



Tuning, Timbre, Spectrum, Scale

William A. Sethares

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6.4 Summary In the pursuit of genuinely xenharmonic music that does not sacrifice consonance or depth of timbral material, this chapter presented three concrete examples of related tunings and spectra. The Tingshaw bell and the Chaco rock showed how to take the spectrum of an existing sound, draw the dissonance curve, find the related scale, and build a playable "instrument." The crystal section showed how to take an arbitrary complex spectrum and to realize it in sound via a related partial-based scale. Despite the odd timbres and scales, the resulting music gives an impression of tonality or key. It has the surface feeling of tonality, but is unlike 19 anything possible in 12-tet. McLaren comments The Chaco Canyon Rock bounces from one inharmonic "scale member" to another, producing an astonishing sense of consonance. The effect isn't identical to traditional tonality—yet it produces many of tonality's effects. One is instantly aware of "right" and "wrong" pitches, and there is a sense of spectral "progression." We call such music xentonality.

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