

Tuesday 22 September 1981
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Greetings %%%/%%/%%/%%/%%

More scribbles from Chalmers and he complains of some difficulty that makes it hard for him to run a typewriter. The words describing this malady or are of course totally illegible. So do we believe him or is this another hopeless cryptogram?

He says that Yasser fled the USSR by way of China way back in the old days and so that would explain why there are no accounts of him or his theories in the Soviet publications.

But look how much of Chalmers' studying and writing and research is going to be lost to the world because nobody is going to be able to read it. Conviser cussed him out for this and called him "stupid". So we have a nice little feud going.

Announcement of the second issue of Acoustics published in Grass Valley CA wherever that is. Haven't the slightest idea. But it is a cassette-magazine and very expensive.

Here is an address for you: Bruce Campbell, 212 Park st. Morgantown WV 26505. He is the one who called me from West Virginia University about cassettes, and so you can write him about Interval.

Alas! October TIME just out and nothing in it either. We may have to give up on it. I don't know how to jog them without making too many waves.

Up to the Laundromat and back for 2 miles total walking, so another set of leg-cramps despite the warm night. A heavy pair of pants gave out because of the laundry machine and ripped all the way down one side and across the middle too. So I guess I have more odd-shaped cloths to use -- couldn't trust it if it were mended.

Another postcard from Reed about a 2-week vacation or something, delaying the editing of the article of course, but he says to go ahead with the Esperanto version of the article along with the English one. So about a week from now there will be a terrible battle with the Varityper trying to get it to write three pages in Esperanto since it has the diacritical marks needed. The Selectric of course is now a total disaster and won't go at all and I don't know whether I can ever afford to get it fixed and dare not tear it apart to see whether the jamming could be released. And it's symbol-set-ball does not have a short-mark or breve, but two of the Varityper type-fonts do have this sign.

At the least the Varityper's mechanism is all open and out where it can be seen, even though it contains a hundred loose screws and nuts and after 35 years of existence is almost dead. I was always able to see clearly whatever went wrong and to access it with ordinary tools. the IBM affairs have proprietary parts which cannot be operated on with standard tools.

Just put on a new ribbon on this thing and of course they stopped making the special Ancient Old Fashioned Remington Spools a long time ago--15 or 20 years ago in fact. I had to take a Royal ribbon and re-wind it into this machine and then detach the other end and get it onto the opposite spool. But this thing hasn't had to have a single adjustment or repair in the 20 years I have had it.

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I got it on a swap deal from Talbot Winchell of the General Semantic group, and some friend of his was a typewriter repairman back in the 50's and part of the 60's, and overhauled it, so no mechanical problems at all since then. Just old age.

The Varityper was a lemon from Day One, and acted up so terribly that they came out and made a house-call free and replaced two broken defective parts -- apparently damaged in transit -- and then it worked for a few months and went back to being the worst lemon of all the things I ever owned in my entire life-span. I could fix it but spent as much time repairing as writing on it. Otherwise I would have been flooding you with letters written in teeny weeny six-point and four kinds of italics and so forth for variety.

On the other hand, if it worked as well as this one does, you would have had to read everything with a magnifying glass.

This is 10 characters to the inch horizontally and six vertically, making 60 characters per square inch, whereas the small type on the Varityper is 16 characters horizontally and 9 vertically giving 144 characters per square inch. Saves paper but people squawked something awful about the tiny type.

The spacing on the Selectric is identical to this spacing.

There is a good argument for having a typewriter with special large type, so that all the stuff written on it can be reduced about 30%. Then all the pages of a newsletter or magazine will look neater.

In the "old" days before tape machines I was forever dreaming about special large music paper and writing all my scores and parts $1\frac{1}{2}$ times life-size and having them reduced so my hand lettering and music manuscript would look more printed.

But photocopying in the 40s and 50s was extravagantly expensive so I never could afford it. Now the Xerox and its competitors have changed everything:

Since I have not yet sent cassettes to Thomas Reed I cannot make him understand how the 19-tone scale or the 22 functions--how the difference between C sharp and D flat in those scales does matter and it is no longer a mere question of sub-varieties or distinctions without a difference. I don't think he understands how Pythagorean and Meantone despite their very different moods and interval-sizes, are both perfectly suited to the present musical notation exactly as it is.

Now it's another 2-week wait. Before he gets back to his office. Probably a workation tuning lots of pianos in the Ozarks or the plains of Nebraska or the small towns of Iowa or whatever.

John A. Sherman, the Cadman-revivalist, phoned me very late last night and I was just groggy so he did nearly all of the talking. 1982 is the centennial of Cadman's birth and so a fairly young fellow in Long Beach someplace who runs a recording facility wants to get out an anniversary Cadman album and now has to write the blurb for the record-jacket and is stuck--doesn't know what to write, so they had a nice little quarrel yesterday afternoon (over the phone I suppose)

so in effect he was trying to establish that there are three sides to every question and inviting me to be the other corner of the triangle or sumpm. What do you say on a record-jacket about a composer who was very famous in 1926 and in the 1940s was known only for his before-1940 compositions though he continued writing, and went on tour often, and then within weeks of his death at age 64 in December 1946, suffered total eclipse and has not been written about or heard of since?

Sherman has this line of argument that all his contemporaries were bitterly jealous of him and slandered him immediately after his death so that nobody would give any posthumous publicity, so he has taken on himself the duty of keeping the memory alive, which of course is hopeless and so he gets deeper and deeper into complaining about it. Sherman does not play any instrument so that makes the task all the impossibler as it if weren't hard enough. He won't admit the possibility which of course I dare not mention to him, that Cadman simply outlived his success. 1910-1928 or such a matter was Cadman's peak of popularity and all the songs and other pieces he had had published were exactly what people wanted at that time. But atonality entered the scene in the late 30's and so after WW II and his demise, the Wagnerian-Romantic style and the ballads sung at the piano in the livingroom were no longer in vogue, and of course now everything is rock in the Real World and jazz is respectable now and 12-tone Serialism in the ivory towers of Academia.

Cadman did not want me to do anything with either quartertones or just intonation, and you know the ironical twist--that is exactly what got me into OMNI and if I had written his kind of stuff I would have no listeners at all. There is nothing disgraceful about succeeding early in one's life and then living on one's previous compositions and then conditions beyond his control causing a decline in interest in his things after his death. Probably much better than being like Bach or Mozart having to wait a century before becoming idealized and idolized and worshipped. Sherman scolds Cadman for not having composed second and third symphonies at ages such as 63 or 64, but he was very ill and so I can understand.

I have now reached the age at which he died so I guess I am more durable. I don't know whether he himself was epileptic but his sister was and there was a constant struggle keeping her alive. Any money he may have made sure didn't make him happy. And he couldn't take it with him.

Maybe you wonder why I wrote about this at all. One reason is that sometime it might be worth deliv trying to find out what records there were of his activities in San Diego and La Mesa where he lived for a while. Or whether I might gain a friend in the San Diego area if someone had known him then and isn't too old now. The other reason is that Cadman's staying within the bounds of the 12-tone system and the piano and conventional instruments and the "safe" harmonies and procedures of the Romantic Period (Wagner was his idol/ideal) did not guarantee his lasting success and posthumous fame. The standard rules for being a Great Composer did not work as advertised, despite the way he spent a lot of time and money and effort and ruined his health going on all the promotional concert tours, and so anybody who scolds and attacks me for not having been a standard garden variety conventional musician is out of line.

The more I discuss non-12 and Partch with people, the clearer it becomes that there was something quite valid about Partch "being seduced into carpentry" and eventually writing his book and giving

detailed instructions how to build certain of his instruments and now in the previously unpublished things you have been running serially in Interval, how to care for and maintain those instruments.

Partch thus tapped in on a Source of ENERGY that other composers never thought of: the vitality, nurtured and kept going and progressing by the Real World Outside Music, of the Handicrafters, the Home Workshop People, and the Do-It-Yourself Movement, then in its infancy. He was much too early, born about 50 years too soon to get the full advantage of this. But it was a very wise thing to do, since that movement has grown and grown, till now it is a big thing.

People can't afford the carpenter and the plumber and the electrician and the architect and the gardner and landscaper and cabinetmaker and such anymore, so they have to become craftspeople themselves. Why, they even have to become their own nurses and doctors. He concentrated, almost without planning or thinking, on instruments that people could make at home, and didn't need a huge factory with special heavy machinery. He didn't carry this thing through to its logical implications, but we CAN!

I have. Find more instruments that can be made at home. I did. You have some of them. You have built other designs of your own. Now, I went one important step beyond Partch and this is adding electronic devices, such as instruments and amplifiers and loudspeaker cabinets and pickups, to the acoustic instruments Partch was making and getting others to make.

The experimental and avant-garde composers of today, such as the ~~the~~ CMB affairs, have not yet realized this idea. So in that way if no other way, I am one jump ahead of them. Let us tap the emotion and energy of the home-craft Movement, which is fed by millions of people now and all those forced to become Do-It-Yourself-ers, and persuade a few of them to join us and make musical instruments and the electronic devices that also produce music or amplify it, and take advantage of that whole movement and its force and drive and power and vitality which are just about at their Zenith right now. There couldn't be a better time than Now--it was too soon before and will be too late after while. That is, it will be too late after the Do-It-Yourself and the Work-At-Home-To-Save-Commuting-To-Factories-and-Offices movements have Matured.

The so-called avant-garde and the serialists and the people who say they are contemporary composers and those in the festivals and who have been in the books for the last few years, usually take existing instruments for granted and do nothing creative about designing new instruments. They buy something off the shelf. Whether it's a Romantic Period Piano, or a 1981 Model Synthesizer. Carrillo may have had new scales, but they are embalmed in those 15 pianos--metamorphosed it is true, by but as the number of notes per octave increases, the timbre gets worse and worse and the compass shrinks to just ONE octave.

I don't have much energy at my advanced age and it will get less and less as I go to be 70 and maybe over. But we can tap the energy of the home-craftsmen and they don't have to be supercreative either since we can make the designs for them to copy: I already did. Add the energy of the home-grown-electronic-shops to this and you have available power. Contrast this with a society of music-arrangers who work in silence with mere symbols--codes--and that for obsolete instruments only. Factory-made by people who don't care. Celebrate Partch as composer & Instrument DESIGNER rather than for his 5th-grade arithmetic.

Yours