point that this kind of fine timbral control is unthinkable with MIDI, which he characterized as too pitch oriented. He also characterized most of MIDI technology as favoring the 19th century ideal of single timbre voices.

Truax's music is not ET'ed--it uses a lot of random pitch variation and extraneous pitches. One of the music students, who apparently had absolute pitch, complained about this aspect.

Fortunately such people are rare, and the XH movement can probably ignore them.

Tonight he's giving a seminar at MIlls on timbrally organized music, which I should probably attend although it conflicts with my Skeptics meeting on Remote Viewing. If I go to Mills, though i can get the HMSL update tonight as well.

successful marketing and engineering strategies can, in hindsight, be only described as brilliant.

I couldn't find a copy of "Noise"in the bookstore I visited on Friday. Today, Berkeley is a Zoo because of the open house, so I won't even try.

You've answered my questions about the use of an oscillator as an intermediate pitch standard in order to tune bars.

I certainly agree that most, but not all, minimalist music is tiresome, but I disagree about the lack of expression in Serial music. Much of it seems intensely emotional to me--a sort of existential shrieking as in the "Survivor of Warsaw," and "Wozzeck." It's Expressionism with a vengeance.

However, the emotional range seems overly narrow though; I can't imagine a serial lullaby, pop love lyric, or rousing drinking song, but such may, in fact exist. It may be that the steely hardness of the 12-tone tempered tritone and semitone plus the frequent octave displacements dominate the mood and tend to limit the expressive range to abstract cerebration and/or intense anguish.

To address your other points: acoustic instruments are a way of regaining control or at least its sense without having to use a computer. DAT and erasable CD should alleviate some of the dynamic range constraints.

The Acoustic-Only movement is a reflection of the Neo-Pastoral, Neo-Luddite, Anti-Intellectualist attitude. True atavistic Pagans would play idiophones, not electrophones. Still, I should think they would be a natural audience for direct, uncomplicated xenharmonic music--flutes, syringes, harps/lyres/kitharas (refretted guitars could substitute), and simple percussion such as sistra, xylophones (bars or tubulongs could serve) and drums.

What roadblocks are preventing such music from being composed and played? I've even heard a prototype recorded commercially with synthesizers (The cassette which accompanies Ursula Kroeber Le Guin's novel, "Always Coming Home"). Is it laziness, lack of imagination, or what? Both you and MacBryde are composers/musicians. Why not start with xenharmonic arrangements of existing Pagan songs/hymns on your present acoustic instruments?

Later, other instruments such as modal flutes and tuned percussion could be built as Pagan Projects if desired.

The Greek tetrachords and the modes suggest themselves, but why not try something like a subharmonic series on 24, Erv's Diacycles, or something of your own invention?

Why does there seem to be such an enormous reluctance by everyone in the San Diego xenharmonic network to actually compose and perform new music?

I actually welcome the New Tonality movement for two reasons. First, harmony and melody are what Xenharmonics is really about. It has

allowance under the new rules, so I will be able to wash my car occasionally and have the yard watered by the gardener. As soon as the vegetation dies, the pollen count will go down, so I have mixed feelings toward the vegetable portion of the "environment."

Ah, Beltane and Walpurga's Night already; it seems that Samhain was only yesterday. I can still remember one of my UCSD professors coming in on May 1 singing:

> "Hurray, hurray, it's the First of May;
> Outdoor screwing begins today."

He had his faults, but a lack of a sense of humor wasn't one of them.

Enclosed is an excerpt from the latest alumni publication from SU. Note the 14 digitals per octave on the third manual. "12 are not enough!" (Shades of Jacqueline Suzanne--that phrase sounds the ultimate feminist put-down of her male lover.) Nanney was my music appreciation teacher in Stanford-in-Germany, lo, these many years ago. It was he who invited Stockhausen down to play Elektronische Musik for our class and rekindled my interest in music theory. The writer got his terminology slightly wrong: "well-tempered" for equally tempered, but at least he avoided the barbarous solecism of "well-temperament." Given this ignorance, it's probably just as well that he didn't even try to describe the Pierce 3 5 7 9 scale or Keislar's keyboard studies.

Yours,

John