

# ***Homage to Cowell***

**for keyboard sampler**

**by Kyle Gann  
1994**

## Homage to Cowell (Tuning Study No. 2) (1994)

Henry Cowell had Leon Theremin construct for him an instrument called the Rhythmicon, which would play rhythms, or pulses, at the same harmonic ratios used for pitch. For instance, a C, E, and G played on the Rhythmicon would pulse at respective rates of 4:5:6, according to the notes' places in the harmonic series. Once I started working with a sampler in the early 1990s, I realized that a looped sample would play back in pulses analogous to the Rhythmicon. So in *Homage to Cowell* I took a single drumbeat, looped it, and tuned a scale to two different harmonic series', one on F and one on B. B is  $7/5$  of F, so that the Eb 7th harmonic of F and the D# 5th harmonic of B beat at the same rate and are played on the same note. It then became easy to play, on the keyboard, harmonies that would result in quasi-geometric groups of pulses. It was an interesting performance experience, for I would simply hold a chord for a few seconds, and dozens of notes would bounce back and forth in fascinating patterns.

Scale:

E	28/15
D#/Eb	7/4
D	5/3
C#	63/40
C	3/2
B	7/5
Bb	4/3
A	5/4
G#	7/6
G	9/8
F#	21/20
F	1/1

Performance instructions: To the extent I could reconstruct what I did, I have notated below some of the chords the number of repetitions of the lowest note (and sometimes above the chord the number of repetitions of the highest note). Some improvisation is allowed; I didn't play the piece quite the same every time, but it was the intention that chord changes would come in the rhythm of the lowest note of each chord. Some comparison with the recording is recommended for getting a feel for how to play the piece.

- Kyle Gann

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Measure 1:  $\text{♩} = 371$   
Measure 2:  $\text{♩} = 333$   
Measure 3:  $\text{♩} = 295$   
Measure 4:  $\text{♩} = 256$   
Measure 5:  $\text{♩} = 241$   
Measure 6:  $\text{♩} = 216$   
Measure 7:  $\text{♩} = 181$   
Measure 8:  $\text{♩} = 151.2$   
Measure 9:  $\text{♩} = 43.9$   
Measure 10: 18  
Measure 11: 24  
Measure 12: 18

Measure 12:  $\text{♩} = 41$   
Measure 13:  $\text{♩} = 43.9$   
Measure 14:  $\text{♩} = 47$   
Measure 15:  $\text{♩} = 49$   
Measure 16:  $\text{♩} = 47$   
Measure 17:  $\text{♩} = 43.9$   
Measure 18:  $\text{♩} = 47$   
Measure 19:  $\text{♩} = 43.9$   
Measure 20:  $\text{♩} = 47$   
Measure 21:  $\text{♩} = 43.9$   
Measure 22:  $\text{♩} = 43.9$

Measure 23:  $\text{♩} = 43.9$   
Measure 24:  $\text{♩} = 49$   
Measure 25:  $\text{♩} = 50$   
Measure 26:  $\text{♩} = 43.9$   
Measure 27:  $\text{♩} = 43.9$   
Measure 28:  $\text{♩} = 53$   
Measure 29:  $\text{♩} = 53$   
Measure 30:  $\text{♩} = 53$   
Measure 31:  $\text{♩} = 53$   
Measure 32:  $\text{♩} = 53$   
Measure 33:  $\text{♩} = 53$   
Measure 34:  $\text{♩} = 53$

Measure 35:  $\text{♩} = 56$   
Measure 36:  $\text{♩} = 28$   
Measure 37:  $\text{♩} = 16$   
Measure 38:  $\text{♩} = 16$   
Measure 39:  $\text{♩} = 16$   
Measure 40:  $\text{♩} = 16$   
Measure 41:  $\text{♩} = 16$   
Measure 42:  $\text{♩} = 16$   
Measure 43:  $\text{♩} = 16$   
Measure 44:  $\text{♩} = 16$

Measure 45:  $\text{♩} = 47$   
Measure 46:  $\text{♩} = 49.4$   
Measure 47:  $\text{♩} = 47$   
Measure 48:  $\text{♩} = 43.9$   
Measure 49:  $\text{♩} = 47$   
Measure 50:  $\text{♩} = 49$   
Measure 51:  $\text{♩} = 45$   
Measure 52:  $\text{♩} = 39$   
Measure 53:  $\text{♩} = 55$   
Measure 54:  $\text{♩} = 43.9$   
Measure 55:  $\text{♩} = 40$

56 ♩ = 45 ♩ = 46 ♩ = 47 ♩ = 50 ♩ = 43.9 ♩ = 47 ♩ = 43.9 ♩ = 47 ♩ = 43.9

3 2 8 ♩ = 47 ♩ = 43 ♩ = 38

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