

# Expressive Text Setting in Partch's Early Vocal Music, and the Harmonic and Voice Leading Resources of Extended Just Intonation

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9/20/12

# Outline

- (1) Partch's Intervallic Language in the Li Po settings
  - Interval classification: The "One-footed bride"
  - Voice-Leading Spaces
  - Examples: "The Long-Departed Lover" (*Lyrics of Li Po*)  
"On the City Street" (*Lyrics of Li Po*)
- (2) Voice Leading and the Tonality Diamond:
  - The Tonality Diamond
  - Examples: "By the Great Wall" (*Lyrics of Li Po*)  
"By the Rivers of Babylon (137<sup>th</sup> Psalm)"
  - The Interval Pyramid



# Arguments

- Partch's interval classification (the “**one-footed bride**”) is a window into the expressive language of microtonal variation in interval size he uses in his text setting.
- **Voice-leading geometries** (specifically, dyad space) are useful for tracking Partch's counterpoint in specific passages.
- Partch's **tonality diamonds** help explain his compositional use of simple ratios, and are therefore a valuable complement to voice-leading geometries for analysis.



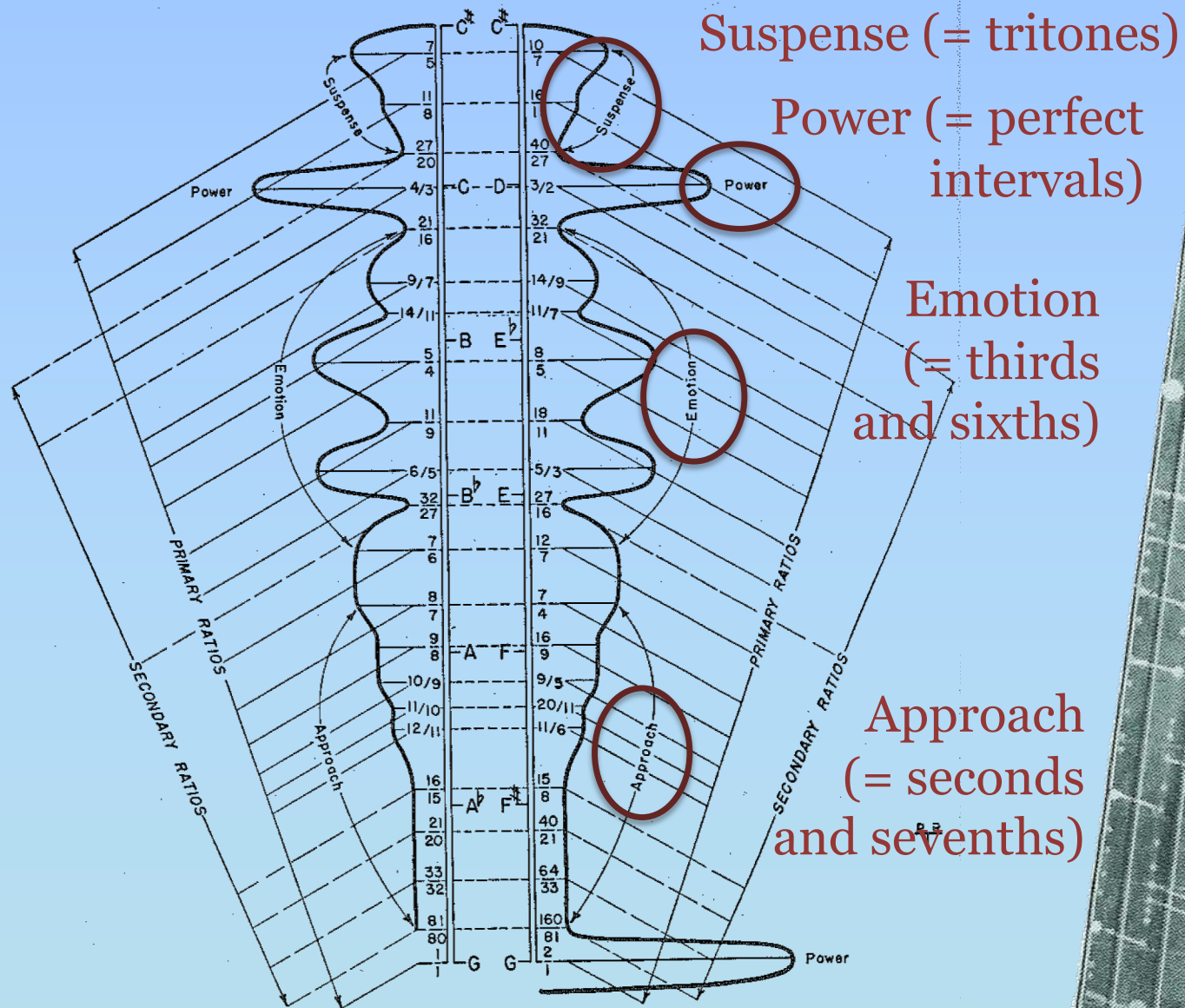
# (1) Partch's Intervallic Language in the Li Po Settings

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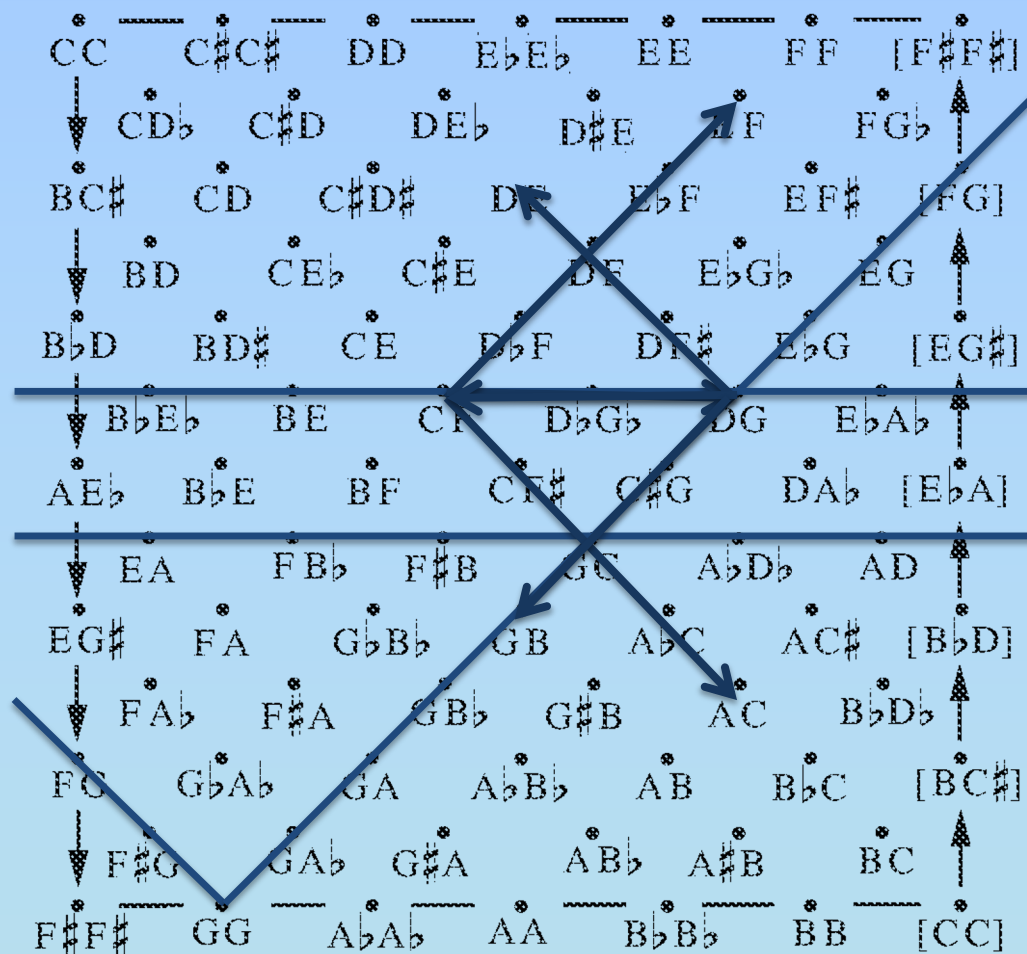
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# Partch's "One-Footed Bride"



## Dyad space (from Callender, Quinn, Tymoczko 2008)



Diagonal lines correspond to motion in the following directions:  
 Horizontal lines correspond to an interval class



Dyad space (from Callender, Quinn, Tymoczko 2008)

Voice-leading spaces are **continuous**:

Small changes of pitch correspond to small distances in the space.

This makes them equally applicable to music **in any tuning system**, especially microtonal systems that permit numerous gradations of interval size.



## "The Long Departed Lover" (*Lyrics of Li Po*)

Fair one, when you were here,  
I filled the house with flowers.  
Fair one, now you are gone—  
only an empty couch is left.  
One the couch the embroidered silk  
is rolled up; I cannot sleep.

Set  
unaccompanied  
or in unison

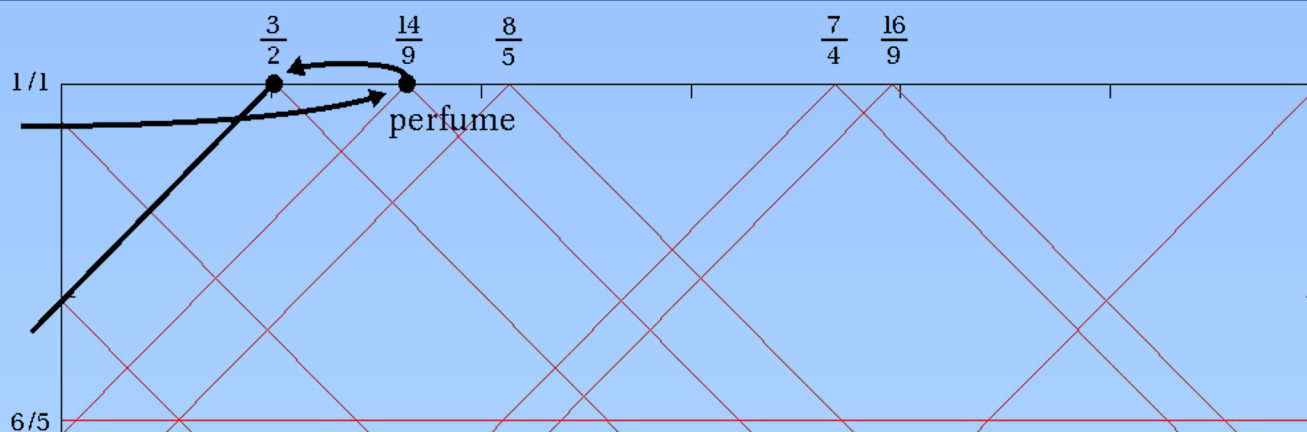
It is three years since you went.  
The perfume you left behind haunts me still.  
The perfume strays about me forever.  
But where are you, Beloved?

Unisons mixed with  
other intervals

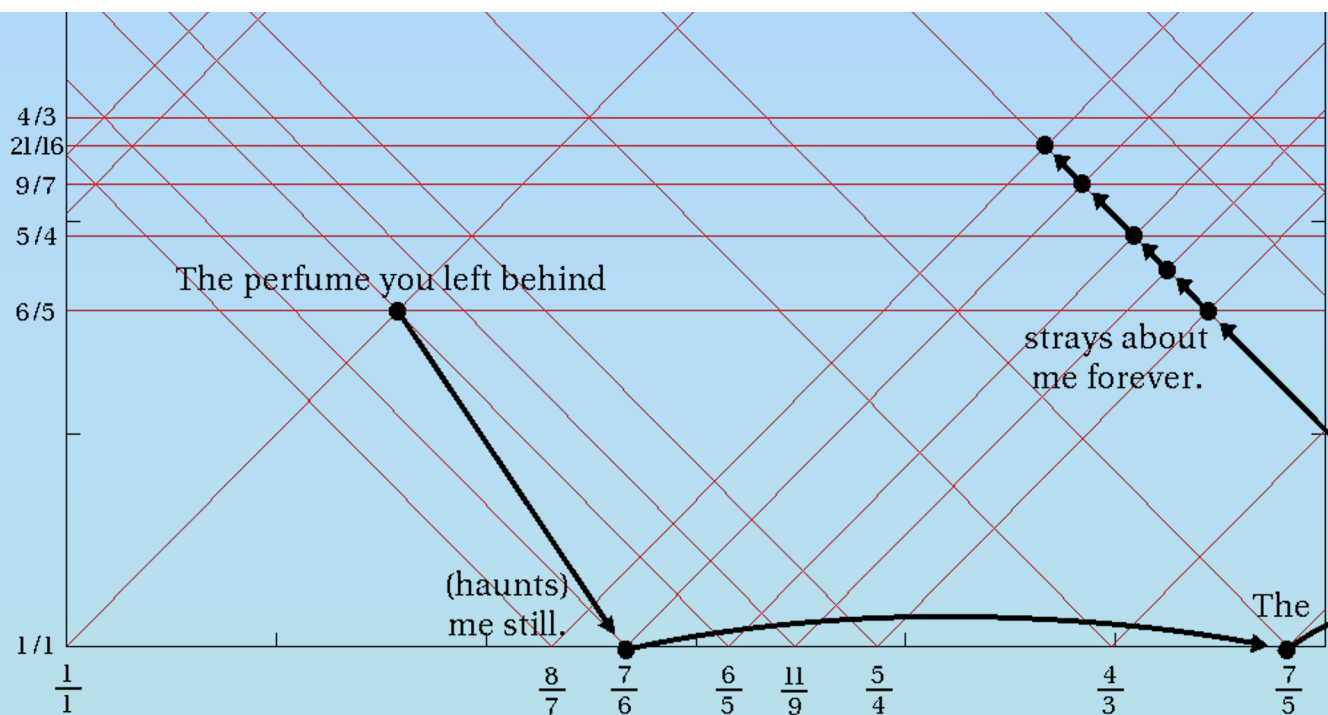
## “The Long Departed Lover” (*Lyrics of Li Po*)

Bob Gilmore (“Harry Partch: The Early Vocal Works, 1930–33”):

“The only vertical intervals used (with one exception) are different sorts of ‘thirds’, Partch’s Intervals of Emotion. . . . The one exception comes at the setting of the poet’s question, ‘where are you, Beloved?’: here the voice rises to the highest pitch in the song’s range, and Partch introduces a single  $3/2$  interval against the Viola note at the word ‘you’. This, the only occurrence in the setting . . . of an Interval of Power, seems to embody . . . the assertiveness of the question.”



The perfume you left behind haunts me still.      The perfume strays about me for- ever.      But where are you, be- loved?

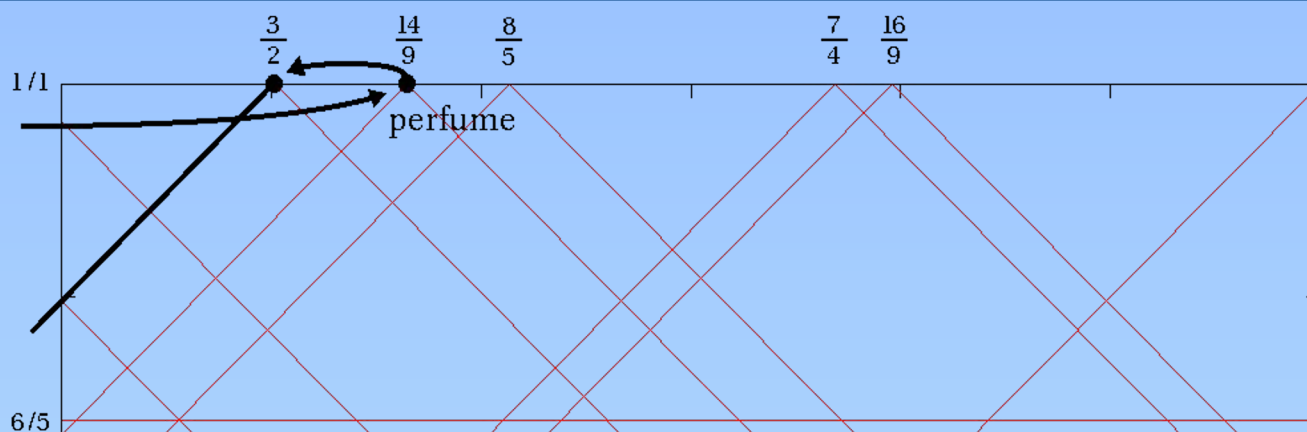


Recording:  
Stephen Kalm  
& Ted Mook





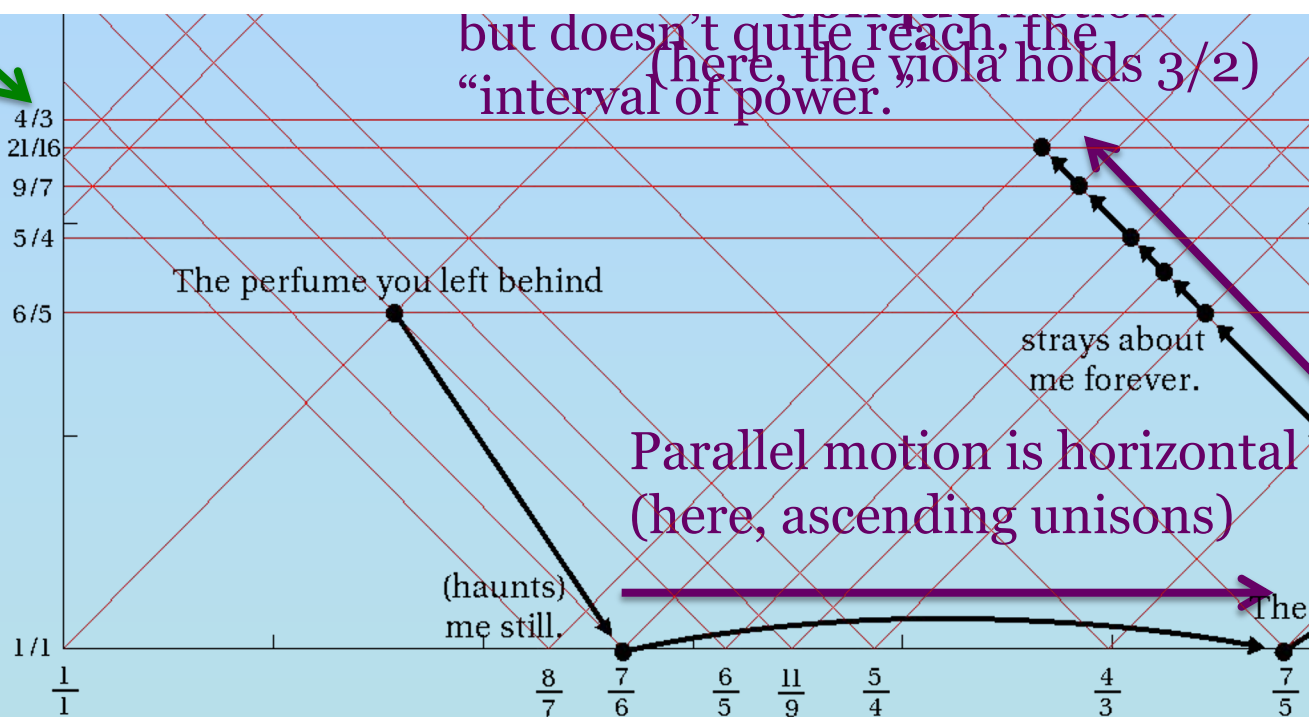
“on”

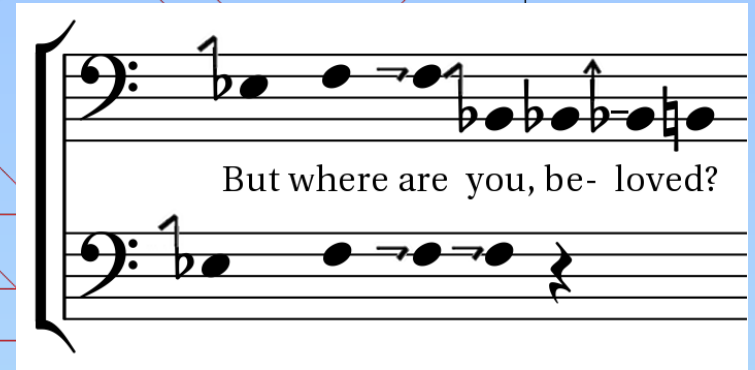
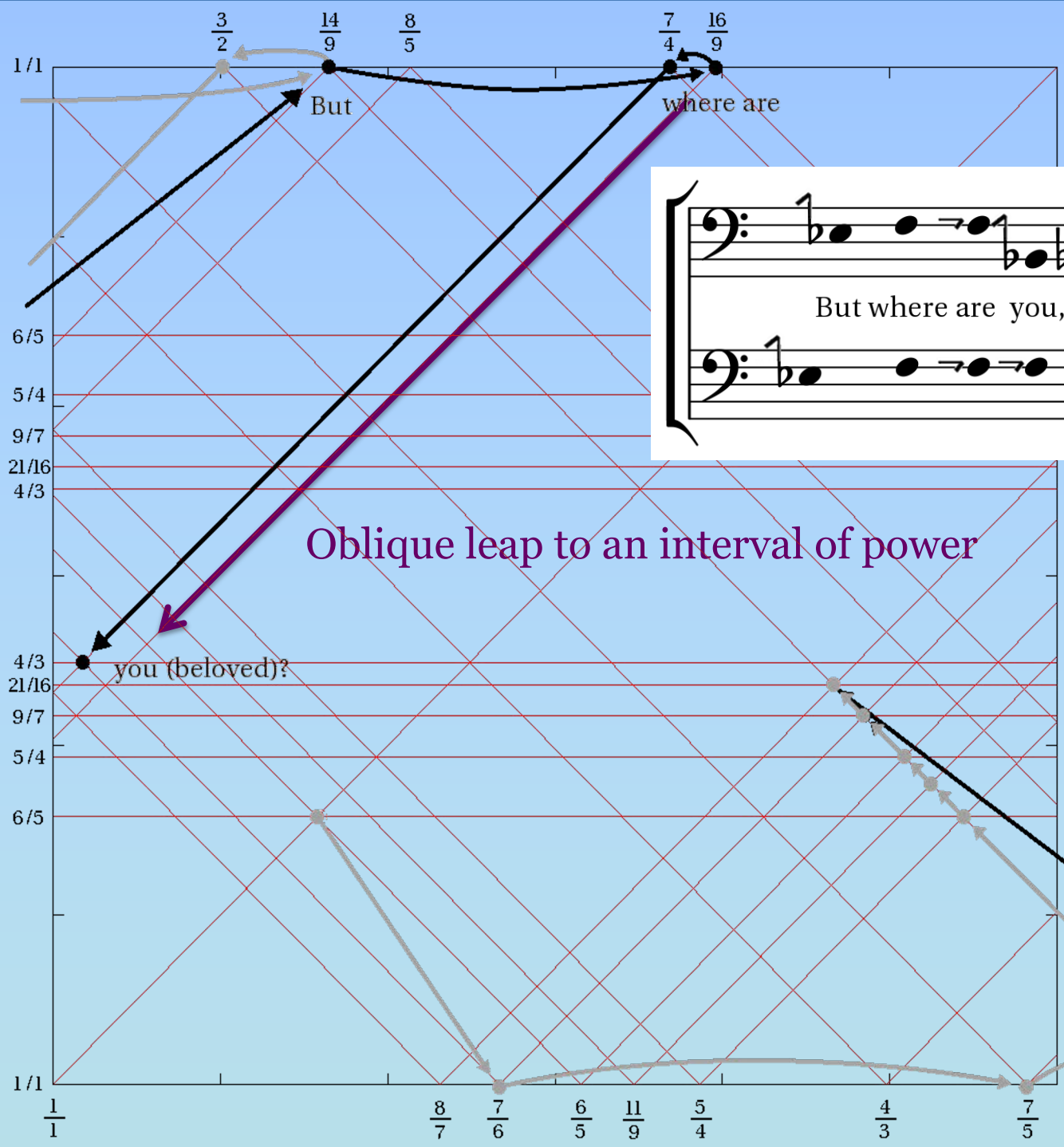


The perfume you left behind haunts me still. The perfume strays about me for- ever. But where are you, be- loved?

Power

“Emotion”





## “On the City Street” (*Lyrics of Li Po*)

---

They meet in the pink dust of the city street.  
He raises his gold crop high in salute.  
“Lady,” says he, “where do you live?”  
“There are ten thousand houses  
among the drooping willow trees.”

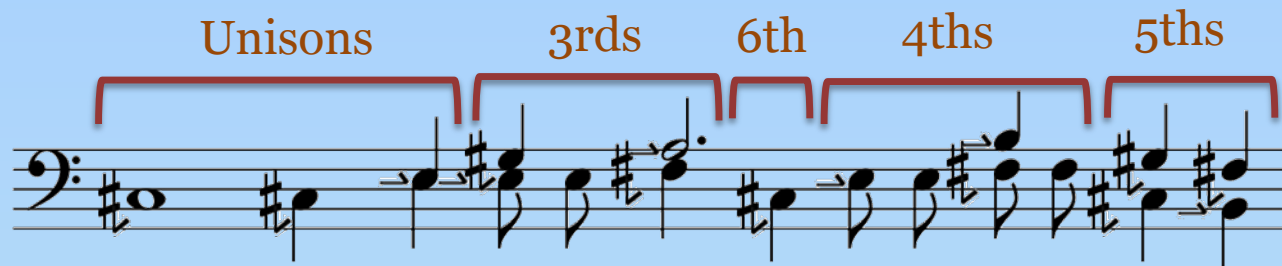
The text juxtaposes images of domestic and civic, humanity and power. This is embodied in the descriptions “pink dust/gold crop” and the images of the lady and the rider.

Partch uses his “Intervals of Emotion” and “Intervals of Power” to reflect this dichotomy.



## “On the City Street” (*Lyrics of Li Po*)

Partch writes the first phrase in an 8/7 just major scale



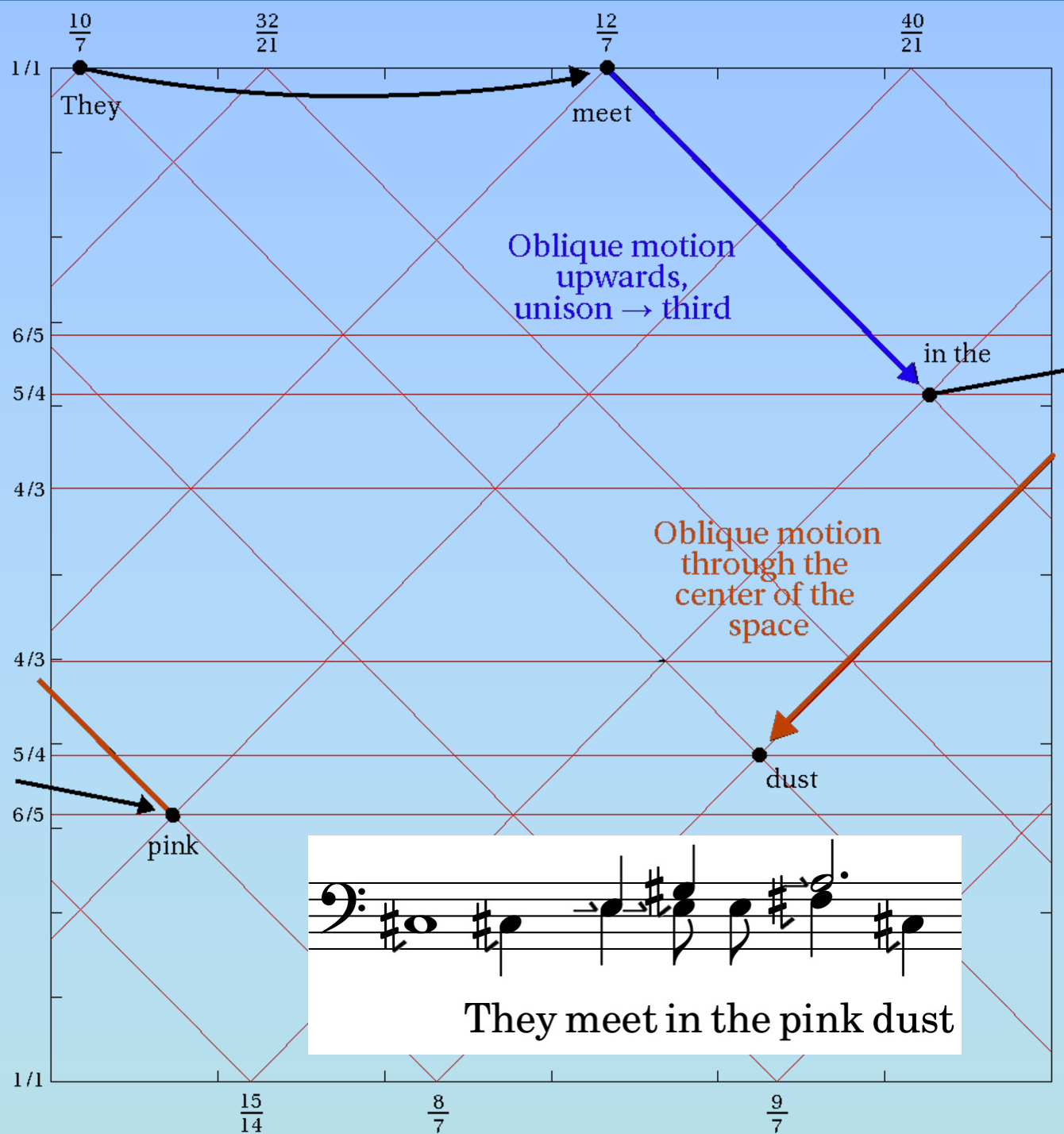
They meet in the pink dust of the city street

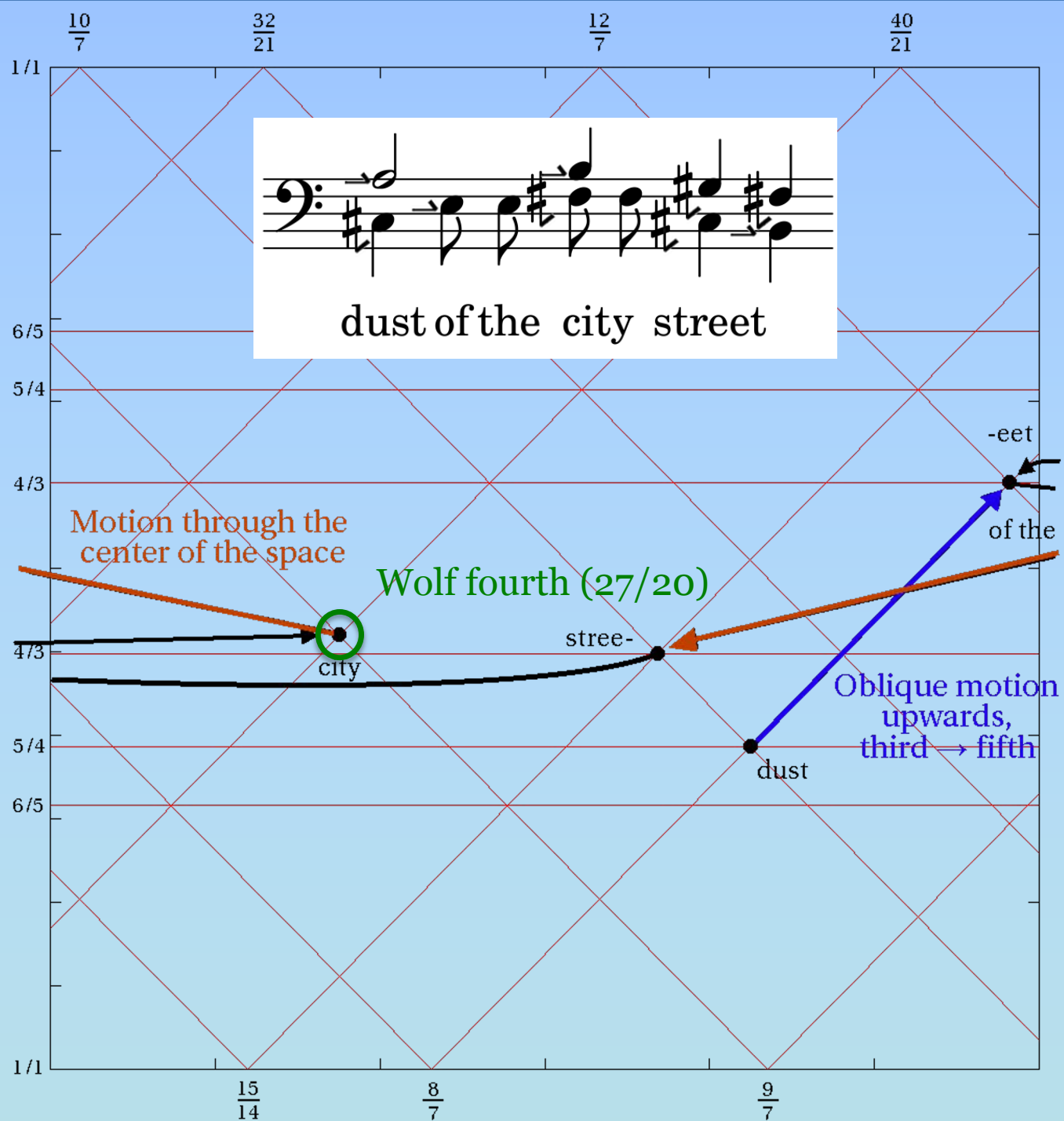
Recording:  
Stephen Kalm  
& Ted Mook  
(From 1933 transcription,  
with error in viola on “street”)



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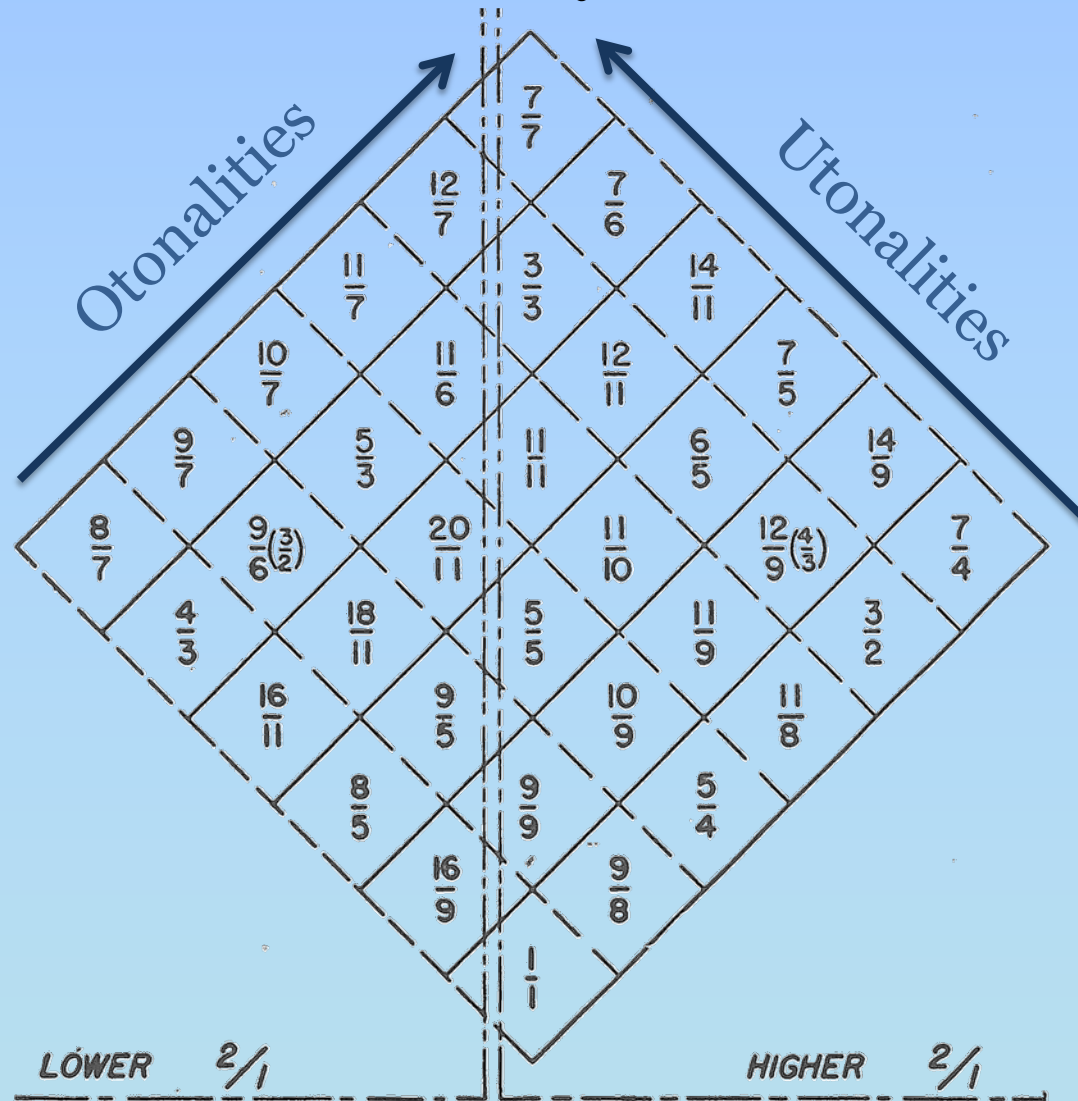
The image features a light blue background with the necks of a violin on the left and a guitar on the right. The violin neck is made of light-colored wood and has a scroll at the top. The guitar neck is dark-colored with frets and a headstock at the top. The title "The Tonality Diamond" is centered in the middle of the image in a black serif font.

# The Tonality Diamond

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# Partch's Tonality Diamond





Handwritten musical score for Viola, featuring lyrics and musical notation. The score is written on three systems of staves.

**System 1:**

Lyrics: He rides his white charger by the  
Fortalice of Gold,

Musical notation: The first system shows a Viola part with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 10/4. The lyrics "He rides his white charger by the" are written above the staff. The musical notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a time signature of 10/4. The lyrics "Fortalice of Gold," are written below the staff. The musical notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a time signature of 10/4. The lyrics "He rides his white charger by the" are written above the staff. The musical notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a time signature of 10/4.

**System 2:**

Lyrics: She wanders in dreams amid the desert cloud and

Musical notation: The second system shows a Viola part with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 10/4. The lyrics "She wanders in dreams amid the desert cloud and" are written above the staff. The musical notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a time signature of 10/4. The lyrics "She wanders in dreams amid the desert cloud and" are written above the staff. The musical notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a time signature of 10/4.

**System 3:**

Lyrics: It is a season of sorrow that she scarce can en-

Musical notation: The third system shows a Viola part with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 10/4. The lyrics "It is a season of sorrow that she scarce can en-" are written above the staff. The musical notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a time signature of 10/4. The lyrics "It is a season of sorrow that she scarce can en-" are written above the staff. The musical notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a time signature of 10/4.

**System 4:**

Lyrics: Thinking of her soldier lover at the border fort.

Musical notation: The fourth system shows a Viola part with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a time signature of 10/4. The lyrics "Thinking of her soldier lover at the border fort." are written above the staff. The musical notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a time signature of 10/4. The lyrics "Thinking of her soldier lover at the border fort." are written above the staff. The musical notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a time signature of 10/4.

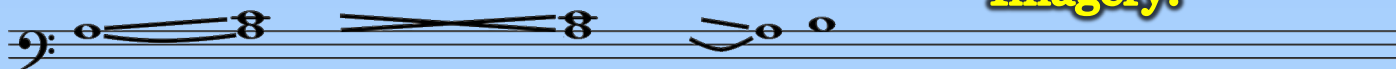


# "By the Great Wall" (*Lyrics of Li Po*)



He rides his white charger by the fortalice of gold

**Imagery:**



She wanders in dreams, amid the desert cloud and sand. It is a season of sorrow she scarce can endure,



Thinking of her soldier lover at the border fort.

**Aloft, illuminated, uncontrollable, disorderly**

The fireflies flitting about swarm at her window,



**Time passing, gradual descent, loneliness**

**Decay, neglect**

While the moon slowly passes over he solitary bower. The leaves of the green paulownia are tattered



And the branches of the shantung, blasted and sere.

There is not an hour . . .

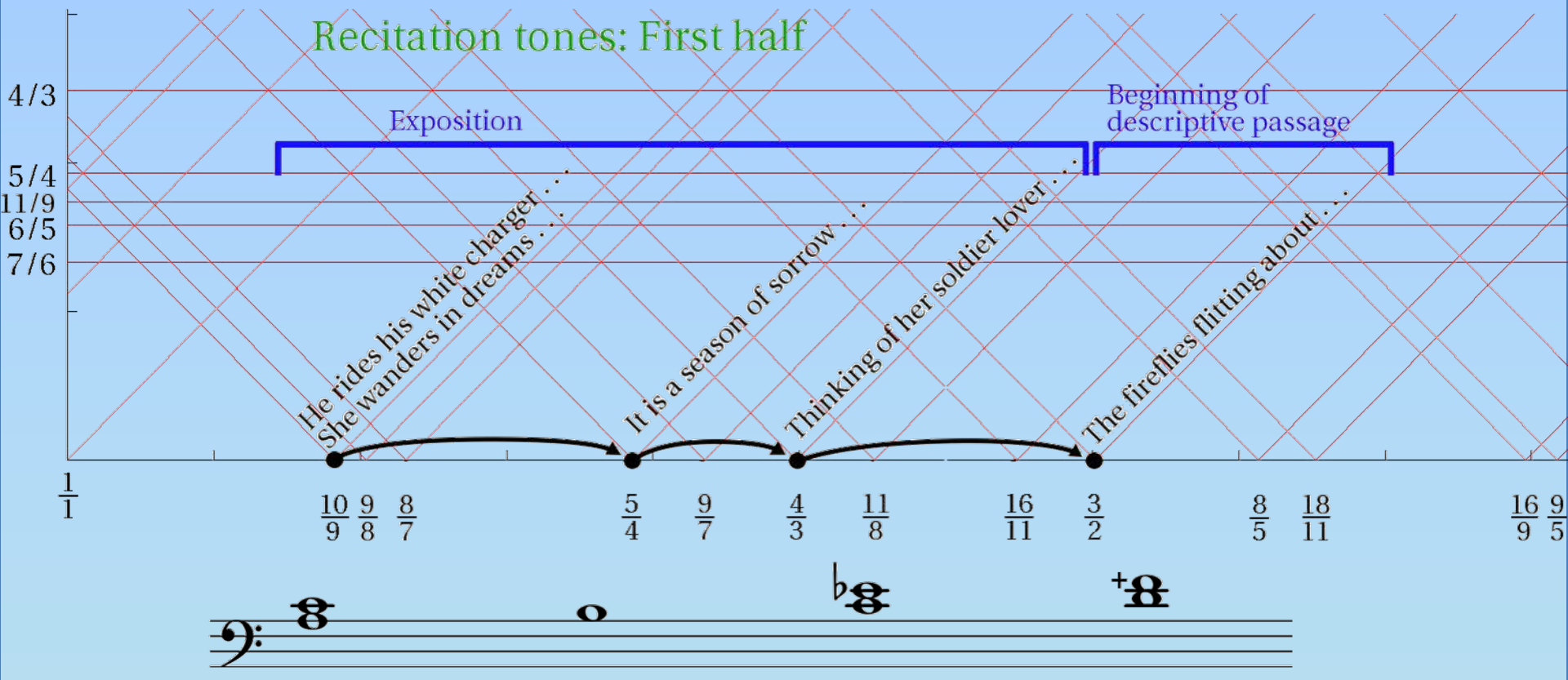


Recording:  
William Wendlandt  
& Partch, 1947

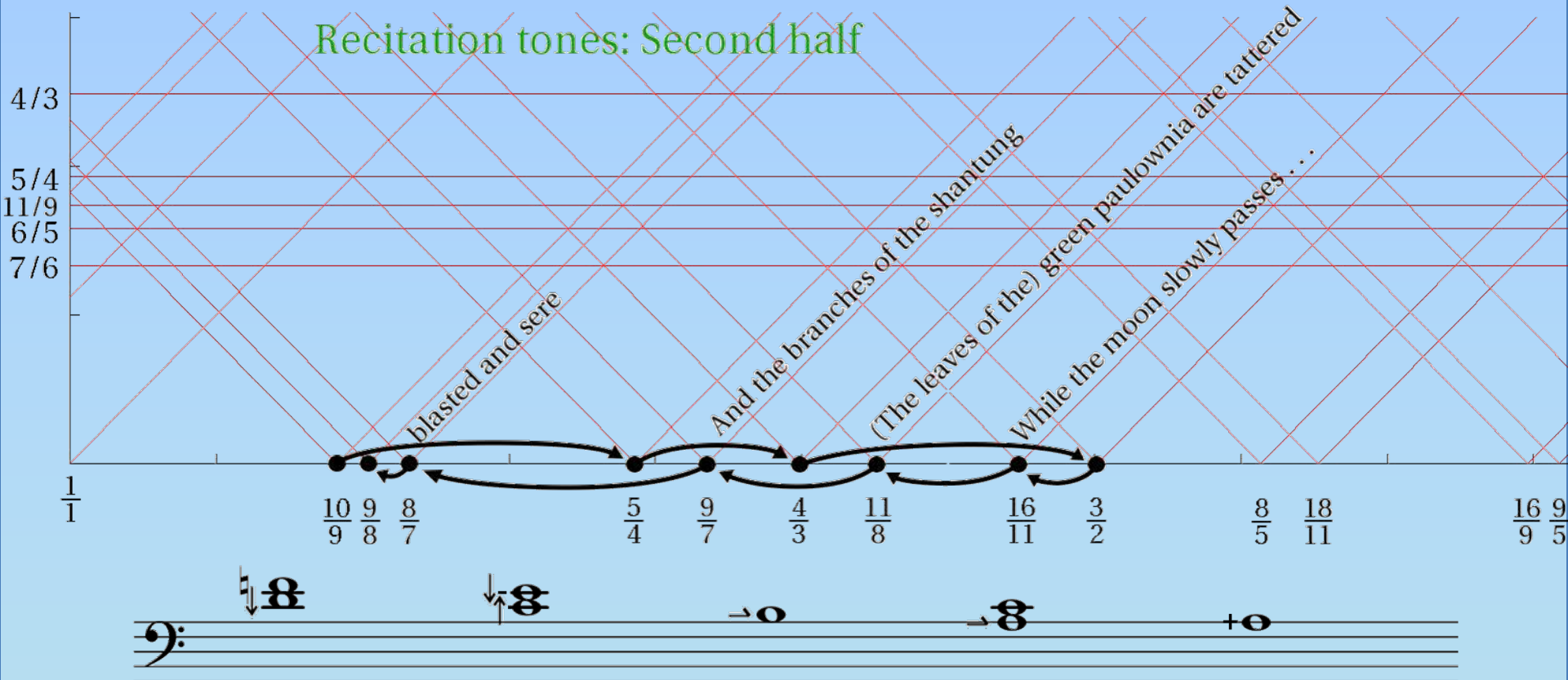
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## “By the Great Wall” (*Lyrics of Li Po*)

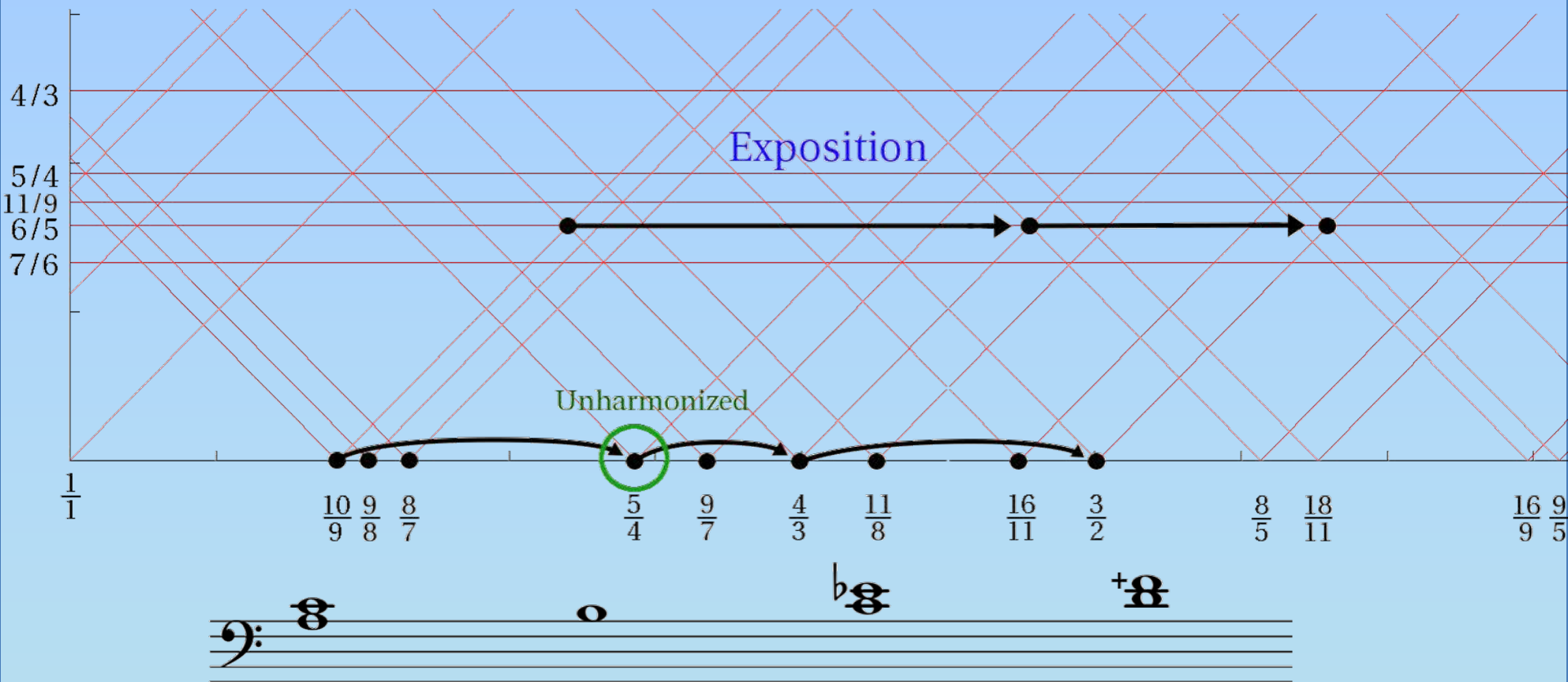


# "By the Great Wall" (*Lyrics of Li Po*)

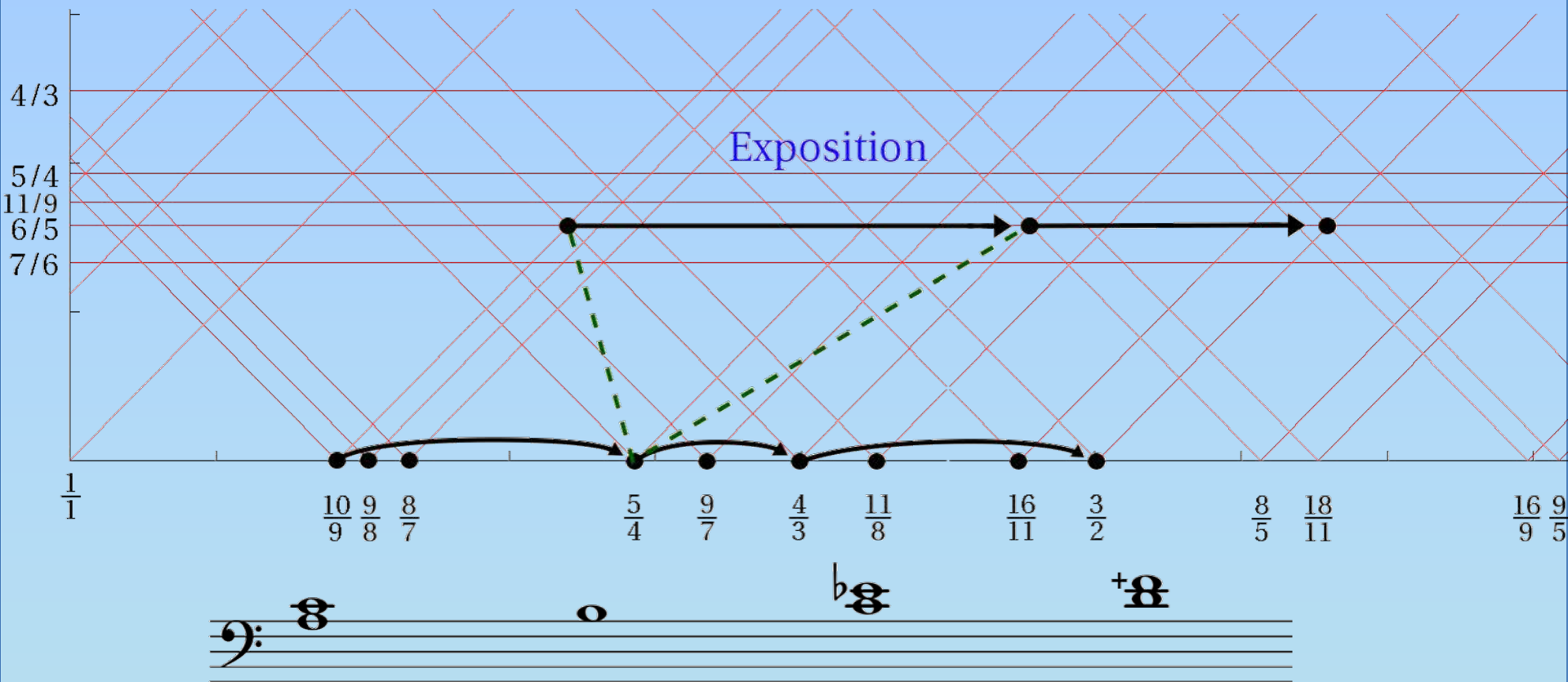




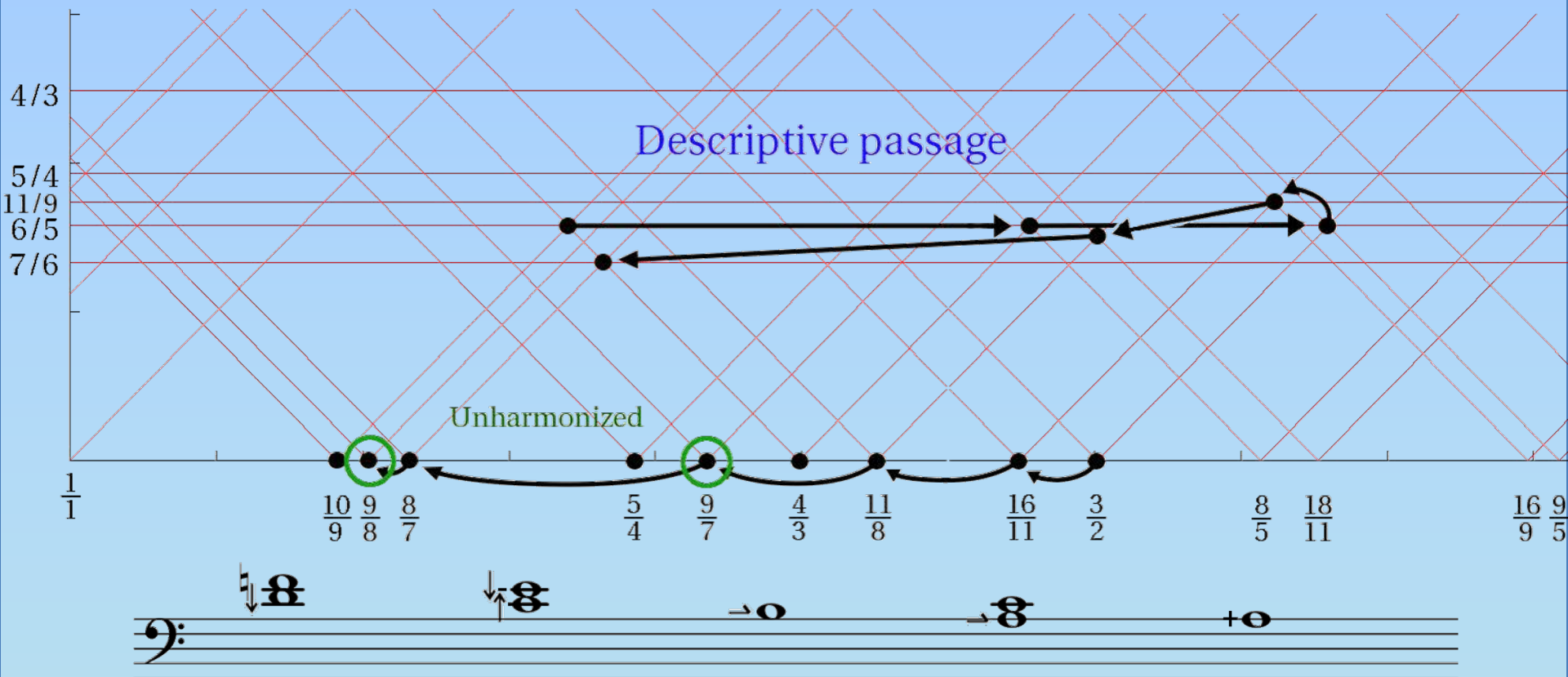
# "By the Great Wall" (*Lyrics of Li Po*)



# "By the Great Wall" (*Lyrics of Li Po*)

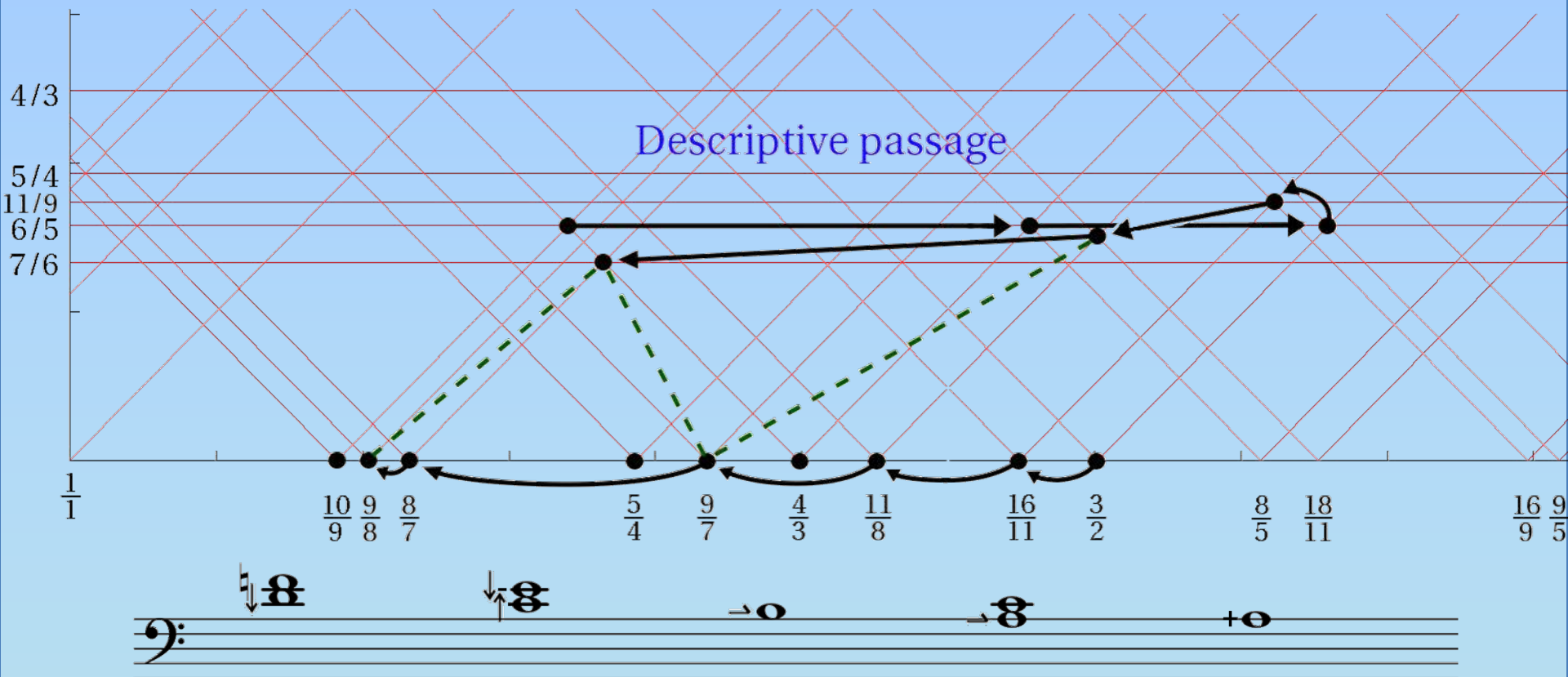


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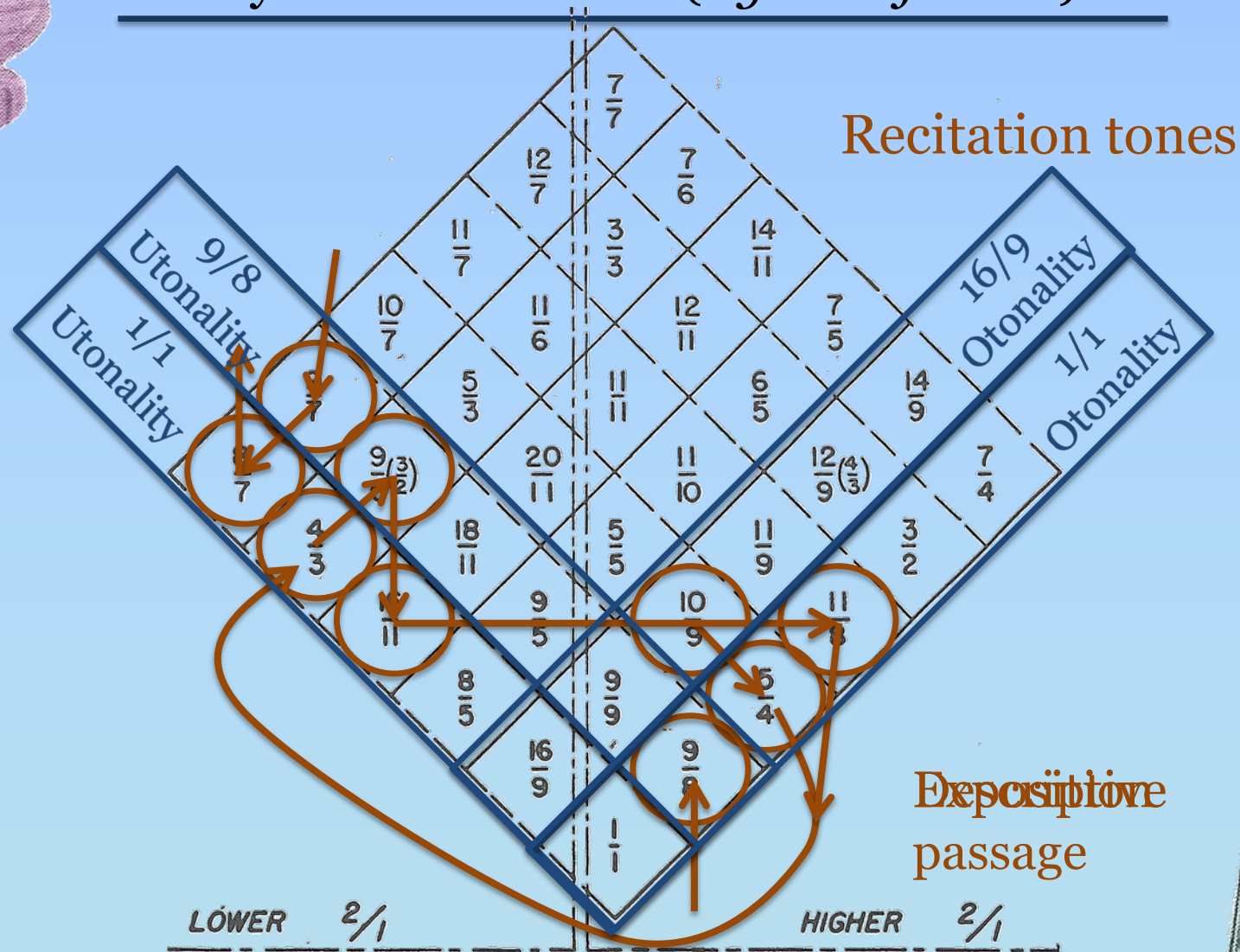




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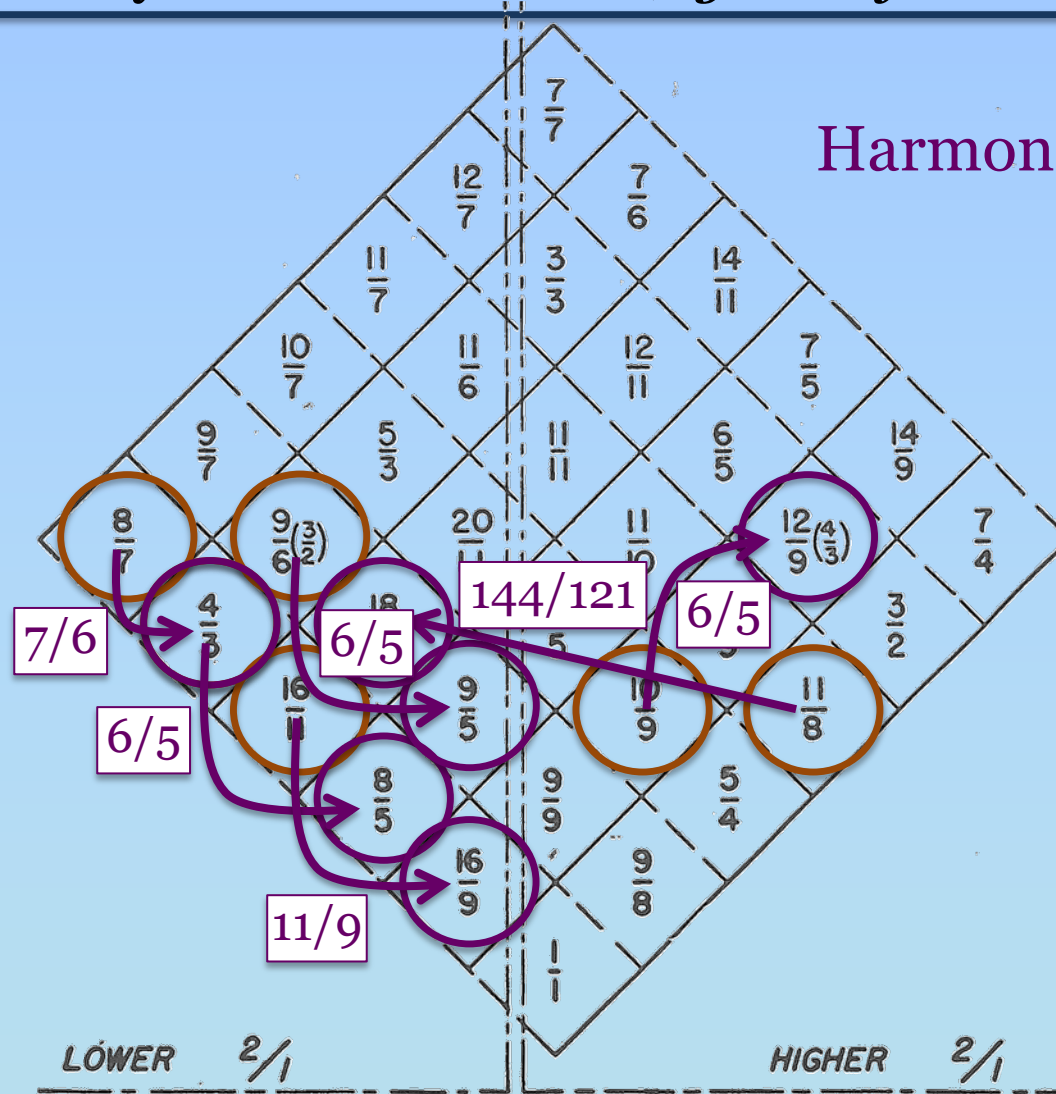
# "By the Great Wall" (*Lyrics of Li Po*)





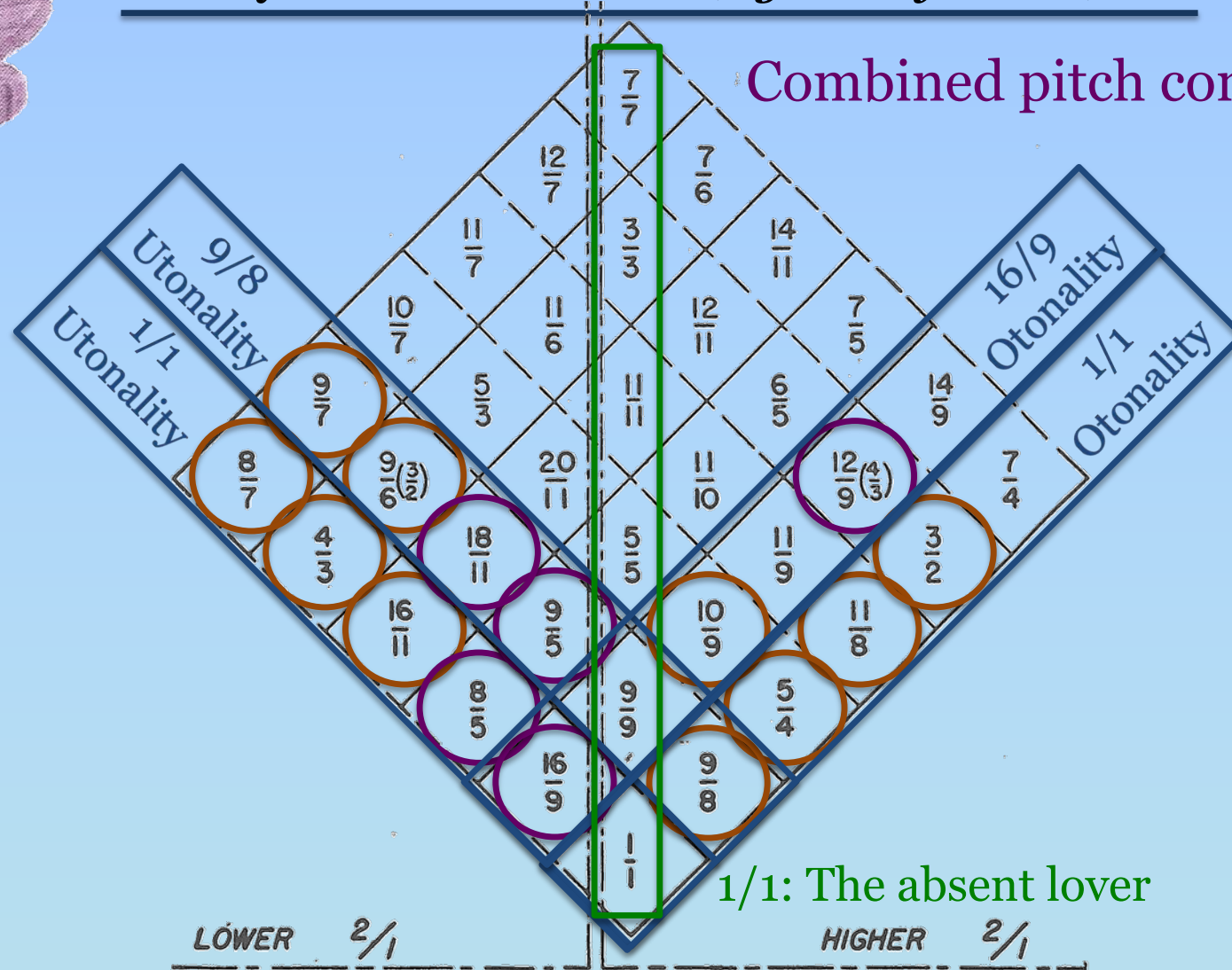
## "By the Great Wall" (*Lyrics of Li Po*)

### Harmonic Intervals





# "By the Great Wall" (*Lyrics of Li Po*)



## “By the Rivers of Babylon (137<sup>th</sup> Psalm)”

By the rivers of Babylon, there we set down.  
Yea, we wept when we remembered Zion.  
Upon the willows in the midst thereof we hung our harps.  
For there they that held us captive asked of us a song,  
And our tormentors required of us mirth, saying:  
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?  
Ah . . .



## "By the Rivers of Babylon (137<sup>th</sup> Psalm)"



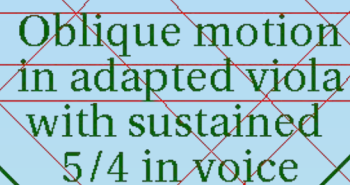
Recording (1945):  
William Wendlandt & Partch, with  
Lee Hoiby and Christine Charnstrom



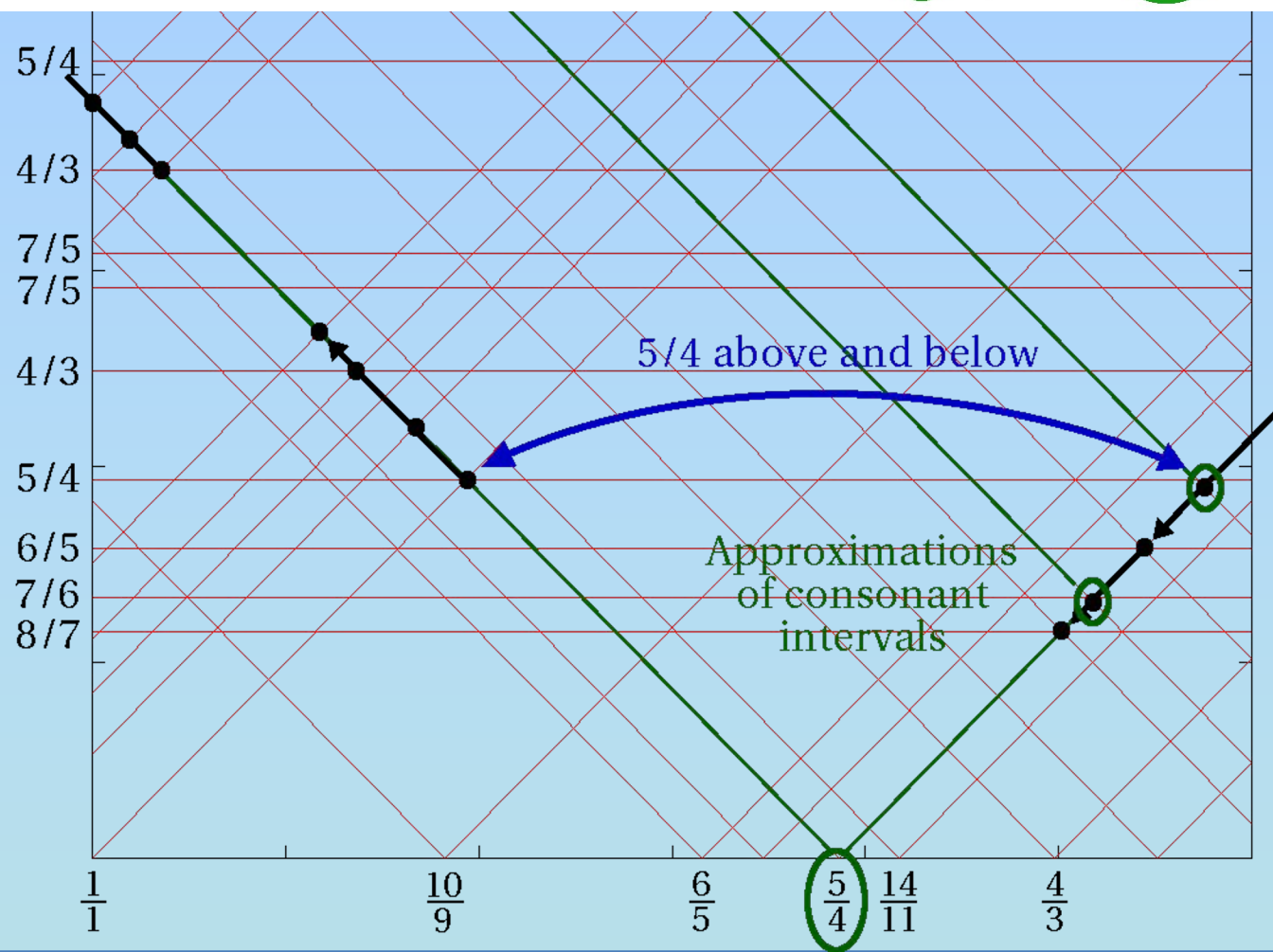
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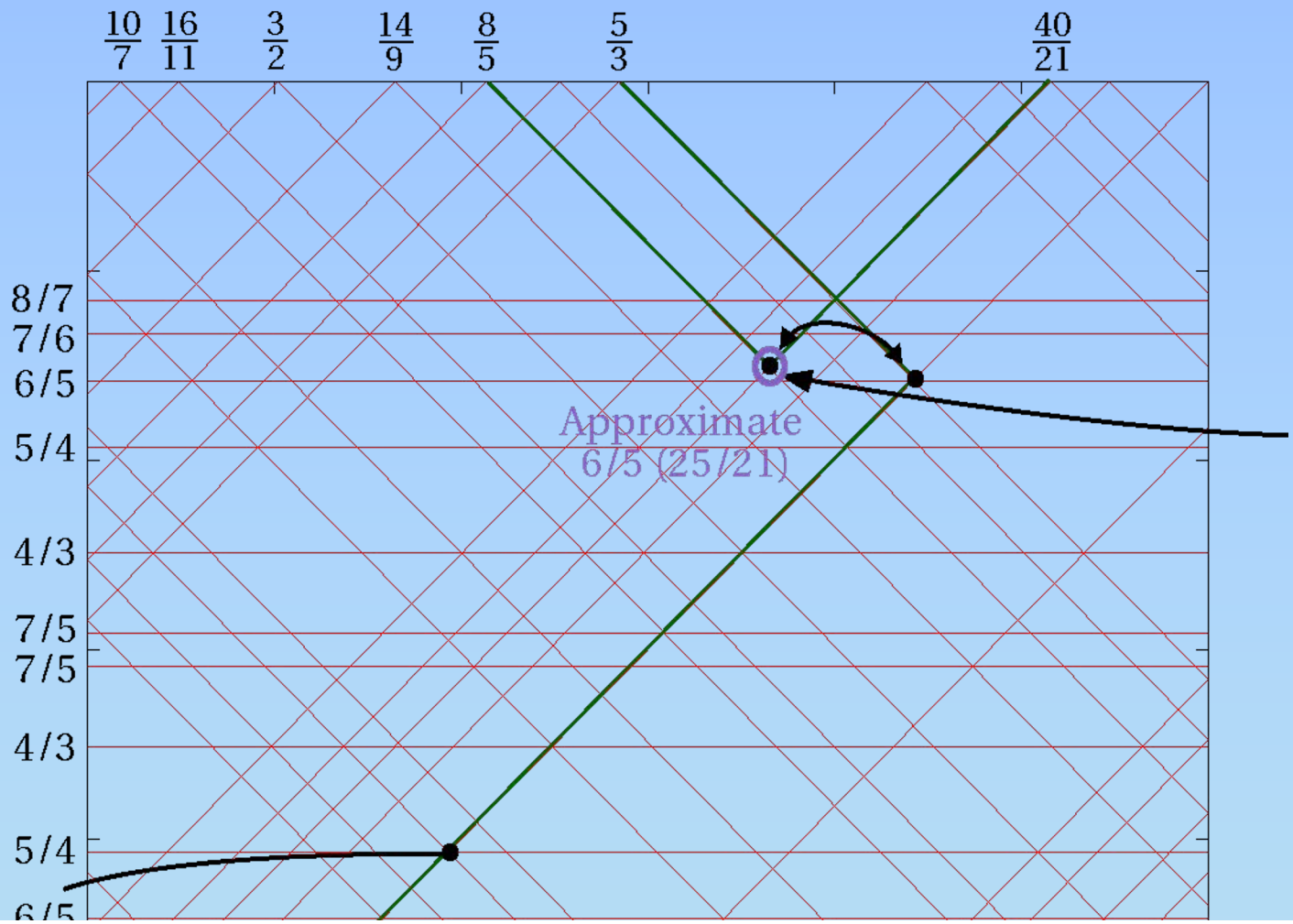
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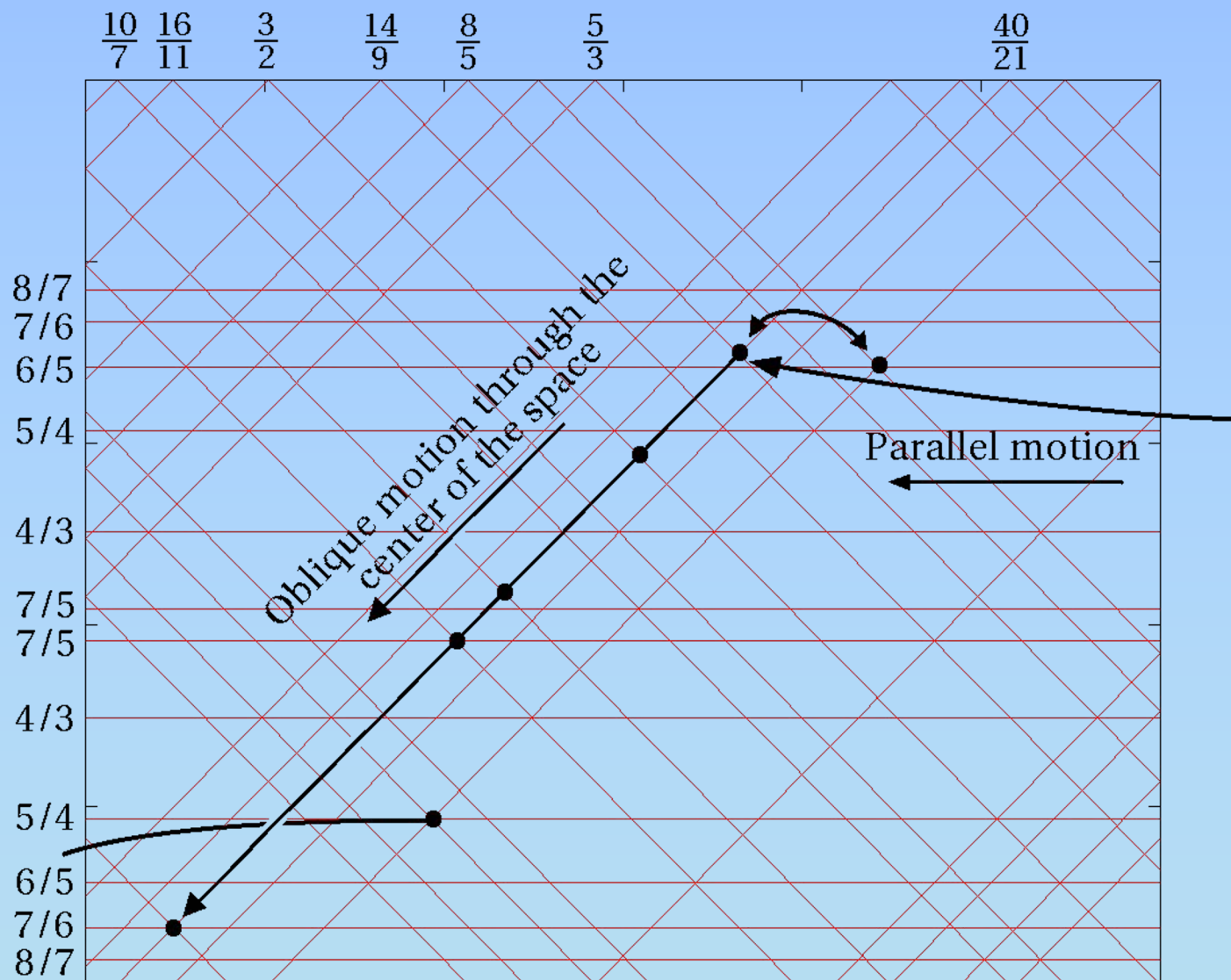


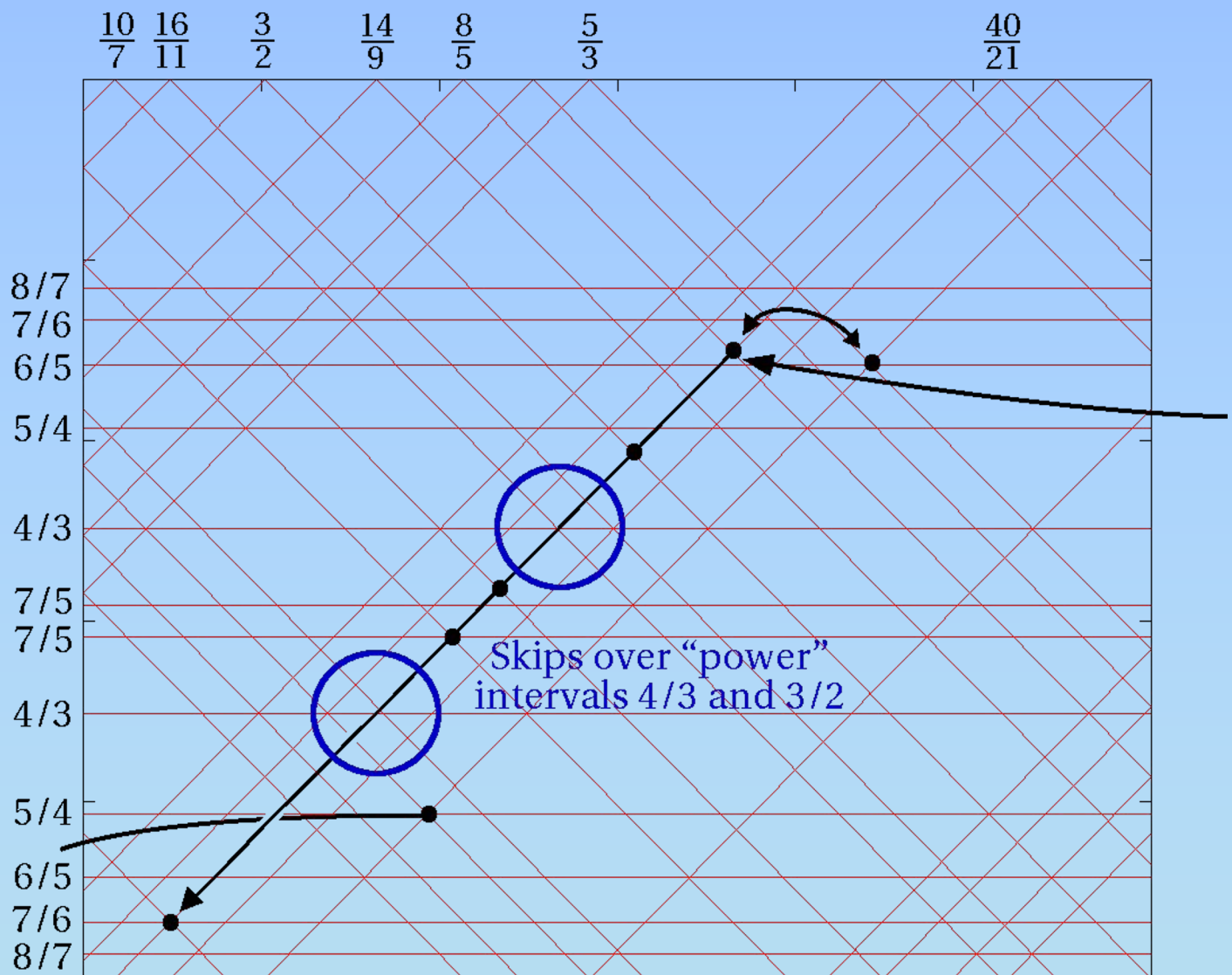
$\frac{10}{7}$   $\frac{16}{11}$   $\frac{3}{2}$   $\frac{14}{9}$   $\frac{8}{5}$   $\frac{5}{3}$   $\frac{40}{21}$

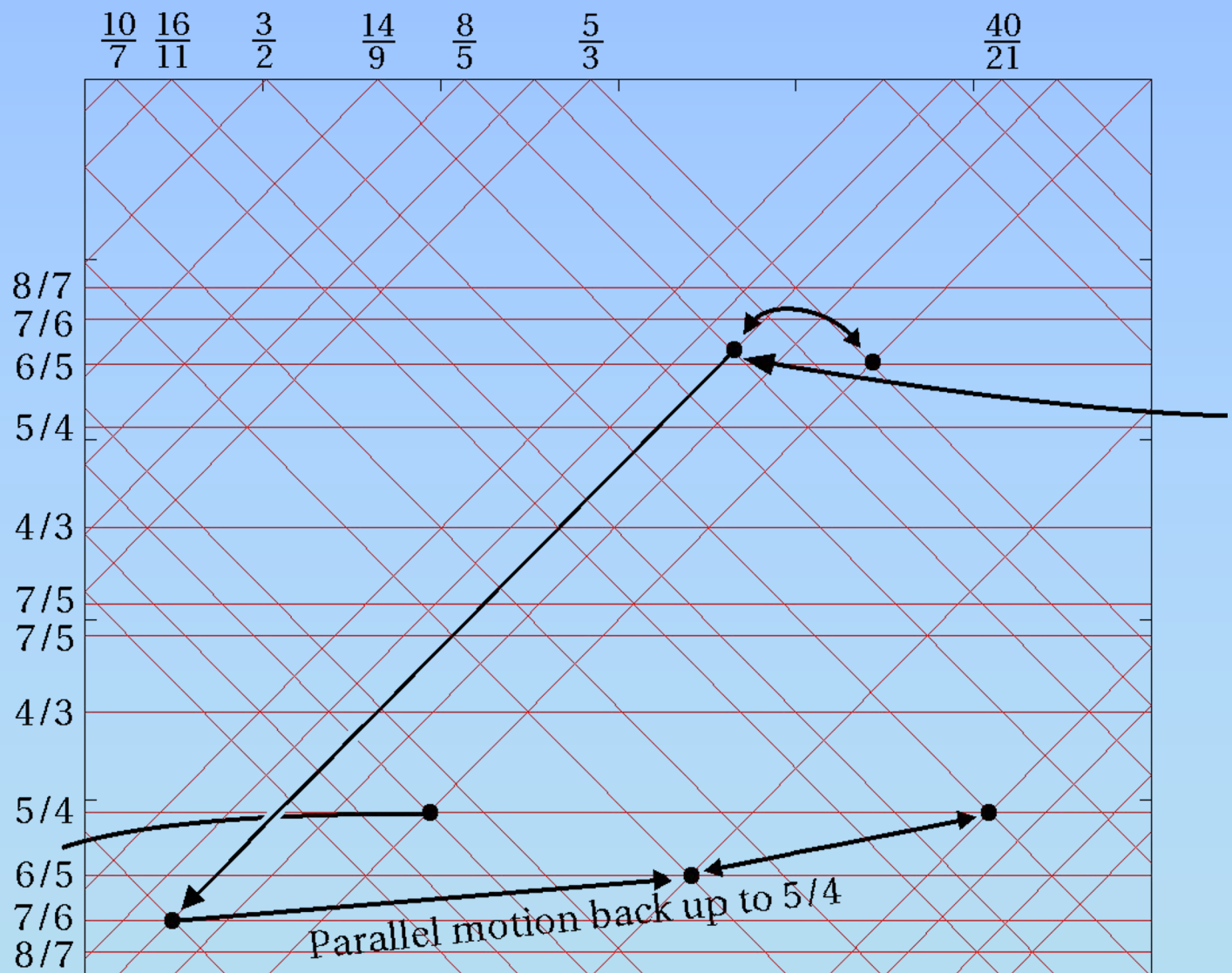




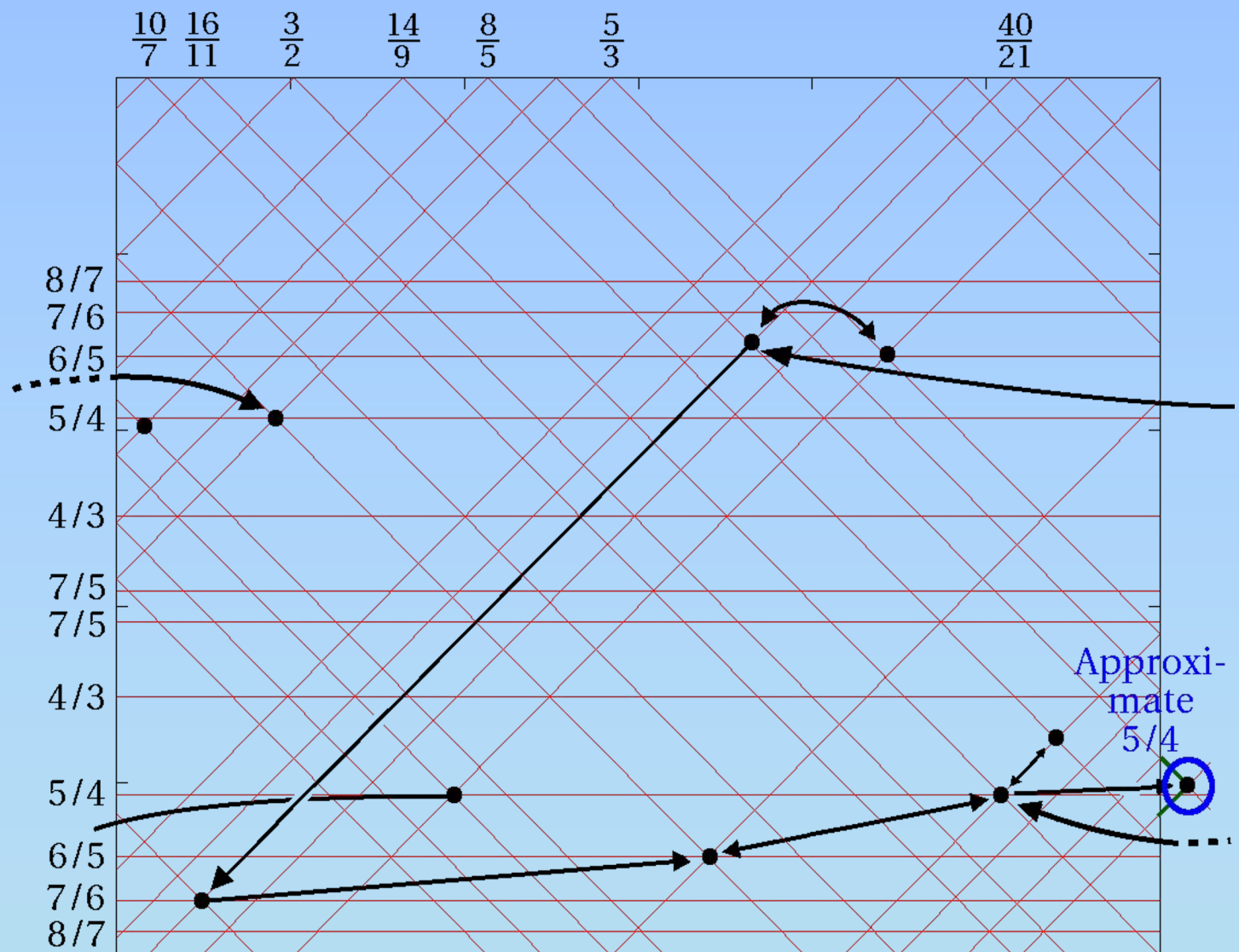






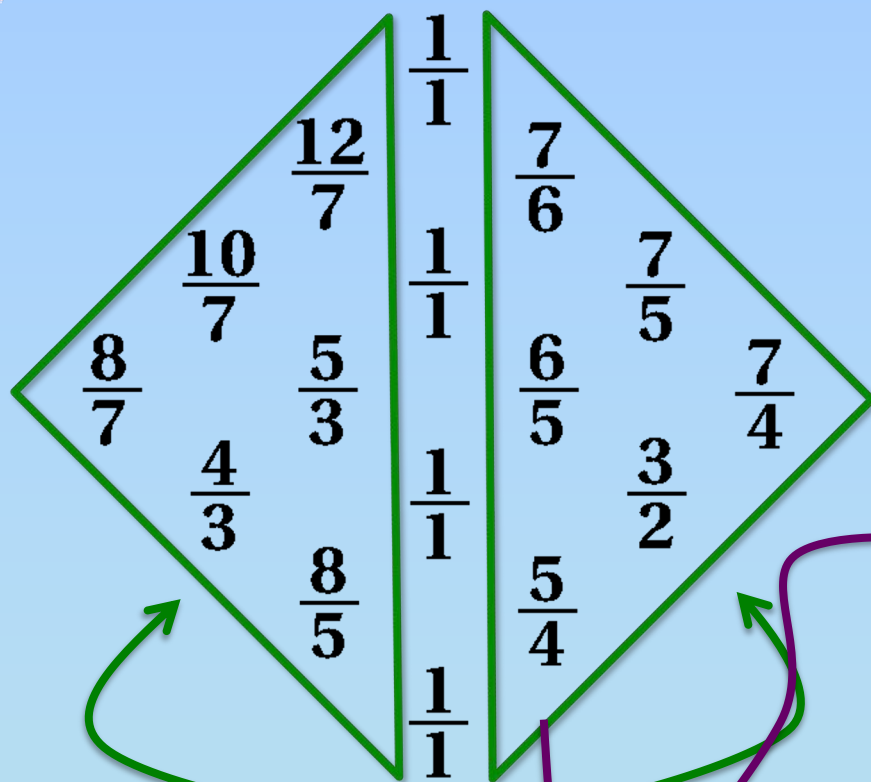






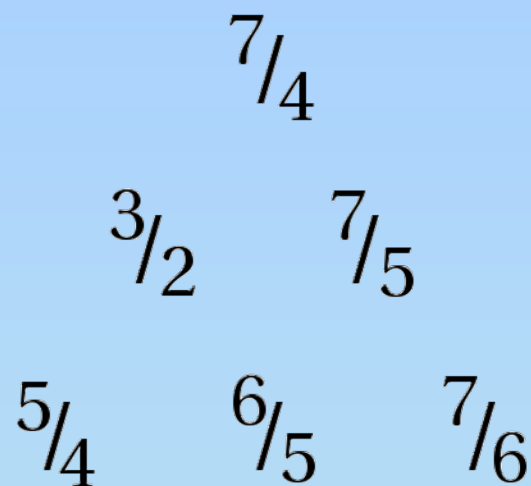
# "By the Rivers of Babylon (137<sup>th</sup> Psalm)"

## 7-Limit Tonality Diamond



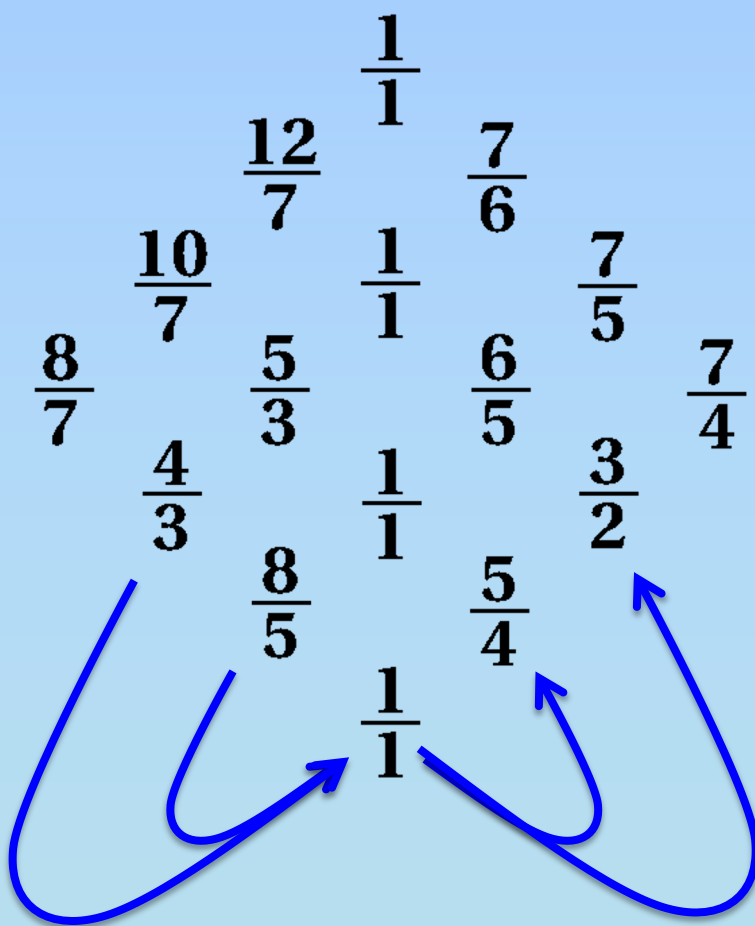
Inversions

## Interval Pyramid

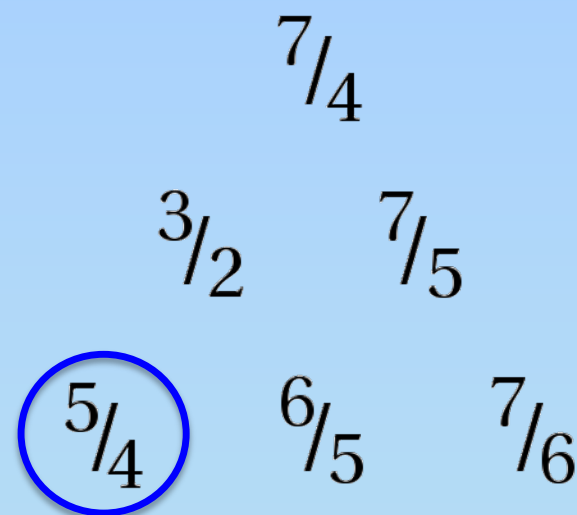


# "By the Rivers of Babylon (137<sup>th</sup> Psalm)"

## 7-Limit Tonality Diamond

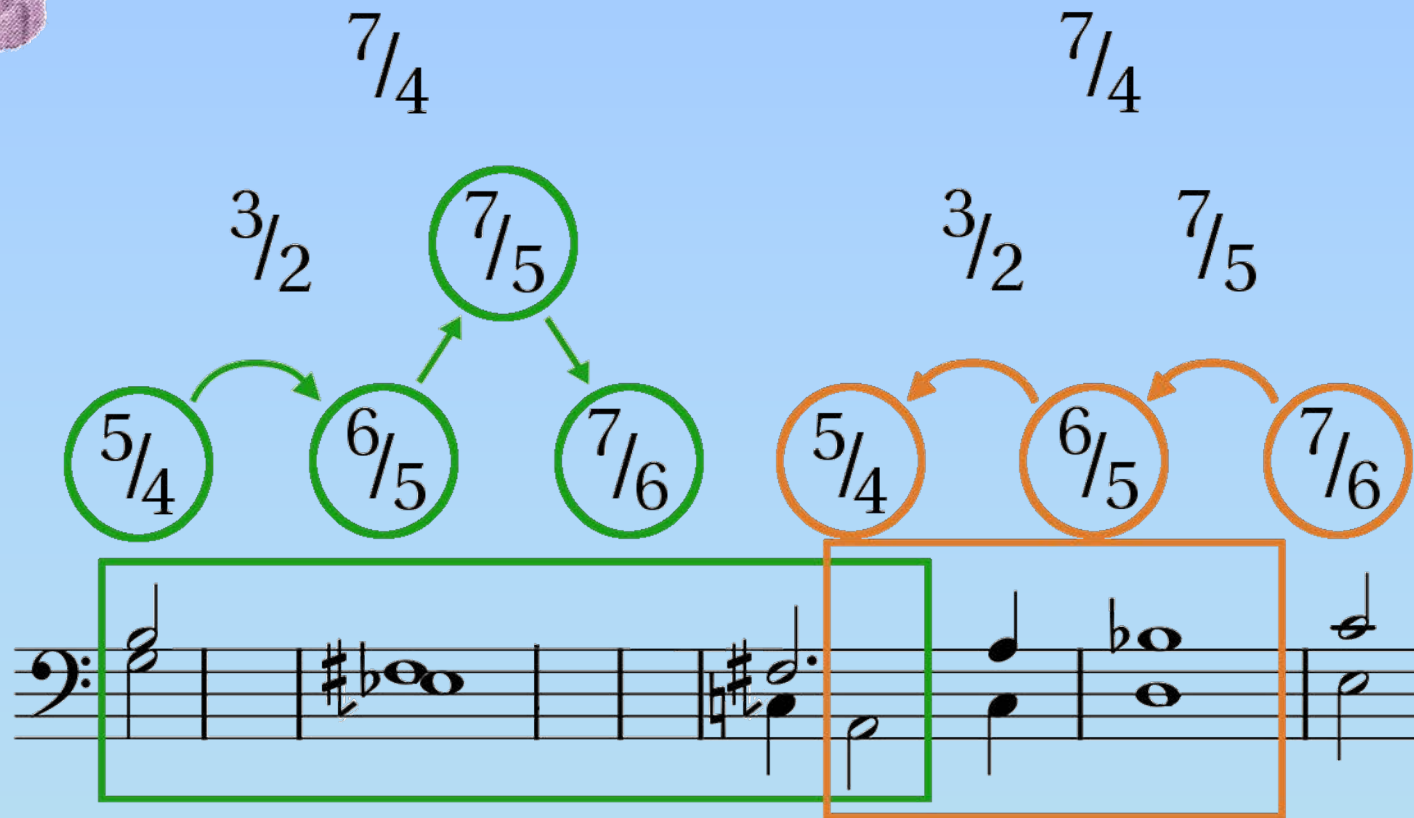


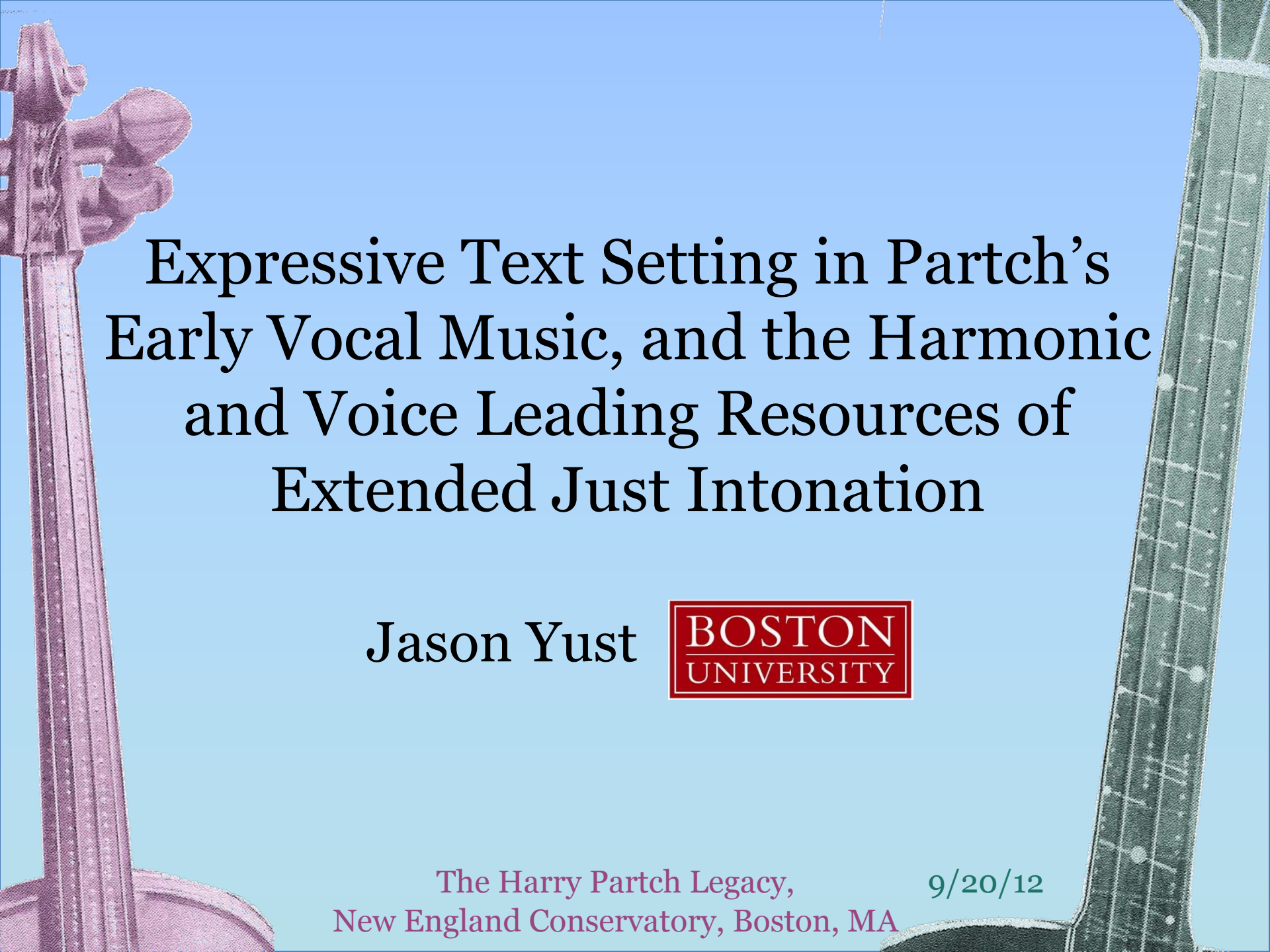
## Interval Pyramid





# “By the Rivers of Babylon (137<sup>th</sup> Psalm)”





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