

Wednesday 14 August 1963

Ervin M. Wilson, 651 Huntley, Los Angeles California 90029

On this hot afternoon I got a parcel-post package from John Chalmers in La Jolla. He loaned me a demonstration tape of the specially tuned reed organ described in the Journal of Music Theory--Referential Tuning and all those ratios that Partch differs from. So I will try to keep it two or three weeks so you can come and ~~xxx~~ hear it. (Hope this 90 heat wave doesn't keep up!)

Went to the library yesterday and, pooped out from carrying four very heavy books back, decided not to take any out this week. So I stayed there longer than usual and tried to read everything and got a beautiful case of mental indigestion, complete with headache when I got ~~W~~ home. Current issue of Electronics World has an article on frequency multipliers and dividers on a semi-technical level. Stopped off at the transfer point and got 5 lb. of patching plaster for the holes in the wall here, and at the surplus store for \$1 worth of slightly used tubes that will go into the second unit of the organ some day. By the time I really get around to the second unit and can afford it, no doubt it will be more expedient to use transistors.

I've only heard part of this demonstration tape so far, but it begins by saying they had a research grant from some foundation or other. This means that it is actually possible to get a grant for non-12 studies! Wonder how we would go about doing something of the kind. Surely California is far enough from New York that there wouldn't be any worry about competition.

I guess I wrote you about the piano rebuilding and refinishing fellow who stopped in a couple of weeks ago and thought I had done pretty well with the organ unit. The two electronic organ enthusiasts that were going to come haven't been here yet. He got my point, that mutual interaction between the oscillators was comparable to the sympathetic vibration phenomena inside a piano.

Going on with the ideas about vibrato and small pitch-steps compared, as we were discussing a while back, I am able to work out "sub-melodies" or "micro-melodies" on the 31st instrument-- I think composers could make some kind of a breakthrough by using these small steps deliberately ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ to "say something" rather than expect the performer to put in a more or less uniform vibrato. Or one could take the numerous ornament patterns of the Baroque era and execute these ornaments in small steps, even 87. I had been wondering what next things I would try in composing; now I know.

Yours,

Encl. a non-musical leaflet I just ran off.

Monday 30 September 1963

Ervin M. Wilson, 651 Huntley, Los Angeles Cal. 90069

Greetings---

A big stack of books has to go back to the library tomorrow so I have been coving things out.

Enclosed is the Russolo Futurist Manifesto on Music, as ~~given~~ extracted from his book The Art of Noise by a couple of editors. Maybe it's garbled, but it was pretty garbled in the first place!

I don't quite get the connection between enharmonic music (which implies greater precision in tuning) and noisic, which implies a disregard of pitch and an careless attitude of anything goes. Pierre Schaffer of Musique concrete fame did not acknowledge his debt to Russolo and Marinetti and the Futurists generally until practically forced to do so by public opinion. Schaffer uses tape recordings of noises and semi-noise-sounds that are re-recorded at any of 12 different speeds to put them up or down as many conventional semitones. (I've read over the patent specification.)

However, it may be that someone with access to books the L.A. Library doesn't have might be able to track down the various efforts to compose enharmonic music that were sparked by the futurists and/or by Busoni's essays, particularly the one on the "tripartite tone" (181) and the 36T harmonium. Oddly enough, this musical venture ~~as~~ has to be approached through the museums and other places devoted to visual arts, painting and sculpture, rather than through any hidebound musical schools or experts.

I am currently on pins and needles for two simultaneous causes of suspense:

1) the fellow from Angels' Theatre was supposed to return my music tape (1 hr., containing some microtone effects) last Friday and he didn't come after making an appointment--no doubt the heat wave has something to do with it;

2) the theremin-maker in New York State is going to send me, any day, a ~~XXXX~~ theremin recording of the Phrygian Melody.

I find the Schlesinger affair very rough going. Warning to me, I suppose, not to be obscure and pedantic.

Yours,