Summer Summary

— for the Interval Foundation —

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During 1990 so far, there has been some progress in introducing xenharmonic music and dealing with new instruments. Our network of people has expanded. The concept of *Chain Referral* is proving most helpful: One person tells another, and that one a third party, and so on, with amazing results.

As 1989 gave way to 1990, we accelerated the shift from silent paper theory to lively practice for all to hear—whether in person or on tape.

Now that tapes can be quickly copied and sent far and wide to other persons, the long long waits for someone to learn a new scale or a new way of writing it down simply disappear! The cassette or other recording does not care what scale a piece is in, nor on which instrument it is played, nor even whether it is rendered by computer.

No horrible delays waiting for parts to be copied from a score; no waiting to arrange rehearsals at horrible expense; no gambling with the very slim possibility of a concert-hall performance—and please remember—that is almost always the ONLY performance of a new composition!

Instead, many tapes in many different scales are available as copies right now. No waiting at all; indeed, a hundred copy-tapes have been sent out in the last several months, clear across the country, and very favorable responses received. There is no question, the time for progress has come.

Nineteen copies of a new tape were sent out since the end of May, for comments and opinions of persons in the Xenharmonic Music Alliance, and unexpectedly favorable responses have been received, so this is a definite Go-Ahead for the definitive versions. This was no ordinary affair. It was a First! Brian McLaren brought computer and MIDI equipment to Ivor Darreg's studio on 21 February and asked for improvisations in all the scales except ordinary 12-tone, all the way from 9 to 31 tones per octave, and this was done in one afternoon. Late in May, the digital master was done, by his selection of appropriate timbres and editing for each of the twenty-two non-12 scales used in the pieces. So far, there is no publication reporting any recording like this. Almost every composer has believed that such a suite would have to be pre-written in many new kinds of notations and pre-planned and the whole project would have involved extensive calculations and worrying about theory and setting up new rules of harmony and contending with all kinds of objections and reasons why such a thing could not be done. Too late now: it *has been done.*

The numerous objections which have prevented other persons from doing this kind of composition have now vanished into thin air. This is a very important milestone. It was not necessary to write even one note down. It was not necessary to tune an instrument to all the 22 scales. This is the main block that has stood through the centuries. No more; it's gone. It was not necessary to bother or tax any performer to learn 22 new scales and read notations for them. *All those scales worked, even though accepted theory says most of them would not.*

No existing conventional performers or groups have been inconvenienced in the slightest by this achievement: they may go on as they have done with the music of the past and ignore this recent event. That is why this was possible. No need anymore to upset the prejudices and training of those steeped in customary modus operandi.

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The way is now free and clear for others to use all manner of new scales without intimidation. It is not necessary to argue over fine points anymore. Listen to that tape and the others that Ivor Darreg has produced during the last two years or so.

For instance: Teen Tunes One is a set of improvisations on the Korg Poly-Six synthesizer (lent by Richard Koerner of Connecticut and modified to permit leaving 12-tone) in the scales which provide the maximum mood-contrast: 13 through 19 tones per octave. After sending out some 20 copies of this tape and getting good response, Teen Tunes Two was done some months later, using the aforementioned Korg with the Ensoniq Mirage provided by Brian McLaren. Thus two-part counterpoint in each scale with antiphony and contrast became possible.

The future for guitars has been taken care of by numerous tapes and overdubs, among which is a tape called "Ten Guitars in Ten Scales", where the change in mood when much the same piece is played in different scales on different guitars refretted by Ivor Darreg, is shown.

Just Intonation and unequal or nonce tunings are taken care of by the cello and by such instruments as the Megalyra, the Newel Post, the Kosmolyra, and the Drone--all extensions of the steel-guitar idea built since 1975.

Buzz Kimball of New Hampshire sent two Farfisa transistor organs a while ago, and these are retunable, so one has 24 tones per octave always accessible on the two keyboards. This permits equal temperaments up to 24, unequal temperaments in considerable variety, and Just Intonation also.

A series of tapes is now at hand for copying with all these instruments so that all manner of comparisons are possible and the contrast of the new tunings with regular twelve-tone can be HEARD all across the country, not just at some special concert or class or seminar or elaborate special event.

These tapes do not require you to strain your attention-span. You can take them a little at a time; you can repeat something that wasn't clear at first; you can refresh your memory by going back to some certain place.

When you have never heard a certain scale before, it is next to impossible to remember how it sounded when trying another new scale or going back to one of your 12-tone instruments. But with these new tapes, one can go back and forth, back and forth, or even round and round a three-cornered comparison, without any effort of remembering. That simply has not been available before. Now progress can proceed.

Currently as this is being written in Mid-August 1990, a twenty-two-tone 3-octave Tubulong set is being completed. Tubulongs have been promoted by Ervin Wilson of Los Angeles for the last two decades, usually made of aluminum tubing or steel conduit pipe, in various scales—some have been done in copper or brass. Darreg's tubulong sets include the 15, 17, 19, 22, and 24-tone scales along with some individual tubes and a few Tuboforks (a metal tube is so cut as to be a tuning-fork and its own resonator-tube).

In the studio's backyard are also metal-bar sets in 10, 13, 14, 19 tones per octave along with various individual bars for various pitches.

Back in 1962/63, Darreg built a special electronic organ which had Elastic Tuning where the notes could change each other's pitches while chords were sounding. Much recent interest in the Elastic Tuning idea has surfaced, since John McBryde and others have started promoting it. Possibility now is that of building a new elastic-tuning instrument like that organ, and then seeing what could be simulated with computer software once the hardware experiments have been put on tape.

OPENING THE DOOR TO THE NINETIES is the title of Ivor Darreg's Annual Report comprising 40 pages and covering Spring 1989 through Spring 1990. Copies of the previous yearly Report are also still available.

Now that you have this information on what has been done, what do you plan?