

While the pattern is similar to the way your three-octave instrument is laid out, the consequences of doing this to a keyboard are different.

Another affair that is not so frightful as it sounds, would be to draw up the keyboard plan for a 31T chord organ, which would be a nightmare for the people who had to wire it up, but might be about as easy to play as existing chord organs in the 12 system.

So much for wild flights of my imagination.

I went to the library yesterday afternoon, and found a weird book by a Prof. Kassner at Princeton. It is not even mimeographed, but ditto'd. It is dated ~~1955~~ 1956 but the library just got it, as near as I can tell. This is the logical sequel to Schillinger, I suppose. It is called the _____ of the Twelve-Tone System. I can't remember that word: it isn't Diffusion, Discussion, or Derivation, but some word that sounds very wrong in this context.

It is loaded with Theory of Groups and Theory of Sets and Domains and some of the paraphernalia of modern linguistics. This is all right with me, as those branches of mathematics may very well have musical uses. But these are applied, not to musical sounds, but to written music, with a couple of pages of argument to justify this. When I read "much written music has never been performed, yet has been read by scholars, and even more written music was never performed during the composer's lifetime" I felt like giving Kassner a rousing Bronx razzberry. The book is dedicated to Schönberg, though I am not so sure he would have appreciated the dedication. (I suppose you saw Albert Goldberg's article with a picture of Schönberg in last Sunday's Calander (times).) I answered Goldberg--maybe I'll get another letter-excerpt published; who knows? That was Sunday afternoon, so now I will have to write Goldberg again and tell him what I found in the library--composing by mathematics as he was railing against.

The important point here is that the human ear is ignored. What do we care how proper a "serial" composition is, mathematically, if the gestalten cannot be heard as ordered structures? (That was the burden of my letter to Goldberg: I believe the present musical troubles lie in writing music to be looked at but not listened to.)

Here you have some of the rationale behind Kienek's 13T scale--you wondered how it could be justified. 13 is about the only thing it would be practical to convert an existing piano to without rebuilding drastically. 13 being a prime number, would break up the re-entrant symmetry of 12 as $2 \times 2 \times 3$, as 3×4 , as 2×6 . If music is written without regard for how it sounds, 13 is as good as 12. (But I couldn't find anything about non-12 in Kassner's book.)

Of course I will have to re-read the thing carefully before I go around criticizing Kassner in public, but I couldn't find anything answering the question, Why 12 tones? It probably is there some place, something like "In the Beginning was the Pianoforte, and Bach and Schönberg are Its True Prophets".

Serialism (modern name for atonality) is an elaborate scheme for using the same scales as Bach without writing anything the way Bach would have done. Oddly enough, I have never seen any abstract painters who deliberately turned their brush the other way when what they were painting accidentally started to look like a figure. Yet the serialists make their notes go the other way if anything accidentally started to be come a melody. This is Discipline. This is Self-Denial. This is Mortification. Or sumpn.

Argument I for 12T (Equality of 12 keys and no bad keys reached by whatever extreme of modulation and no limit to the disant distance one may travel round the circle of fifths in either direction because it is re-entrant) was completely abolished by what Schonberg and his disciples did, yet this argument is used by such persons just as though they had not abandoned it in fact. This is hypocrisy, in my book.

If there are no keys, no tonics, no modulations; and if the fifth and fourth are no longer treated differently from the augmented and diminished intervals and others, then Argument I falls flat on its face. Serialists can still argue for an equal division of the octave, but there is no longer any compelling reason for 12.

Now one of my tasks will be, How to restate the above so that certain people will read it, who would never read it in the above form, style, and manner.

I got a letter from one John Chalmers of La Jolla, that he is interested in 19T and other systems. He asked me a few questions, but his writing is almost indecipherable, so it may take several letters back and forth to find what he is about.

I wrote a note to the film-makers, but Mr. Kneifel has moved and the letter came back from Venice marked Moved--no address, so I remailed it yesterday to Cinemists 63, 1809 N. Las Palmas, Hollywood 28, and hope it reaches somebody there. This group appears to be a non-profit association of enthusiasts for the Film as an Art Form (their capitalizing).

You said something about stomach trouble in a previous letter, so for curiosity's sake I enclose a sample of my latest mimeographing job, a doctor in Beverly Hills I used to go to (8 years ago) when I could afford a doctor, mailed in one of his diets for me to mimeograph. Now I have to walk to the nearest postoffice and mail the package. This happens about every seven or eight months. He has about 16 diets and various forms and instructions.

The ironical event occurred a couple of times, about four years ago: I was doing a 900-calorie-a-day reducing diet for this doctor at the same time I was doing a price list for the candy factory across the street. I wonder how many million calories the candy factory turns out in a day. Enough to wrack a good many reducing diets, I can be sure!

Yours,

Friday 21 June 1963 (allegedly first day of Summer)

Ervin M. Wilson, 651 Muntley, L.A. 69

Your newest keyboard charts arrived this morning. Perhaps you have a point about forcing people to view 24T differently by using another keyboard-pattern. Besides the 8/11 interval, there is a melodic possibility based on the ~~4~~tone interval (24 is 8 times 3) and the bagpipe scale, as well as some other scales, contains this interval.

In my preliminary glancing I also noted your remarks about a fingering that was obvious for right hand but not for left hand. There have been one or two attempts to evolve ~~symmetrical~~ symmetrical keyboards, such that the low notes might be at the center of the instrument and away from this center, either left or right, is upward in pitch. There is also something to be said for the converse arrangement, such that the highest notes for each hand are in the center, and away from the center is downward in pitch. This is good for piano-type instruments in that the thumbs have the top note, which is usually the melody note, and which they can hit harder.

I would estimate that up to $\frac{1}{2}$ the exercises in the finger-exercise books are devoted to equalizing the two hands and co-ordinating the little finger of one hand with the thumb of the other, the ring finger of one hand with the index finger of the other, and so on, which runs counter to the built-in nervous-system symmetrical pattern. It is surprising how many typewriter errors are the right finger of the wrong hand, as d for k or e for i and so on.

The two-manual short-keyboard organs suggest overlapping the left- and right-hand keyboards as two manuals. Experiments in this direction could be carried out by rewiring existing organ keyboards, since the three- and five-black-digital pattern is "mirrorable".

Now I have another brainstorm that could be experimented with, especially by someone who hasn't invested as much time practicing fingering ordinary keyboards as I have. Give certain of the keyboard patterns you have, a quarter-turn so that up in pitch is really up an incline, down in pitch is really down an incline toward the player, and what is now front-to-back will be in-to-out: i.e., the two keyboards are mirror-images of one another, so that the right and left thumbs, and right and left little fingers have corresponding functions. Or, give the keyboards an eighth-turn only.

