

Tuesday 26 october 1993
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Happy Pumpkins!

The main problem these days is where to put anything. Took more than a week to straighten out the desk, for example.
The filing drawers are jam full.

The new xeroxes that Brian has sent me are in trays, that is to say, they cut the bottoms off boxes of beer cans and that leaves shallow cardboard trays just about right for laying papers in. Those are all over the place. I bought a hundred new filing folders and soon they will be used.
Some things that have been sent me have 3 hole punch, so I do have a few looseleaf binders.

Don't know whether I ever told you about the oddest looseleaf binder in my collection: this turned up near the cottage in Glendale in the front yard--rules and regulations for would-be janitors in Mormon churches (oodles of Mormons in Glendale; not quite that many here).

Haven't seen that binder since I moved here.

I wonder: you have to have instructions how to use a broom?

That could be because Glendale was the most strictly white city that I ever lived in, whereas this neighborhood is one of the most integrated I have ever lived in--Vietnamese, Thai, Chinese, Mexicans, you name it we got it. That would explain why no pairs of Mormon missionaries patrol Polk Ave., but California Ave. in Glendale they OUTNUMBERED the Jehovah's Witnesses. Apparently there are Mormon districts of San Diego--not sure.

Much more now than I will need a year hence to do the Carrillo article. Carrillo's booklet on the physical laws -- as he titles the Node and the Harmonic series.

Rather strange in a way, since most advocates of smaller intervals are always appealing to the harmonic series and he isn't.
Just take One-Sixth and chop that up into finer and finer Mincemeat and preserve the unruffled Sanctity of the tempered Whole-Step.
Now this takes me way back to Portland 1928.

Lady by the name of Justine Gilbert who taught piano in Portland and lived in a cottage about a mile up one of the hills just south of the main part of the city--I don't remember the name of the road but think it was Barbour Blvd. If you kept on the road it might take you to corvallis, come to think of it.

Anyway my father met her because here father was an architect or something downtown and she had a booklet on HARMONY published at the basement printshop that did the weekly Catholic Sentinel and my father wrote editorials for that. The pamphlet or booklet had ratios for a 17-tone scale of some kind and of course the usual ratios that are used to justify the 12-tone piano.

I was taken uphill to her studio a couple of times (we were living downtown for a couple of years, 1928-29).

Justine Gilbert was trying to prove UNDERTONES. Actually, difference tones were meant, but I won't squawk. "Proving" by whacking this or that interval while holding down the key for the "undertone" so that string would vibrate sympathetically.

OK a faint sound was heard in the bass.

So of course the diminished fifth and the augmented fourth were tried.

B and F in treble octave, call it 5:7 and get a bass G; call it 7:10 and get a bass D-flat.

A year or so later, trying what she did on another piano elsewhere, the faint bass notes were heard, BUT it was obvious that undamping those strings and simply pounding on the piano-case with something would produce a faint tone from ANY undamped bass-string, so this must have been a case of self-deception on her part.

By that time no chance to go back to her to argue and I wouldn't have wanted to. I had too many important things like toothache to worry about. I doubt very much that anybody in 1929 or 1930 cared about music theory when

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the Great Depression and the Stock Market Crash of 29 and the Prohibition Gangster Scandals were all that mattered to anybody.

My father went around day after day Forever and ever Amen declaring that THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A DEPRESSION and complaining how everything had failed and will continue to fail, so we were all very sad most of the time. So I could see nothing ahead but a whole lifetime of illness.

I had no reason whatever believe that health would come to me at age 70.

However age 12 was when I was introduced by librarians to the Helmholtz Book and Dayton C. Miller's acoustics books.

So when people want to know what life was like in the dark ages before Computers,

Relevance here to Carrillo's polemics against a whole tribe of writers on acoustics? Mainly this: the piano was an instrument of illusion, of deception. The mushy fuzzy cloudy vagueness of the Romantic Period: remember the stories about Richard Wagner lying in some apartment with silks and satins and every hard edge, covered and shielded from view with layers and layers of wrappings.

So it was only natural or Victorian or in the spirit of Fin de Siècle to protest the coming age of hard-edge cold hard bare striving for precision and discarding illusions--of the Bauhaus school and the new architecture that put people in bare cubical boxes and metal windows and all stripped down.

Something like the difference between a circuit board with a grid on it, as opposed to the fuzzy felt and sticky glue and random wood-grain you will see inside a piano. A 97-key, one-octave, sixteenth-tone piano would be unthinkable right now, but back then in the teens and twenties of this century? The only way to go then.

Carrillo went to Germany to study, back when; Stokowski was enamored of some of Wagner's pieces--the shoe fits.

Now fast-forward to about 1950 or 1949 when I was going to the building across the street from USC campus North End, Jefferson & Hoover, Shrine Auditorium nearby: I took a record player, amplifier, and the Vyshnegradsky 78 to the piano-rebuilders' class and played it and caused a whole roomful of raised eyebrows.

As I suppose Carrillo did in the 1930s. Quartertones.

Other news: Glen Prior phoned me about his new law office etc. I told him about your Tetrachord book, and so he wanted the address of Frog Peak and I told him. Maybe he will order it.

When the Priors moved recently, he had to store the 31-tone Marimba and probably somebody will store it for him more accessibly.

I sent him one of my tapes which has marimba from the Mirage forced into 19.

MORE LATER