



PARTCH Ensemble

- The Wayward

Music

JUNE 16 - 17, 2023
8:30 PM

PRESENTED BY
REDCAT
Roy and Edna Disney
CalArts Theater
CaLARTS
California Institute of the Arts

We gratefully acknowledge that we operate on the traditional lands of the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash peoples—including the Gabrieleño, Fernandefño, and Venturefño; members of the Takic and Chumashan language families; and other Indigenous peoples who made their homes in and around the area we now call Los Angeles. We honor their ancestors past, present, and future, and recognize their continued existence and contributions to our society.

PARTCH Ensemble

• The Wayward

Cloud Chamber Music (1950)

Baritone ~ Adapted Guitar III ~ Kithara I ~ Adapted Viola ~ Bass & Diamond Marimbas
Cloud Chamber Bowls ~ Deer Hooves Rattle ~ Voices

Amateur California Prune Picker (2022) by Kyle Gann

Chromelodeon ~ Adapted Viola ~ Gourd Tree ~ Spoils of War
Bass & Diamond Marimbas ~ Cloud Chamber Bowls

THE WAYWARD

Barstow — Eight Hitchhiker Inscriptions from a highway railing near Barstow, California (1941/68)

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Today I Am a Man | 5. Possible Rides |
| 2. Gentlemen | 6. Jesus Was God in the Flesh |
| 3. Considered Pretty | 7. You Lucky Women |
| 4. A very Good Idea | 8. Why in Hell did you Come? |

Voices ~ Boo ~ Chromelodeon ~ Diamond Marimba ~ Surrogate Kithara

San Francisco — A setting of the cries of two newsboys on a Foggy Night in the Twenties ~ (1943/55)

Voices ~ Cello ~ Chromelodeon ~ Kithara II

The Letter — A depression message from a hobo friend (1943/55)

Baritone ~ Adapted Guitar ~ Bass & Diamond Marimbas ~ Kithara II ~ Canon

U.S. Highball — A musical account of a transcontinental hobo trip (1943/55)

Bass & Diamond Marimbas ~ Boo ~ BloBoy ~ Castor & Pollux Canons ~ Chromelodeon
Kithara II ~ Surrogate Kithara ~ Spoils of War

Ulysses at the Edge of the World — A Minor Adventure in Rhythm (1955/62)

Trumpet ~ Saxophone ~ Boo ~ Bass Marimba ~ Cloud Chamber Bowls ~ Diamond Marimba ~ Voice

Erin Barnes (Diamond Marimba, Eroica & cymbal), Alison Bjorkedal (Kithara), Tim Feeney (Cloud Chamber Bowls, Canons), Dustin Donahue (Bass Marimba), Aron Kallay (Chromelodeon), Dan Rosenboom (Trumpet), John Schneider (Guitar, Canons, BloBoy & Voice), Derek Stein (Cello & Adapted Viola), Nick Terry (Bass Marimba & Boo), Brian Walsh (Baritone Saxophone), Alex Wand (Canons & Surrogate Kithara)

Our gratitude to the artisans who have helped recreate Partch's instruments: Skip Abelson (Diamond & Bass Marimbas), Kent Arnold (Chromelodeon), Greg Brandt (Adapted Guitars), Scott Hackleman (Kithara, Harmonic Canons), Robert Portillo (Adapted Viola & Janus II canon).

ABOUT THE WORKS

Cloud Chamber Music (1950) opens with a sonorous carillon on four Cloud-Chamber Bowls, their distinctive bell-like tones yielding to a mournful microtonal lament on Adapted Viola and Adapted Guitar. Following this, in a faster tempo, the Viola introduces the melody of "Canción de los Muchachos" of the Isleta tribe of New Mexico (a tune Partch learned when transcribing it from an Edison cylinder recorded by Charles Lummis). This is then sung by all the musicians, accompanying themselves on their instruments, except the Kithara, whose player takes up a Native American deer-hoof rattle. This ritual provokes another outburst on the Cloud-Chamber Bowls. Ben Johnston has suggested a scenario implicit in this sequence of musical events: "Cloud-Chamber Music," he writes, "begins as a depressed reaction to a false clarion, but then seizes American Indian incentives as a reinvigorating antidote."

Amateur California Prune-Picker (2022) by Kyle Gann — "As a long-time microtonalist, I've always wanted to write something for the Harry Partch instruments, so I am extremely grateful to John Schneider for offering me the chance. My idea was to prove, or perhaps I should say test, the universality of Partch's ensemble by trying to write in a style that didn't sound like Partch. Accordingly, I concentrated on the microtonal relationships among the various harmonies, and had to wrestle with the fact that not all of his instruments had the same pitches. After fifty years of composing, I was made to feel like a rank amateur in this totally idiosyncratic environment, and as Partch inveighed against his performers looking like an "amateur California prune picker," I thought I should embrace the title. Were I to attempt a second essay, I would probably surrender and write "à la Harry." —K.G.

THE WAYWARD

"A collection of musical compositions based on the spoken and written words of hobos and other characters—the result of my wanderings in the Western part of the United States from 1935 to 1941." —Harry Partch

The legendary 1969 Columbia recording of **Barstow** imprinted the work in the imaginations of a generation, and like *US Highball* that followed, it underwent numerous orchestrations. Hitchhiker graffiti is put to music, telling the tale of eight wanderers - some funny, some sad, but always engaging when seen through the lens of Partch's re-telling. He gives us an earthy and poignant first-hand account that is unique in the world of music, one that is sure to become a permanent part of our American cultural landscape. Taken along with the rest of his Americana from the 1940's, Partch has created a body of work that places him shoulder to shoulder with the two best-loved storytellers of the era, John Steinbeck and Woody Guthrie.

Setting the gliding contours of real human voices had partly inspired Partch's famed microtonal scale, and the opening viola lines of **San Francisco** do, in fact, wordlessly depict the curbside sales pitch with

uncanny accuracy. So accurate, in fact, that when reviewing the 1944 Carnegie Hall premiere for the *New York Tribune*, Lou Harrison wrote, “Mr. Partch has woven a spell of about the foggiest and dampest music I have ever heard. I got homesick”.

The text for **The Letter** comes from the composer’s long-lost hobo journal *Bitter Music* (1935-36) that he initially set to music in 1943 under the title “Letter From Hobo Pablo,” a friend whom he met at a Federal Shelter in Stockton. The 24-year old Pablo was, “... the one sensitive person I have met and the only one I can bear to talk to,” so when they are told that they must go to a work camp “...to work 6 hours a day, 5 days a week, tobacco & work clothes furnished, and \$4 a month besides,” they both chose Harrington Ranch. Pablo only lasted three weeks, being expelled for drinking, but Partch was clearly pleased when he recounts the letter he received three months later, which he introduces as “Echoes from Mandolin-Face of the tooth-fretted Lips.”

In 1957, Partch described this final version of **U.S. Highball** as, “...the most creative piece of music I ever wrote, and in the sense that it is less influenced by the forms and attitudes that I had grown up with as a child and experienced later in adult life, there can be no doubt of it.” The initial version was sketched out with guitar & solo voice, followed six months later by an expanded version for voice, guitar, kithara & chromelodeon. But he soon realized that the work really needed percussion instruments, and nine years later, he created the work you hear tonight. It describes his 1941 two-week freight-hopping, hitch-hiking & pot walloping journey from Carmel, California to Chicago in search of a new life and recognition of his music:

“It was the second day out of San Francisco that I began jotting down words in this notebook: fragments of conversations, remarks, writings on the sides of boxcars, signs in havens for derelicts, hitchhiker’s inscriptions, names of stations, thoughts... These fragments ARE the text of *U.S. Highball*...The work falls naturally into three parts: first, a long and jerky passage by drags to Little America, Wyoming; second, a slow dish-washing movement at Little America; third, a rhythmic allegro by highway to Chicago. The one word—*Chicago*—is the end of the text. Instrumentally, what follows implies a tremendous letdown from the obstinately compulsive exhilaration of *getting* to Chicago. It implies bewilderment, and that essentially dominant question in the life of the wanderer — *what next?*”

But the story doesn’t end there: following the 1958 release of the recording on Partch’s own Gate 5 label, he and filmmaker Madeline Tourtelot shot a studio performance of the work, and a decade later interspersed those black & white scenes with color footage of trains, roads, scenery traversed, and even abstract art. The 24-minute art house film still makes quite an impression, and is easily viewable online.

Ulysses at the Edge of the World was written for jazz great Chet Baker, to be accompanied by double bass and BooBams, bamboo tubes with skin heads that inspired Partch’s own 64-note tongue drum version he called “Boo.” Sadly, Baker was too busy to premiere the piece, and a few years later Partch added a baritone sax part as he had become a fan of Baker’s duets with Gerry Mulligan. The piece was eventually recorded by another pair of players, and in the liner notes to the LP *New Music for Trumpet*, the composer relates:

“At the time I was writing it the feeling of my hobo years was strong. As a wanderer myself (like Ulysses) I had often been asked the question, “Have you ever been arrested before?” and it struck me as very humorous to be able to ask another wanderer the same question.”

However, the duet version did not include the previous invitation, “Trumpet can improvise here if it wants, preferably on this six-tone scale...using the same 7/8 accompaniment.” So tonight, we couldn’t resist honoring Partch’s initial intent since both of our soloists are not only recognized stalwarts of the new music scene, but also major contributors to this city’s vibrant jazz scene.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Kyle Gann (b. 1955 in Dallas, Texas) is a composer and the author of seven books on American music, including books on microtonality, Charles Ives’s Concord Sonata, John Cage’s 4’33”, *Conlon Nancarrow*, and Robert Ashley. He studied composition with Ben Johnston, Morton Feldman, and Peter Gena, and about a third of his music is microtonal. His major works include the piano concerto *Sunken City*, *Transcendental Sonnets* for chorus and orchestra, the microtonal music theater piece *Custer and Sitting Bull*, *The Planets* for mixed octet, and *Hyperchromatica*, a three-and-a-half-hour work for three retuned, computer-driven pianos. From 1986 to 2005 he was new-music critic for the *Village Voice* in New York City, and he is the Hawver Professor of Music at Bard College, where he has taught since 1997.

PARTCH Ensemble, the Grammy® Award winning & triple Grammy® nominated new music group, specializes in the music & instruments of the iconoclastic American Maverick composer Harry Partch, who created some of the most alluring and emotionally powerful music of the 20th century. He composed music for drama, dance-theater, multi-media, vocals and chamber music—all to be performed on the extraordinary orchestra of instruments that he designed and built himself.

They have performed for the LA County Museum of Art, UCLA’s Partch Centennial Celebration, Sacramento’s Festival of New American Music, Mills College, UNM Albuquerque, the Getty Center, Repertory Dance Theatre of Salt Lake City, Carlsbad Music Festival, Jacaranda Music, Guadalajara International Book Fair, Grand Performances, Brooklyn’s Roulette, Philadelphia’s Kimmel Center, the San Francisco Symphony, and South Korea’s Tongyeong International Music Festival. In 2004, they made their REDCAT debut premiering Harry Partch’s *Bitter Music*, and have returned every year since. Their recent collaboration with Philadelphia’s PRISM Saxophone Quartet include Lisa Bielawa’s Emmy Award winning opera for TV/Internet *VIREO: The Autobiography of a Witches Accuser*, and the CD of newly commissioned works *Color Theory* (XAS Records). *SONATA DEMENTIA*, Volume 3 of their award-winning Bridge Records “Music of Harry Partch” series, was released in 2019, the same year they premiered the complete *The Wayward*.

REDCAT TECHNICAL STAFF

REDCAT Technical Director: BILL BALLOU

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Associate TD, Lighting: CHU-HSUAN CHANG

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Audio Assistant: JOSUE CLARK

Lighting Board Operator: CHRISTA TROESTER

Deck: T KOSEK

UPCOMING AT REDCAT

Ajani Brannum and Jimena Sarno

June 29

On the occasion of the REDCAT exhibition *Lisa Alvarado: Pulse Meridian Foliation*, movement artist Ajani Brannum and interdisciplinary artist Jimena Sarno will perform newly commissioned pieces in the REDCAT gallery for one special night. Brannum will open up the space by exploring the in-between with a new performance entitled *They're Not Corrections, They're Changes*, evoking the various meanings found in meridians. Sarno will close out the night with a live set by exploring a space of pulsation and foliation through sound. This performance program engages the exhibition's inquiry into the body's relationship with space. Performances presented in the gallery will explore how memory, experience, and embodiment are transformed through movement and sound.

Digital Infinities: Computer Generated Film & Video, 1952-2023

July 1

Presented in conjunction with the LACMA exhibition *Coded: Art Enters the Computer Age, 1952-1982*, Digital Infinities explores the histories, present and futures of experimental computer generated work that expand upon the possibilities of the moving image. Program includes films and videos by Natalie Paneng, Mary Ellen Bute, Ryoichi Kurokawa, John Stehura, Jeron Braxton, Nam June Paik, Arash Akbari, Lillian Schwartz, Arafa Cynthia Hamadi, John Whitney, and LaJuné McMillian.



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