

Montreal, P.Q. Sat., Oct. 19th, 1991

Dear Ivor,

Whew! With my demonstration at the Computer Music Conference this afternoon, I brought to a conclusion an important step in my career in music which you helped to launch me on. Just as Americans differ radically, one from another, in their sensitivities to subtleties of timbre, intonation ... so Quebecers are no different in differing radically one from another.

I played my trombone resyntheses - one based on the nominal Ab3 fundamental, one based on the Ab1 pedal tone. Both were quite close to the original, but I could easily sense that the pedal tone based resynthesis had a breathy, brassy presence whereas the Ab3 resynthesis sounded "pure & correct" but lacked something subtle.

A hardware synthesizer engineer from Quebec (who was demonstrating a very exciting additive synthesis device controlled from a Mac II) listened to my examples. He could tell no real difference between the two. My heart sank. He suggested that perhaps my cassette player & headphones weren't doing justice to what was on the cassette (they weren't the best). Then a Montrealer came by, listened to the examples, & without my having said anything about which was which, he unhesitatingly told me that the first resynthesis was the better, more lifelike one. That was the Ab1 version - "the right one". He was impressed with the quality of my resyntheses - and also liked some of the just intonation examples I'd brought along. - I played for him one part of that "example #58" from my narrated demonstration which you had complimented me on back in early '83.

(I'm enclosing xeroxes of a series of slides I made up ^{of} the trombone example - I believe they're close to being self-explaining)

I have the feeling that my additive instrument resyntheses were about the most faithful in capturing the instant (voice) feel and presence of ^{any of} the examples I heard. However others here had gone much further towards generating streams of music.

I have a sense of being in a minority here. The terms "stochastic" and "aleatory" are seen by many as being ominous omen-signifying harbingers of that unknown glorious destiny towards which we are progressing. "Let the computer share equally in the creative work" "Give the computer freedom to share in the creative work" (I'm not sure if this is the right way to put it)

all about?)

And I think of Martin Luther saying in praise of Josquin des Pres, a great composer of his time - "With other composers, the notes do what they want to do, but Josquin makes the notes do what he wants them to do." I've looked at (& coded) some of Josquin's music and I learned something from it. He employs ~~many~~ canons and perhaps other hidden mathematical devices. The canons are striking and impress the listener with a certain sense of mathematicality, geometricity, a rational beauty. But looking more deeply into his scores, I saw that he doesn't feel himself bound to hold strictly to his canons where it would lead to an unmusical result. He "cheats" on his rules. I believe his music is better, more satisfying, because he doesn't let his algorithms & canons constrain him. The mathematical devices are tools which he is the master of. I feel it's the same today. I believe one must be always on guard when it comes to turning "management responsibilities" re music composition over to a computer. I believe it should be an unequal relationship between composer & computer, with the composer the boss & the computer having a subordinate subservient position.

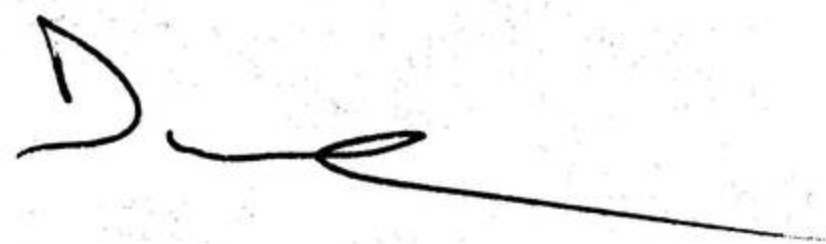
(I don't go as far as Luther, though, when he exhorted Christian slaves of the Turks to remain in slavery & not to attempt to escape back to Western Europe. "If you escape, you are stealing, because your bodies belong to your owners, and you are stealing your bodies from their lawful owners if you attempt to escape.")

I received your tape, Ivan, with the many examples - in particular the cello which you had modified to play in high pitch registers. Many, many thanks. I want to listen to the tape some more, with the concern & time pressure of the conference over I'll have a bit more free time to relax & listen intently to it.

I'm relaxing watching the weather station in French, listening to the French language - a pleasing, likeable language. The weather info content also is a change from Florida - Visibility 15 km, Plafond 6200 pieds, Faible Pluie, temperature 3°C - then the surrounding cities St-Jerome, Longueuil, St-Jean, Vaudreuil, Chateauguy, Valleyfield, - The north - Baie James - very cold. They're saying there's a heat wave in southern California.

Take care, Ivar. If you're interested, I'm thinking of putting together a tape + accompanying diagrams with some of my demonstrations. Progress is slow, but I very much hope & believe the work is solid & thorough & will contribute to music's beauty & will put new tools into the hands of composers - not "hung up quick bucks" tools but high quality ones which will be tough & resilient and, being based upon scientific fact & truth, will be valid 100 years from now.

Yours,



Dave Hill

Route 3, Box 2025

Quincy, FL 32351-9513

(904) 875-1136 (message machine when I'm out)