Summer 1964
Newsletter from Ivor Darreg

How do you describe tone-qualities in words? Obviously, it can't be done. It is rather like trying to describe the difference between red and green, or between blue and orange, when you are not allowed the use of any colored inks. I am now in such a situation. Last year I built the first unit of a very unusual electronic organ, and later on I plan to add several more units.

This instrument was not designed to be produced in quantity; it is intended to be recorded and to be played before small audiences. Thus several severe restrictions and requirements the designer of a mass-produced instrument faces, did not affect the design of this instrument. Thus, it does not sound at all like ordinary electronic organs--and there I must stop, because I can't describe tone-quality in words.

The only way for you to form a conception of the possibilities of the instrument is to come and hear it—if that is impossible, you may get some idea from a tape recording.

The instrument is located at 1280 Exposition blvd., Los Angeles, Cal. 90007, and can be seen and heard by making an appointment with Ivor Darreg, writing the above address or phoning 732-9341. Perhaps you know someone who would be interested—if so, pass on this leaflet to them or let them know about it, or bring them along.

Through the kindness of several of my friends, I have been able to make a few copies of my tape recordings. Several of these have been mailed out to interested parties, and at the present time I have two 5" reels of edited copy tape at the 7½ speed and one 3" reel at the 3¾ speed, available for rental.

I hope to borrow tape recorders again in the near future, and make more such copy tapes, along with new superposed recordings and compositions not on the present tapes.

Besides the organ, I have other instruments, such as the amplifying clavichord, the keyboard electric drum, the electronic keyboard oboe, and others. The composition "In Limbo", which was the accompaniment to the Angels Theatre performances of Shaw's play, "Don Juan In Hell" last Summer, makes use of nearly all these instruments, achieving many new sonorities.

If you are a pianist, you may be interested in my piano compositions. Twenty-two of these are now available as sheet music, printed to order, and sample copies of most of these can be inspected. My advocacy of electronic music and instruments, and other advanced techniques, does not mean that I have neglected the conventional instruments.

As should be clear from the enclosed pamphlet "ART·O·MATION", I do not advocate new instruments and/or automatic playing for all music, not even all my own music. Indeed, this is one reason for reprinting the article and sending it around to you again. If you still have your old copy, pass it on to someone else.

This month I can't mail out more than 40 copies of this paper and the enclosed reprints, so I have to ask you a favor: Can you re-mail this to someone you believe may be interested? I was quite heartened last year by the number of persons who re-mailed their copy of the Special Bulletin February 1963, stretching my postage budget a little bit.

If you will refer to the enclosed Price List, you will find the special bulletin listed at $1. There are only 10 copies left, but more copies could be printed if the necessary funds can be raised. So many people acknowledged their copies and commented on them, that it really seems this publication deserves a wider audience.

The pace of development in electronic music has greatly accelerated in recent months, so I plan to get out a Supplement to that Bulletin this Fall.

Several concerts, lectures, and recitals of electronic music, which I was unable to attend, were reported in the newspapers and magazines in recent months. I was taken in February to a lecture recital of computer music, and anyone who saw how the hall was packed and how attentive the audience was, would have to concede that public interest in this field has really developed.

This provides another reason for reprinting my ART·O·MATION leaflet, enclosed, as it is all the more relevant to the present situation.

You might tell your acquaintances to watch for the July, August, and September issues of the magazine Arts and Architecture. It is quite likely that one of these issues will have, in its Music section, a reprint of my article Art-o-mation, with a comment by the music critic. (Sad but true, some people believe what they see in print more than they would believe a mimeographed circular like this, so with such persons re-mailing might not be advisable. I can safely leave this matter to your discretion.)

As many of you already know, my health does not permit me to take a full-time position away from home, and I am greatly handicapped in this Los Angeles area with its long distances by having no transportation. Public transit has deteriorated so badly in recent years that I have not been able to attend meetings or lectures for a very long time. Thus I cannot promote my activities as other people in the electronic and musical fields usually can. And there you have a reason for getting this letter out at this time: the only way I can travel is by mailbox.

Yet great opportunities in both the technical and the artistic aspects of electronic music are appearing right now--and this is the development that I have been preparing and waiting for for some 25 years. Wouldn't it be a shame if I "missed the boat"? If I can't go about the countryside seeking an active participation in the field now coming of age, then the only alternative is to ask my acquaintances if they know anyone who knows anyone that can assist me in taking my rightful place in electronic music. A year ago would have been too soon; next year will probably be too late. It looks very much like now.

I am confident that I have something unique and essential to contribute to the progress of music, electronic and other kinds. I will not be competing with other composers and designers of instruments, for the field is so incredibly vast that there is plenty of room for all approaches and attitudes. Rather, what I will be doing will complement what others are doing; and opportunities for cooperation will be many. Furthermore, as brought out in last year's Special Bulletin, there will be highly useful by-products of musical research and development that can be applied outside the field of music. This I have proved by the Numaudo Code, for instance.

Sincerely, IVOR DARREG.