



MUSIC AND INSTRUMENTS OF HARRY PARTCH

A RESIDENCY OF GUEST ARTISTS FROM
THE HARRY PARTCH ENSEMBLE

FEB. 4-8, 2020

THIS RESIDENCY IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE
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THE SCHOOL OF MUSIC,
PHYSICS DEPARTMENT,
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GUESTS

THE HARRY PARTCH ENSEMBLE

Under the direction of Charles Corey, the ensemble recently concluded a five-year residency at the University of Washington, Seattle, and is presently based in the Seattle area. Both locally and as a touring group, it presents programs that focus on Partch's music while also including works written for these instruments by contemporary artists.

The Harry Partch Ensemble performs exclusively on the original instruments built by Partch himself, following his performative philosophies and unique treatment of the human voice. Experiencing Partch's music performed on these one-of-a-kind musical sculptures offers a dramatic, intimate window into Partch's all-consuming artistic vision. <https://www.harrypartch.com/>

CHARLES COREY

Charles Corey is an American composer holding a Ph.D. in music composition and theory from the University of Pittsburgh, where he studied with Mathew Rosenblum, Eric Moe, Amy Williams, and Trevor Björklund. His approach to composition exploits and subverts the relationships that exist between different tuning systems; the results of this process range from pieces that use standard tuning systems in unique ways to works that involve multiple tuning systems working in concert.

Corey is director and curator of the Harry Partch Instrumentarium, affiliate assistant professor of composition at the University of Washington, Seattle, and director of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra's Merriman Family Young Composers Workshop. He directed the premieres of Partch's *The Potion Scene* and *The Bewitched – A Ballet Satire* and gave the first performance of the original score, for voice and Adapted Guitar, of *U.S. Highball*. <https://www.charlescorey.com/>

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

All events in Schneebeck Concert Hall
Free and open to the public

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| TUESDAY, FEB. 4
6:30-8 p.m. | Open House and Instrument Tour
See instruments crafted by Partch
and meet guest artists |
| WEDNESDAY, FEB. 5
Noon | <i>The Early Works of Harry Partch</i>
Informal recital and conversation |
| SATURDAY, FEB. 8
7:30 p.m. | The Harry Partch Ensemble Concert
Charles Corey, director |

ABOUT HARRY PARTCH

Harry Partch (1901–74) was a West Coast original. A brilliant visual and performing artist, composer, and philosopher, he questioned aspects of music that most of us take for granted. In particular, he believed that most Western composers had fallen for a “scam” by limiting themselves to the notes found on a piano keyboard.

His desire for more notes—and new sounds—led him to invent and build many unique instruments that will be displayed and performed on the Schneebeck Concert Hall stage during this weeklong residency. Lovers of art, science, and iconoclastic thinking are warmly invited to come and enjoy!

THE EARLY WORKS OF HARRY PARTCH

An informal concert and discussion with the Harry Partch Ensemble

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 5, 2020
SCHNEEBECK CONCERT HALL | NOON

PROGRAM

Barstow (1941).....Harry Partch (1901–74)
text collected by Harry Partch

Charles Corey, adapted guitar I and intoning voice

December 1942 (1942).....Harry Partch

- I. Come Away Death text by William Shakespeare
- II The Heron text by Ella Young
- III The Rose text by Ella Young

Charles Corey, adapted guitar I and intoning voice

Seventeen Lyrics by Li Po (1930–33).....Harry Partch
text by Li Po (Li Bai),

- I. The Long Departed Lover trans. by Shigeyoshi Obata
- II. On the City Street
- III. An Encounter in the Field
- IV. The Intruder
- V. On Ascending the Sin-Ping Tower
- VI. In the Spring-time on the South Side of the Yangtze Kiang
- VII. The Night of Sorrow
- VIII. On Hearing the Flute in the Yellow Crane House
- IX. On Hearing the Flute at Lo-cheng One Spring Night
- X. A Dream

– *brief pause* –

- XI. On Seeing off Meng Hao-jan
- XII. On the Ship of Spice-wood
- XIII. With a Man of Leisure
- XIV. A Midnight Farewell
- XV. Before the Cask of Wine
- XVI. By the Great Wall
- XVII. I Am a Peach Tree

Luke Fitzpatrick, adapted viola and intoning voice

Come to Dust (2017).....Charles Corey
text by William Shakespeare

Charles Corey, adapted guitar I and intoning voice

The Grave of Li Po (2017).....Luke Fitzpatrick
text by Bai Juyi,
trans. by Shigeyoshi Obata

Luke Fitzpatrick, adapted viola and intoning voice

PROGRAM NOTES

Barstow, first written in 1941 for Adapted Guitar and Intoning Voice, and rescored several times as Partch expanded his instrumentarium, has become one of his best known works, combining his unique approach to harmony and his characteristic style of vocal writing with his largely autobiographical focus on American hoboism. This original version, written for a configuration of the Adapted Guitar that Partch completely abandoned in 1945, contains texts Partch collected himself in Barstow, Calif. in 1940. Aside from removing some profanity – not to keep the work modest, but because he found its overuse tiresome – the texts appear as he found them. Of the first inscription, he writes: “But this – why it’s music. It’s both weak and strong, like unedited human expressions always are. It’s eloquent in what it fails to express in words. And it’s epic. Definitely, it is music.”¹

–Charles Corey

December 1942 is a series of short vocal settings that represent a return to composing after the 1941 transcontinental hobo trip that forms the basis for *U.S. Highball*. The second and third settings, “The Heron” and “The Rose,” would be substantially revised nearly a decade later and included in *Eleven Intrusions*. The first, “Come Away Death,” is a beautiful and refined setting that Partch presumably felt needed no further expansion or orchestration – a sentiment that only applies to this piece and his *Seventeen Lyrics by Li Po*.

–Charles Corey

Harry Partch’s *Seventeen Lyrics by Li Po* (1930–33) were composed following Partch’s dissolution with Western music. Partch sought to expand the 12-tone equal-tempered scale through just intonation, exploring 29 notes before reaching his well-known 43-note scale and others. Partch’s first of many instruments was his Adapted Viola. Using a custom viola built with a cello neck, Partch fashioned a series of brads along the neck indicating his initial 29-note scale. His first work he did not destroy, Partch sets the music in the *17 Lyrics by Li Po* to the poetry of Li Bai (701–762 A.D.) so the “vitality of spoken inflection is retained in the music.” Li Bai’s passion for sweet wine, the pain of lost love and his exploration of the human condition made it a natural fit with Partch’s music.

–Luke Fitzpatrick

Come to Dust connects philosophically, though not aesthetically, with Partch’s own Shakespeare settings, “Come Away Death” from *December 1942* and *The Potion Scene*. I have followed a mostly natural inflection for the text, and offset that with voiceless, atmospheric passages that take advantage of the tuning and configuration of the Adapted Guitar.

–Charles Corey

The Grave of Li Po is a setting of the poem of the same name by Po Chu-i (Bai Juyi) (772–846 A.D.). *The Grave of Li Po* is inspired by Harry Partch's *17 Lyrics of Li Po* and uses the same 1922 translation.

–Luke Fitzpatrick

THE HARRY PARTCH ENSEMBLE IN CONCERT

Charles Corey, director

SATURDAY, FEB. 8, 2020

SCHNEEBECK CONCERT HALL | 7:30 p.m.

PROGRAM

from *Eleven Intrusions* (1946, 49–50).....Harry Partch (1901–74)

- I. Two Studies on Ancient Greek Scales:
Study on Olympos' Pentatonic
- II. Two Studies on Ancient Greek Scales:
Study on Archytas' Enharmonic
- III. The Rose text by Ella Young
- IV. The Crane text by Ki no Tsurayuki, trans. by Arthur Waley
- V. The Waterfall text by Ella Young

Charles Corey, harmonic canon, adapted guitar II, intoning voice;
Bonnie Whiting, bass marimba, diamond marimba

Dark Brother (1942–43).....Harry Partch
text by Thomas Wolfe

Jeff Bowen, intoning voice
Luke Fitzpatrick, adapted viola
Charles Corey, kithara II
Laure Struber, chromelodeon I
Paul Hansen, bass marimba

The Potion Scene (1955).....Harry Partch
text by William Shakespeare

Sarah Kolat, Juliet
Bonnie Whiting, soprano
Marcin Pączkowski, soprano
Luke Fitzpatrick, adapted viola
Jeff Bowen, kithara II
Laure Struber, chromelodeon I
Rebekah Ko, bass marimba, Spoils of War
Paul Hansen, marimba Eroica
Charles Corey, conductor

Two Settings from Lewis Carroll (1954).....Harry Partch
text by Lewis Carroll
I. The Mock Turtle Song
II. O Frabjous Day!

Charles Corey, surrogate kithara, harmonic canon
Bonnie Whiting, Spoils of War, bass marimba, intoning voice

The Letter (1943, 1955).....Harry Partch
text collected by Harry Partch

Paul Hansen, intoning voice
Luke Fitzpatrick, harmonic canon
Charles Corey, kithara II
Jeff Bowen, surrogate kithara
Bonnie Whiting, diamond marimba
Rebekah Ko, bass marimba

San Francisco (1943, 1955).....Harry Partch
text collected by Harry Partch

Jeff Bowen, intoning voice
Paul Hansen, intoning voice
Luke Fitzpatrick, adapted viola
Charles Corey, kithara II
Laure Struber, chromelodeon I

Barstow (1941, 1968).....Harry Partch
text collected by Harry Partch

Jeff Bowen, intoning voice
Paul Hansen, intoning voice
Marcin Pączkowski, surrogate kithara
Laure Struber, chromelodeon I
Bonnie Whiting, diamond marimba
Rebekah Ko, bamboo marimba

INTERMISSION

The Bewitched – A Ballet Satire (1954–55).....Harry Partch
I. Background for the Transfiguration of American Undergrads
in a Hong Kong Music Hall
III. Background for the Inspired Romancing of a Pathologic Liar
VI. Background for Euphoria on a Sausalito Stairway

- VII. Background for the Transmutation of Detectives on the Tail of a Culprit
- VIII. Background for the Apotheosis of a Court in its Own Contempt
- IX. Background for a Political Soul Lost Among the Voteless Women of Paradise

Sarah Kolat, The Witch
 Brian Schappals, clarinet
 Luke Fitzpatrick, adapted guitar III, kithara II, adapted viola
 Charles Corey, harmonic canons, surrogate kithara, Spoils of War, chromelodeon I
 Jeff Bowen, kithara II, Spoils of War
 Laure Struber, chromelodeon I
 Bonnie Whiting, diamond marimba, Spoils of War, chromelodeon I, harmonic canon
 Paul Hansen, bass marimba
 Rebekah Ko, marimba eroica

Concept² and staging by Sarah Kolat and Charles Corey

Castor and Pollux (1952).....Harry Partch

Charles Corey, harmonic canon
 Jeff Bowen, kithara II
 Luke Fitzpatrick, surrogate kithara
 Paul Hansen, diamond marimba
 Rebekah Ko, bass marimba
 Marcin Paćzkowski, bass marimba
 Bonnie Whiting, cloud-chamber bowls

PROGRAM NOTES

In many ways, *Eleven Intrusions* is a direct continuation of the style of Partch's early compositions for Adapted Viola and voice, despite the 17 years between his last setting of a Li Po poem in 1933 and the completion of this work in 1950. The work opens with *Two Studies on Ancient Greek Scales*, written first for Partch's Harmonic Canon in 1946 and rewritten in 1950 following his invention of the Bass Marimba. While many of Partch's compositions highlight interest in the music and theories of Antiquity, none does so more overtly. The next three *Intrusions* show an evolution of the ideas in his early works for one performer, employing the Diamond Marimba and Adapted Guitar II, which were also recent inventions. "The Rose" and "The Crane" are reworkings of compositions from 1942 that feature the slow gliding resonance of Partch's Adapted Guitar II, while "The Waterfall" highlights the chordal design of his Diamond Marimba.

Dark Brother, a setting of the final two paragraphs of Thomas Wolfe's *God's Lonely Man*, was the first piece Partch wrote specifically for his Chromelodeon. The Chromelodeon part emphasizes tonality flux – Partch's term for his voice-leading practice of resolution by narrow intervals – and fast passages of tiny intervals that cloud the harmonic activity. These two techniques would become hallmarks of Partch's Chromelodeon writing.

The Potion Scene, a setting of a passage from *Romeo & Juliet*, was originally written for voice and Adapted Viola; Partch substantially recomposed the music in 1955 to take advantage of the instruments then in his ensemble, creating a dark, foggy orchestration that moves between texturally supporting Juliet's monologue to functioning as an overwhelming dramatic force.

These two preceding works are strikingly similar, each featuring an intoned vocal line that barely hovers atop an intense and densely microtonal Chromelodeon and Adapted Viola texture punctuated by Kithara and percussion. The texts are profoundly lonely, offering some insight into the solitary and misunderstood existence that haunted Partch through much of his life.

"Beauty comes and passes, is lost the moment that we touch it, can no more be stayed or held than one can stay the flowing of a river. Out of this pain of loss, this bitter ecstasy of brief having, this fatal glory of the single moment, the tragic writer will therefore make a song for joy. That, at least, he may keep and treasure always. And his song is full of grief, because he knows that joy is fleeting, gone

the instant that we have it, and that is why it is so precious, gaining its full glory from the very things that limit and destroy it.”³

Two Settings from Lewis Carroll offers a dramatic shift in mood from the preceding works. These playful settings were originally composed as part of Partch’s effort to write lighter pieces that would complement the intense drama of his first full-length theatrical work, *Oedipus*. Although most of the comic works from these few years, such as *Castor and Pollux*, are larger in scale, these two short settings provide the clearest window into the whimsical side of Partch’s personality.

The text of *The Letter* comes directly from a letter Partch received from Pablo, a friend and fellow hobo; the great majority of the text appears exactly as Pablo wrote it. Partch composed several versions of *The Letter*, but they all feature the text set above a gentle ostinato that features a simpler version tonality flux than that presented in *Dark Brother*. Short instrumental sections punctuate this letter, moving to harmonies outside of those found in the ostinato.

San Francisco is a short, atmospheric setting of cries of two newsboys. Regarding its 1944 premiere, Lou Harrison wrote, “Mr. Partch has woven a spell of about the foggier and dampest music I have ever heard. I got homesick.”⁴

The original version of *Barstow*, composed in 1941, was for voice and Adapted Guitar; Partch revised the work several times, and arrived at a final scoring in 1968. Partch collected the text of *Barstow* himself, copying inscriptions from a railing in Barstow, California in 1940. In an article published in September, 1941, Partch wrote of the first inscription: “But this –why it’s music. It’s both weak and strong, like unedited human expressions always are. It’s eloquent in what it fails to express in words. And it’s epic. Definitely, it is music.”⁵

The Bewitched – A Ballet Satire, is the shorter, first edition of what would become one of Partch’s best known works, *The Bewitched*. In this earlier version, Partch kept the ensemble comparatively small due to his desire to tour the piece, and held it to a duration of fewer than forty minutes so it could fit on a single LP. After months of frustrations trying to propose and execute such a tour, he undertook a substantial revision of *The Bewitched*, approximately doubling both the number of performers and the total duration, adding a lengthy Prologue and brief Epilogue to frame the ten scenes of the work. The *Ballet Satire* was immediately abandoned, receiving its premiere in Seattle in April 2019.

As for the conception of *The Bewitched*, Partch writes:

“In the summer of 1952, a man visited my studio and suggested that if I would write a series of ‘backgrounds’ for television...I might make a lot of money...This idea, plus the fact that in the ensuing years literally dozens of what I could only call *lost musicians* visited me at my studio in Sausalito, plus an old interest in the ancient idea of the *benevolent, all-knowing* witch, led to the present work.”⁶

Castor and Pollux is a dance work depicting the story of Leda and the Swan and the birth of the twins Castor and Pollux. The score consists of two halves, one for each twin, each further divided into four scenes representing Seduction, Conception, Incubation, and Delivery from the Egg. The first three scenes for each half are scored for subsets of the ensemble, while the final scene features the previous three performed simultaneously in an energetic superimposition of rhythms, melodies, and harmonic structure.

–Charles Corey

¹Harry Partch and Thomas McGeary. *Bitter Music: Collected Journals, Essays, Introductions, and Librettos* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 201.

²The character of The Witch is defined as an ancient, omniscient, benevolent power, and through her bewitching, the characters represented within each scene reach some kind of reconciliation. However, despite the evocative titles for each of the scenes, Partch never stated an overall program for *The Bewitched – A Ballet Satire*. His rescoring of the work, *The Bewitched – A Dance Satire*, does include explicit programmatic elements, but they rely on the expanded forces of the second version, and would not come across as dramatically as intended in this smaller, intimate setting.

Drawing inspiration from Partch's Cloud-Chamber Bowls and the global political climate at the time of this work's composition, this evening's story sees The Witch examining items from the Atomic Age and considering construction of her own fallout shelter. And as for why she would engage in such an activity, our Witch – like Partch himself – recognizes the power of creating something with her own hands.

³Thomas Wolfe, “God’s Lonely Man” in *The Hills Beyond* (New York: The New American Library, 1941), 152.

⁴Bob Gilmore, *Harry Partch: A Biography*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 151.

⁵Harry Partch and Thomas McGeary. *Bitter Music: Collected Journals, Essays, Introductions, and Librettos* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 201.

⁶Harry Partch. *Genesis of a Music: An Account of a Creative Work, Its Roots and Its Fulfillments*, 2nd ed., (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974), 334.

UPCOMING SCHOOL OF MUSIC EVENTS

All events are free unless noted otherwise.

Saturday, Feb. 8

The Harry Partch Ensemble

Charles Corey, director

Schneebeck Concert Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 14

Jazz Orchestra featuring Delfeayo Marsalis

Tracy Knoop, director

Schneebeck Concert Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Tickets required: tickets.pugetsound.edu

Friday, Feb. 21

Jacobsen Series: The Legacy of George Walker

Schneebeck Concert Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Tickets \$20/15: tickets.pugetsound.edu

Free for Puget Sound and K-12 students

Friday, Feb. 28

Symphony Orchestra featuring Student Concerto-Aria Winners

Rosie Rogers, bassoon; Elliott Wells, cello; and Emma Lenderink, flute

Schneebeck Concert Hall, 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 4

Noon Recital Series

Schneebeck Concert Hall, noon

Friday, March 6

Jazz Orchestra

Tracy Knoop, director

Schneebeck Concert Hall, 7:30 p.m.

All listings are subject to change. For the most current information about upcoming arts events and lectures, visit pugetsound.edu/music.

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