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Greetings from Down South-----

I don't have any too kind thoughts for spelling-reformers this morning. The editor of that quarterly bulletin is trying to make me do his hack writing and of course I have more cheerful useful and profitable things to do. I am sure that even so specialized and recondite an affair as our projected X Q would have more readers than his 300 to 350.

Ed Kniefel was here several times and needed a sign for his concession at the Fair (he discovered this would be a desirable change of pace instead of color-photo laboratories and similar things he had been doing this year--dazzling sunlight rather than total darkness, for one thing) and since I knew how to spell and the other possible sign-makers didn't, I was nominated. Also, he got two bagfuls of cardboard letters to staple onto back-boards that happen to be out there at the fairgrounds, and he wanted them painted red so he brought cans of paint--but forgot the thinner and I don't have much of that here. So this was my chance to paint the screen door (which was looking horrible after the neighborhood kids messed it up several months ago) and a couple of my metal boxes.

So I have been wondering: how much cheese and sausage would be sell if I had taken the reformers' advice and writted it ~~TOHMER ANT SAUSISUR~~ on the signs? Or for that matter according to the winning scheme of the Thax's Will Alphabet Contest?

If you think making signs is easy, try getting a wobbly paintbrush to do a capital C sometime. And--perhaps slightly relevant to the tuning and temperament question: you NEVER measure the spaces between letters and between words--you have to develop a sense of what looks right. Even with readymade cut-out letters you would have to fiddle around with re-spacing them. A complicated network of illusions is involved.

And, odder still: After using lettering pens and brushes one comes to realize why the Old English black letter and the German Fraktur were developed and why they held on so long. That is, the ease of writing (it may not seem so, but they are easier) had to be balanced against legibility. Legibility finally won, of course, but it took a few centuries.

I bet the neighbors here were extremely puzzled. Was I going to open a sausage-factory? Or was I trying to be the head cheese around here?

Perhaps this is also relevant to the attempts to reform musical notation. To write music rapidly, one holds the pen at a sprange angle that would be used for only very oddball and fancy lettering.

In that book on Computer Music (the one in which Hiller cites me) there are a couple of articles proposing machine

compatible (they would be typewritable, of course) codes for music information retrieval, and still other articles refer to rival coding schemes.

Conventional musical notation is difficult to do with a pencil, but some kind of rough-and-ready accommodation was made--it had to be. However, when the ballpoint was invented, that really spoilt things. It is very difficult to make legible notes with a ballpoint pen. The new felt markers and brush-tip pens do pretty well, though.

I am chagrined and disappointed at the quartertone situation these days. It was bad enough that Haba had one set of signs (calculated not to clash with his sixth-tone signs) and Wyschnegradsky another; but now there's Penderecki with a set of signs that clashes with both and is especially incompatible with the Couper-modification of Wyschnegradsky that I use. In particular: one I use for $\frac{1}{4}$ tone flat Penderecki uses for $\frac{1}{2}$ tone flat. Since Penderecki is using quartertones in a much more meaningful way than some others have done, there is danger that his notation may catch on.

I think I would have to retreat to Mila's if that happens.

Or take the bull by the horns and go to graphs.

For 19 and 31 this does not matter in the slightest, who does what in writing 24. But for 22 it matters somewhat.

I may have annoyed some people by using a quartertone notation for 22, but I am trying to be practical: to make it possible to play some of the things in 24 or in an unequal 24. And at the same time to be able to use Mandelbaum's 19 and Fokker's 31 with their distinctive notations--that is, you would know after reading two lines of it what system and whose notation scheme.

Ervin may be a little disturbed by my not eagerly taking up his 41 notation proposal and certain others---but that does not mean I won't use those systems---it only means that I would never expect any performer to read a 41-tone notation never mind how good and logical it might be---I would have it done on a computer or automatically-played instrument. I also think the deliberately inharmonic systems will have to be done automatically--no violinist would avoid the fifths, certainly.

Partch has created such a notation-and-cipher hodgepodge that nobody will be able to recover the lost meanings in 1924 or 2010.

Now do you see the reason for my infatuation with tape? And why I am trying to avoid notation and to avoid too many written articles to be seen by people who will never hear them?

I finally got a letter from John Reckwell, music critic on the I. A. Times, just before his vacation. My letter had lain around some three weeks. Or four. He saw my point, anyway. Maybe it will photocopy for you. I'll turn on the machine and see. Planned obsolescence again--it is half broken down.

There probably is a future for 13, at that: one can move the bridge of a conventional tenor banjo or oldstyle banjo or certain guitars with ease, to put it at the 13-tone position. Now who the hell would ever, ever know what 13 SHOULD be in order to be able to criticize the 13-out-of-12 discrepancy? Horsefeathers. I get so mad at the perfectionists. Spoiling everybody's fun.

Case in point: some ten years ago, I was asked to copy some excerpts from the official General Semantic textbook --items relevant to each other but scattered in 14 different places, a few sentences here and a few there. I hyphenated some words in an unorthodox fashion so Talbot Winchell who was running their I.A. affairs at the time chided me over the phone and sent me a Webster's Collegiate so I would conform to their hyphenations. My friends were aghast. "So what?" they chorused. After all, only some fifteen or twenty people would ever read the typed-up excerpt copies, and as a matter of fact, I doubt that more than five people ever did. And now with computer-hyphenation of newspapers, anything goes.

If you want something really amusing, most of the spelling reformers wouldn't know where to put a hyphen if you threw it at them. With their fanatical preoccupation with single letters they forget entirely about syllables. Of course, it is also true that no-one agrees about English syllabification anyway--the Government printing office gets out its own hyphenating book (which I have here someplace, and which contradicts Webster's all the time). In most other languages, such as Spanish or Russian, there is never the slightest doubt as to where a hyphen goes at the end of a line when having to divide a word. This has caused a peculiar rule among typing classes--they allow very, very ragged lines so that the speed typists taking their tests for breakneck typing won't get penalized for a wrong hyphenation.

Latest radio newscasts say that the emigration from Los Angeles and vicinity has now reached something like 20,000 and they are still moving out in droves. Earthquake was one reason, of course, and the aerospace collapse with its unemployment, but also there are such things as smog. I think there are more reasons: no public transportation worth a damn, and high property taxes that make home-owning impractical, and let's face it if the news media won't: the streets are not safe at night. This is the 15th anniversary of my getting beaten up and my face paralyzed for a month or more, and all the other consequences of that, so I do not care for the month of June at all.

While I was halfway through one of these signs, the pan of paint overturned, undoing a whole word and it was quite a task to mop up all that red paint. I somehow believe that had this job been in May or July, that wouldn't have happened. The wind blew a newspaper up enough to overturn the paint.

Yours

I just received the Xerox of the Mandelbaum article, which you say was 1967 conference printed 1969.

That might explain a few things about his views.

For one thing, note that like all his predecessors without a single exception so far as I am aware, he says nothing about the cost of microtonal experimentation. After 1967, the cost has come down, dramatically. Fretless guitars and basses, easily retunable electronic organs, portable at that; revival of the steel guitar, which needs only a chart instead of actual frets; more powerful computer software; frequency synthesizers, and more recently, IC modules.

For another, his emphasis, and that of most xenharmonists, is on harmony AS OPPOSED TO melody--when the order is the other way around.

Let me put it more bluntly: I have things to say in 19 which would be too polite, too subtle, too hard to hear as distinct melodic steps, in 31. For 17, even more so; 31 is impossible as a standard lingua franca for the aggressive, assertive melodic moods that can be obtained in 17 and 19, and to a lesser degree in 24--or for the queer effects one might get from such systems as 13, 14, 26, etc.

But on the other hand, no amount of performance and listening to 24-tone can give you any inkling of what 31 can do in the way of refined subtlety and restful harmonies. Take 24 vs. 31 for a moment--their moods, their aesthetic qualities are as far apart as the poles. ~~Therefore~~ Therefore we need both and must not exploit one at the expense of the other, and so for other obvious pairs and triplets of systems.

But both his argument and my statements just above, are somewhat obsolete because the COST of experimenting has come down. And will come down much further. Also, the most powerful of the 12-ton-ists' objections, the stupendous cost of everything non-12, has been wiped out. Yet this is the objection they never raise clearly and bluntly; they always hide it in a smoke-screen of tangled rhetoric.

You may wonder why I am not over-eager about computer music. You have been very kind, not to force the issue or keep bringing it up to me. It's simply the cost of computer time, of programming services, software, and the cost in time as well as money I would incur in preparing a composition for computer performance--and at the moment that cost is so great that I would be better off buying more instruments and components instead of blowing it all on the time and services I would require for just one composition. This will not always be the case, and there will be more efficient codes.

1967 to 1971 is four years. So it would be worse than useless for me to reply to Mandelbaum's arguments for 31 -- especially when I devote so much time to composing in 31: The arguments can be presented much more forcefully by producing tapes and disc copies in which several systems are shown against one another--this variegated contrast is going to be one of the most important resources we will have. To favor one system over others is

McLuain' you in-----I guess I told you or even showed you one time you were here, McLuhan's idea of scrambling the order of the pages in his newsletters. I find that today this seems like an excellent idea: what occurs to me last should be first in this letter, hence page 5 on top, by golly.

However the chronological order would be better when you put this away in your files.

I have conducted many trials in which I exposed people to new notations--such as Fokler's or Vyshegradski's or Gouper's or whatnot. The temptation to play staff-notated passages on a piano or other 12-line instrument is so overwhelming that it would take a saint to resist it. Result, notation can do serious, IRREPARABLE harm. You can't un-do the frightful damage of a first impression. This is especially so with the 'silent' majority--the visually-biassed individual. The seen takes command of the heard, resulting in mis-hearing.

But at the time Mandelbaum wrote his Thesis, and for some time afterward, notation was far more important than it is now. So I hope I get some answer to my latest tape sent to Mandelbaum, three months ago or such a matter. Maybe he hasn't played it yet.

That is, I am going to depend on my Music Sample Sheet and Composition List to show that I know how to write notation, orthodox and oddball, and try to avoid wasting any more of my time on notating what cannot be performed accurately by the reader anyhow. The only value of notation from now on is that of someone who wishes to follow the tape from the score, a quite legitimate desire.

Now we come to the questions raised by X Q, which should be justification for putting this page on top. I have only so much time and energy. I have to acquire a reputation, of several kinds at once--for Murando, for the compositions, for the instruments, for the monographs and bulletins (which includes the Expose') as a consultant, for linguistic endeavors, and most important of all, to set forth or have set forth for me, what I have already done--i.e. I have to get some return on the investment of time and trouble made during the last 40 years. So that doesn't leave too much share of the time for X Q. I have been mulling the matter over since you brought it up again a fortnight ago.

I have reams of notes and cecordles of files and letters etc., so I could write up brief monographs and/or articles and/or charts or tables, besides which P. 3 of my Music Sample Sheets is highly relevant. So why don't I have the first few issues of X Q consist of an editorial, a statement of purpose, a statement of the kind of articles wanted, and one or two of my articles. By the time I use up my abundant backlog, others will have written articles and sent them in and it will then be a going concern. Also, that way my own articles will be mimeographed as cheaply as possible and the other contributors will get the benefit of the more elegant offset and neater format. As for sound illustrations, very cheap mailable disc records are now available. These would not be bound in with the issues of X Q--that would be impracticable for several reasons--but one or two such records would be given with each subscription. Let's keep alert to what economic conditions will be in 1972 and 1973. That will