

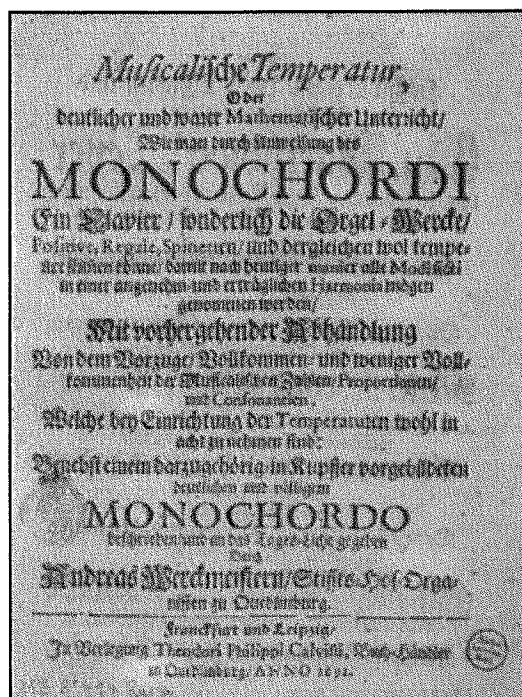
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TEMPERAMENTS VII: Werckmeister III

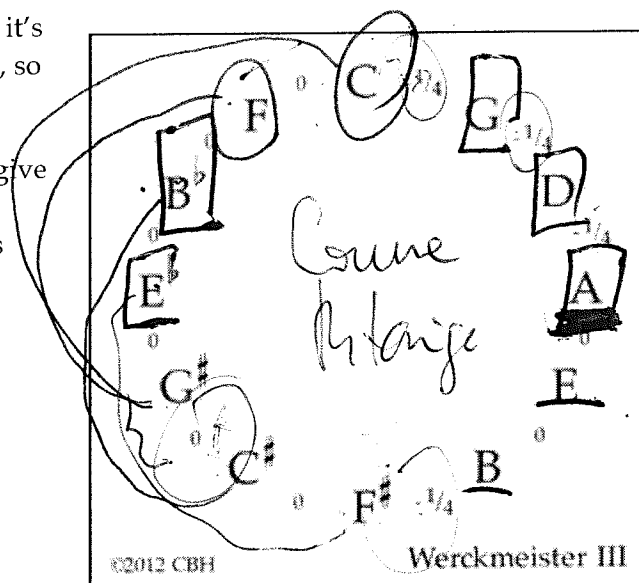
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When you feel you've mastered Kirnberger III, it's an easy matter to change it into something else, so now it's time for **Werckmeister III**.

(Those Darwinists reading this will, I trust, forgive me working backwards in history for ease of tuning—in musical terms, what came later was not always better!)



Titlepage of Werckmeister's *Musicalische Temperatur* (1691)



Andreas Werckmeister (1645–1706) was an organ expert as well as musician and theoretician. He proposed several temperaments and it is his third “correct” temperament from his *Musicalische Temperatur* published in Frankfurt in 1691 that is his most popular today. (Note that the various Werckmeister temperaments are numbered differently in various sources—as well as apps and electronic tuning machines!)

Completely changing the tuning of the pipes in a large organ is time-consuming and hence expensive: This temperament was probably devised for the convenience of organ tuners tasked with updating an organ from the old Quarter-comma meantone tuning, to something that could play in a wider

variety of keys demanded by the then-current music, all with minimum pipework modification.

While there is no evidence that this temperament was used for anything other than organs in Werckmeister's time, it has found favor today in ensemble music. It especially pleases violinists, who are able to preserve a pure fifth between their two top strings **a'-e''**. We happily used this temperament for the original instrument performances of Bach's *Brandenburg Concerti* at the 2015 Carmel Bach Festival.

This is how you can change your nicely-tuned Kirnberger III into Werckmeister III on your instrument:

1. Sharpen that **e'** that your violinist friend so much despised, so that instead of the beautiful pure third with **middle c'**, it makes a pure perfect fifth above **a**.
2. Tune down the octave to **e**, and raise your **b** so it forms a pure perfect fifth above the **e**.
3. Compare your **b-f''** to **c'-g'**: As the circle shows, both these fifths are the same quarter-comma