

Through the last half of the 17th century and into the 18th...

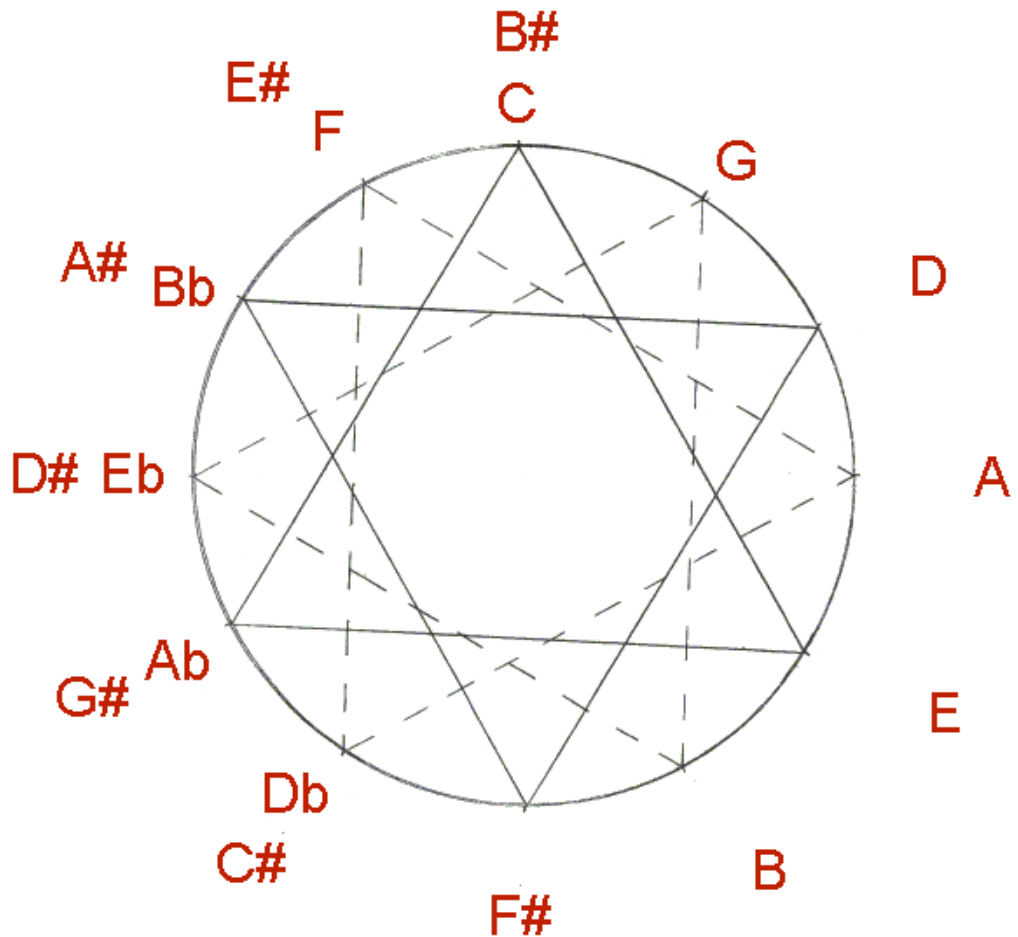
- Composers, improvisers, players, and teachers were no longer satisfied with the regular meantone restrictions.
- Froberger, Böhm, Buxtehude, Reincken, Kuhnau, Pachelbel, older Bachs before Johann Sebastian,
- All these musicians pressed beyond the restricted scales of regular meantone (C, F, G majors, D and G minors), and needed more notes: D#, A#, E#, B#, Ab, Db, Gb, Cb....

...Cb, Gb, Db, Ab,
Eb, Bb, F, C, G, D, A, E, B, F#, C#, G#,
D#, A#, E#, B#, ...

**“Modified meantone”
temperaments give us
more notes.**

The common notes are still favored, but more of the uncommon notes become possible without being too far out of tune.

To do this, the flatted notes are made slightly LOWER than they would have been, and the sharped notes slightly HIGHER, so the chosen compromised pitch can serve decently as either one.



Playing some examples...

in “1/6 comma” meantone
(a typical 17th century style) –

It sounds terrific if we restrict ourselves to
correctly-spelled notes, but horrible if we don't.

Pages from:

Louis Marchand's Allemande in D minor

Francois Couperin's “Les Pavots” in B minor, from Ordre 27

Wilhelm Friedemann Bach's Sonata in E-flat major, first movement

Regular “1/6 comma” meantone (or the 55-note division)

Eleven 5ths are each narrowed by the same small amount of deliberate error from purity. This sameness is the basis of the term “regular”.

The leftover point is a diminished 6th, not a 5th. It is much too wide to sound like a 5th. It howls like a wolf.

The eight correctly-spelled major 3rds all sound sweet and harmonious.

Eb-G, Bb-D, F-A, C-E, G-B, D-F#, A-C#, and E-G#.

The four diminished 4ths cross over the wolf, and they are too wide to sound like major 3rds.

B-Eb, F#-Bb, C#-F, and G#-C.

The word “meantone” comes from the observation that the tone within each correctly-spelled major 3rd is at a geometrically average (mean) position.

