

Monday 31 August 1981

Jonathan Glasier 3932 Alameda Place San Diego CA 92103
Greetings++++

4:30 A M and I can't sleep. Indeed something woke me at 3:30 and then by 4:00 a fit of coughing and it isn't quite over.

Sunday afternoon Chris Banta came here and took me over to the Guitar Center on Sunset DBlvd. where he looked at a couple of synthesizers---something about those which have a split keyboard--it's possible to have some other tone in the bass. This one was ply polyphonic. Then there was supposed to be a Sound exhibition at the L A County museum on Wilshire----turned out to be nothing but one suspended speaker unit in the sunken cor courtyard in front, with a somewhat warbly high A going all the time. So of course we didn't bother going into the museums proper----but went into the bookshop where I said hello to Don Deschner (literary expert who lives in Hollywood and has published some books about movie starts etc.) Then to the Delacour Auditorium----the annex that was built onto the Natural History Museum in Exposition Park about 20 years ago when it was still the Art Musuum.

He went down Exposition Blvd. from about La Cienega, so this is the first time in 8 years or so that I have seen the empty lot where my house on Exposition Blvd. and DNormandie used to be. The tres trees that were in front of the house are still there, but no house, and the small houses on the corner next door to it are not there any more either. Catercorner from it the grocery-store build is also gone without any trace. Where the candy factory used to be is a garish mustard-colored b uilding. So you would never recognize the place I spent 20 years in.

At the auditorium (it has Sunday afternoon free concerts throughout the year) was the SUPERCUSSION group---Montebello High School, conducted by Steven Traugh, who composed all but one of the pieces on the program. Completely percussion--glockenspiel, marimbas, vibes, tubular chimes, piano, and enough drums to stock two rock groups. Only odd item was an electric bass.

Ron George was there, so I had some chance to speak to him. He said something about having a new studio just being set up.

So there is another attempt to escape the monotony of 12: the inharmonic partials of all the metal- and wooden-bar instruments and the inharmonic partials of the piano (they blended!) and lots and lots of noises from the Wholesale Drum Showroom or the Boiler Factory. The one great fault was "no breathing" i.e. no demarcation of long pieces into movements, no phrase countours with little pauses at the end of a secon section or phrase.

If this had been a band, with a tuba or sax or trombones or wind instruments, they would have been forced to have phrasing and those punctuation-type pauses. So somebody has got to get that conductor interested in horns. This is a common fault of organists, who never stop. Thus Glen Prior's banging away the other December at the Brand auditorium has been outdone. This went on for two hours.

Complete films of W.C. Fields
Don Deschner 1989

Went over the Ouspensky things. Preface to the Conversations with a Demon or Talks with a Devil (the Russian title could have been translated four or five ways) preface by John G. Bennett--of Subud fame for a while, and then he went in for Gurdjieff.

In that preface, the notion of "the devil doesn't bother man until he tries to escape". Those who are harassed are just those who begin to wake up in the Gurdjieff sense and may find a way out.

So Ouspensky's stories are allegorical in that way----the time frame is before I was born--early 20th century for the most part.

This and other of Ouspensky's books show that the tendency to materialism was already present in Russian thought long before there were Communist Revolutions. The quarrel between idealism and materialism and the various dualisms and the paradoxes and contractions they raise, were already there.

Ironically, the American Behaviorist kind of materialism is harder and more strict and ruthless than Russian materialism. I actually think the American atheists are more extreme than the so-called "dialectical materialists".

Which leads me to a pest I had to put up with for years --- he was asked to leave one of my creativity meetings by all the others present that night. He continued to phone me and send all kinds of nonsense stuff. But this is a warning: where the attempt to link diet and healthfoodism and things on the order of naturopathy or chiropractic (remember my problem with this man was 1950-1970 and he was much older than I so influenced by the kind of ideas current in 1910 or so) results in surrender to a pessimistic materialistic determinism/fatalism, quite the contrary of the religions these people profess. It was as though he was sent by some demon to keep me from succeeding as a composer.

He kept harping on the idea that he had gone over all the standard songs and pieces and had discovered the Laxative Theme. I suppose his ambition was to have an orchestra record it. Fortunately this never happened--what if they had to clean up the recording studio afterward?

That is, I was very evil and wicked and dissolute and worthless because I wanted to compose music that accomplished no Useful Purpose. It had to be for some disease or other, or I had no right to compose or perform it. Maybe this is an offshoot of the Freudian Religion that America has so assiduously practiced most of this century. He and his emulators continued their argument to the point that if my music didn't exist solely to cure some disease, then it must exist to CAUSE some disease; therefore I was spreading sickness all over the world and I must be stopped!

I hope you now understand why I am so wary of New Age Movements and people who want to put me on the Self-Improvement Treadmill forever. Just as a matter of pride: shouldn't I know what I am doing, and not merely being a vain searcher for whatever, at my age?

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Finally got back some of the lost sleep, until the coughing started in again and stopped when I got back up.

Let's go at it another way: the value-increase in my instruments, as a COLLECTION--that is, the way they increase one another's value by being together. And of course, those that you have, forming another COLLECTION INCLUDING your own instruments, being all together and thus related to one another. This is a mental attitude or subjective affair in part----the value of your collection going up the more people see and hear it and going down if you put them away in dead storage.

I was made vividly aware of this after being brought home from that concert yesterday afternoon--Chris Banta never realized that I had a set of Deagan tubular chimes, and was extremely surprised to find out, it was not only a larger set than the chimes they had at the concert, but it is much LOUDER. I have had to keep it in the closet hidden away because there is no frame for it and I don't have a front porch here to hang it on. I have been worried that if I built a frame, I might be forced to leave that behind when forced to move out. So the value of my collection is decreased by having them in dead storage.

Other people such as Mrs. Wright cannot think of my possessions in any other way than as Invitations to Burglars To Come And Get Them. Aren't you worried that ... ? so that I am not supposed to enjoy anything I have; I am supposed to worry about each thing being stolen. Of course if I had that kind of pictures on the Treasure Map I would be robbed. There is no way to burglar-proof this house. If someone wanted to get in they could, no matter how many locks I put on. And I can't bar my escape in case of fire. (They were installing the electric gates and burglar alarms and stuff in the first condominium the last week.)

The McAuley's want to borrow a Megalyra but I need it here so that you will have one while I am repairing the other (yellow one) for you. You have gotten me to appear in public quite a number of times in three years; they haven't done it at all in six years. So I can't be generous to them under those circumstances. They will simply have to wait until the red one has all its pickups and that will take time----16 coils on four boards.

I was able to get a tiny can of the orange paint to make the orange one (which was in the art exhibit) look right for the Halvorsen thing in San Bernardino next year. I can't afford to tie up a good instrument for that--it would be gone a month or longer.

I made two copies of the quartertone fretting table for 635 mm (25@) (25") so have started to refret the hollow-body guitar of that string-length. It will be quartertone in a matter of days since I do not disturb the 12-tone frets already in it.