

Selecting illustrative works from the lifetime of a creative person is a daunting task; doing so with a singularly individual artist like Harry Partch is all the more difficult. In the four decades since Partch's death, interest in both his life and his compositional output has continued to grow, and there remains a place for documents that can offer insights, suggest paths, and give new life to that creator's endeavors.



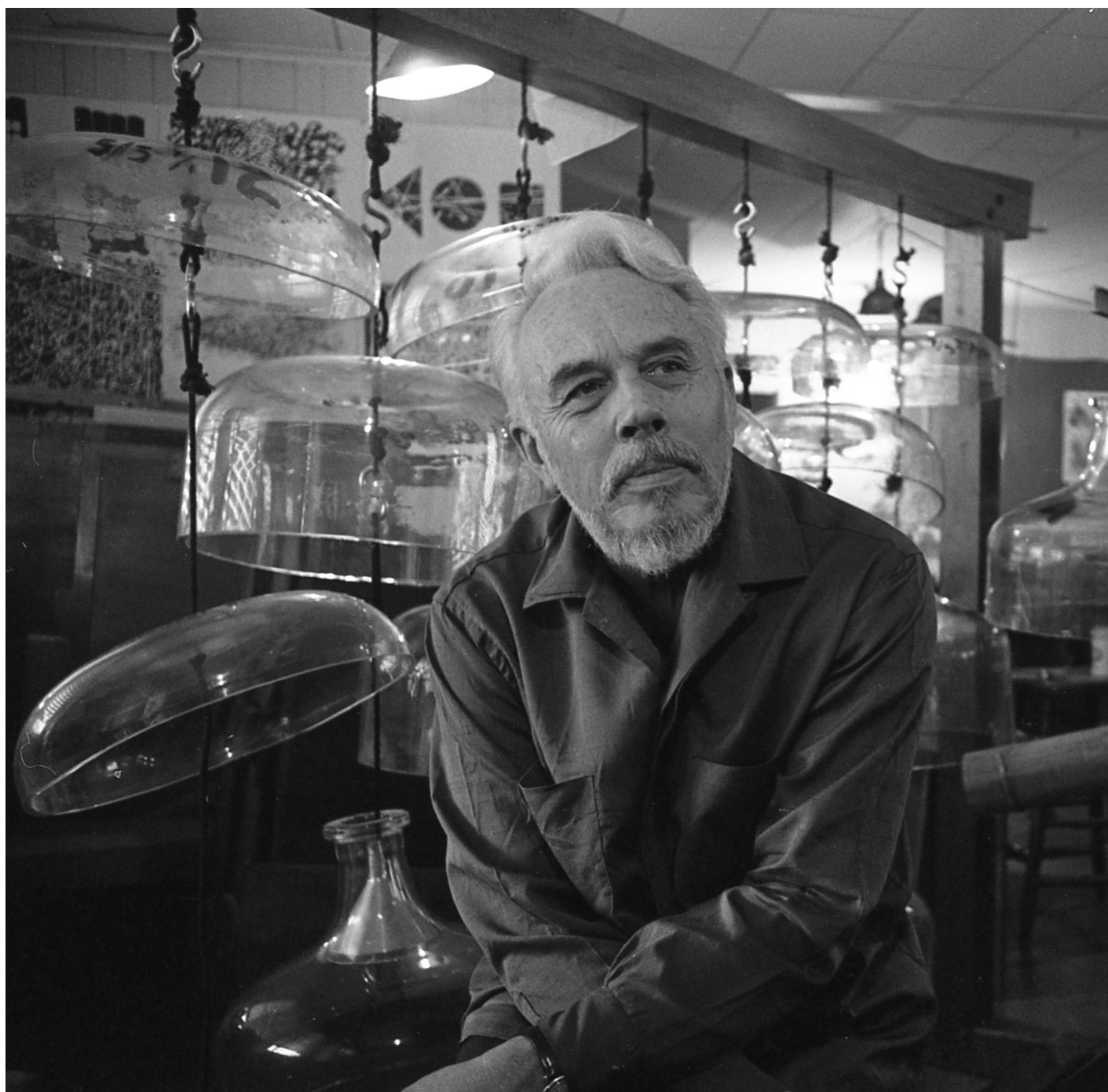


Even as duplicate instrumental ensembles are beginning to appear, and the original Partch instrumental resources have found a new home for performance and study, there is considerable value in returning to the many recordings he crafted over a lifetime of composition and performance. These are recordings that carry not only the stamp of the author, but his voice as well—Partch himself appears on every single track of this record, either as singer, instrumentalist, or both.

Partch had an admittedly uneasy relationship with recordings—how could it be otherwise, for the corporeal composer who so wanted his works to be *experienced* in real time, with live performers and raw emotions? And yet, as a vehicle to increase the exposure of his works, and—on a more fundamental level—as a means of financial support, his production of recordings became a model for the modern-day indie artist. It wasn't until he was in his sixties

that any of his music was available on a commercial label, yet from the first release of 78s in 1946, through his release of his own Gate 5 records, to his attendance in the recording studio during the mixing of *The Dreamer That Remains*, Partch was actively engaged in the process and steadfast in expecting the highest quality of performance capture he could obtain. Harry's hope for the listener? As he put on the back of one of his Gate 5 records:

"The FIRST HEARING of this work should be through the best and most powerful playback equipment that is obtainable for the short time necessary. When one judges the work through inadequate playback equipment, it is very much as though he were appraising a new painting by the light of a 25-watt bulb twenty paces away in the dead of night."

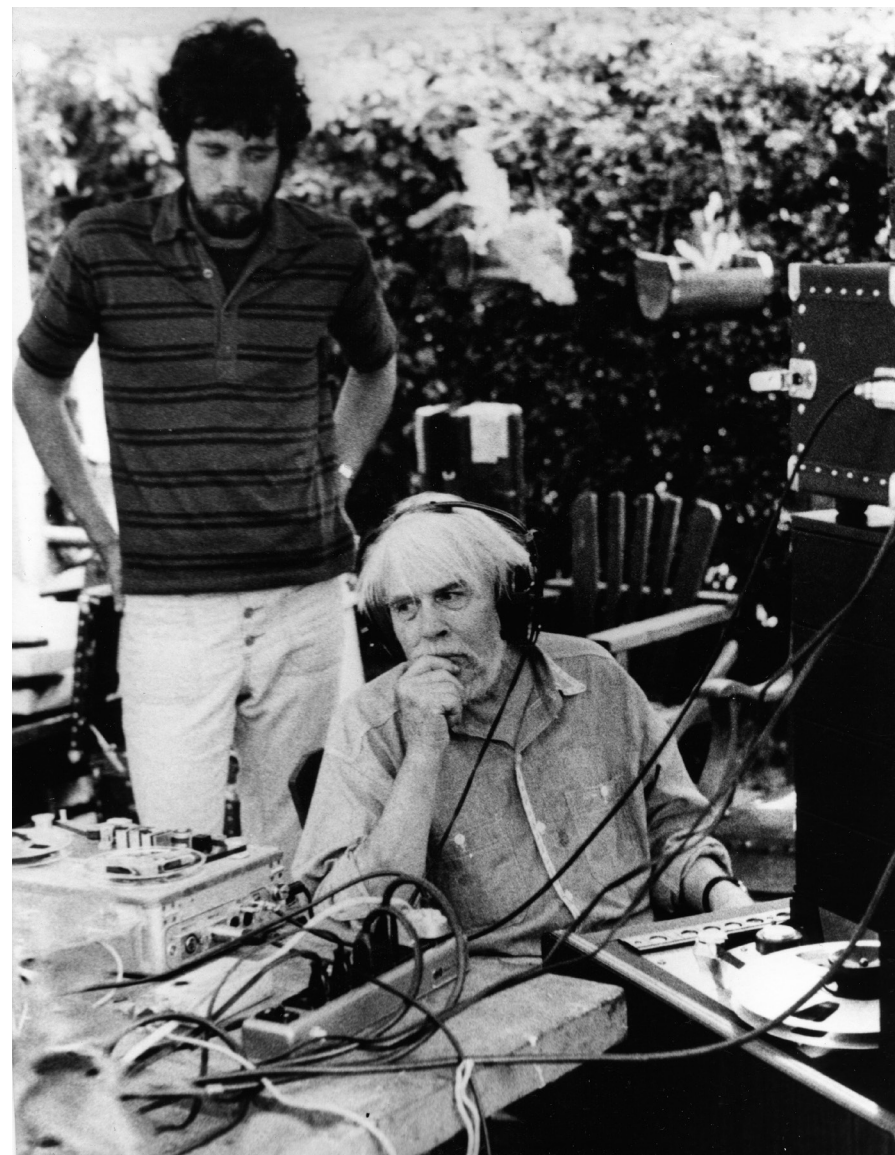


The Dreamer That Remains

In 1971, Partch met with one of his strongest supporters, arts patron Betty Freeman. At this meeting, she proposed two projects in one: to produce a documentary on the composer, and to commission a new work to accompany it. Partch was moved by the proposal, and even more so after meeting her intended director for the film, Stephen Pouliot. All of this took place near the end of the composer's life, when his energy and health were beginning to fail him, but he committed to the project as fully as he ever had. There were months that saw film sessions of interviews and scenes with Partch in his workshop working on two instruments (a new Kithara I, and a completely new instrument, the Mbira Bass Dyad), and moments of daily life. During this time, he put together both a libretto and musical sections that would serve as both a composition as well as material for the musical portions of the film.

The piece itself, *The Dreamer That Remains*, is a through-composed narrative that uses a moderately large instrumental group who also sing, along with Partch himself. The first section starts from a single tone on a tuning fork, and moves to bold ensemble playing and impassioned choral outbursts. The underlying text in this part of the piece surrounds the quote that gave name to the composition, and the music progresses not so much with a structure as with a traversal of moods and colors, mirrored by images of the instruments and performers in the film. In the center, Partch himself, the dreamer who has been there from the beginning, the portrait of the man as an artistic spirit.

The second section accompanied the end of the film, in a staged rendition, and combines Partch's recollections of his childhood growing up in Arizona with thoughts on present-day human



conditions. This portion of *Dreamer* may be the most public acknowledgment by Partch of his homosexuality, initially in a somewhat flaunting manner that he later revised to be more circumspect. In the end, the substance of this comes across as a plea for people to be kind to one another and respectful of all loving relationships, an “anodyne for peace, concord, comfort.”

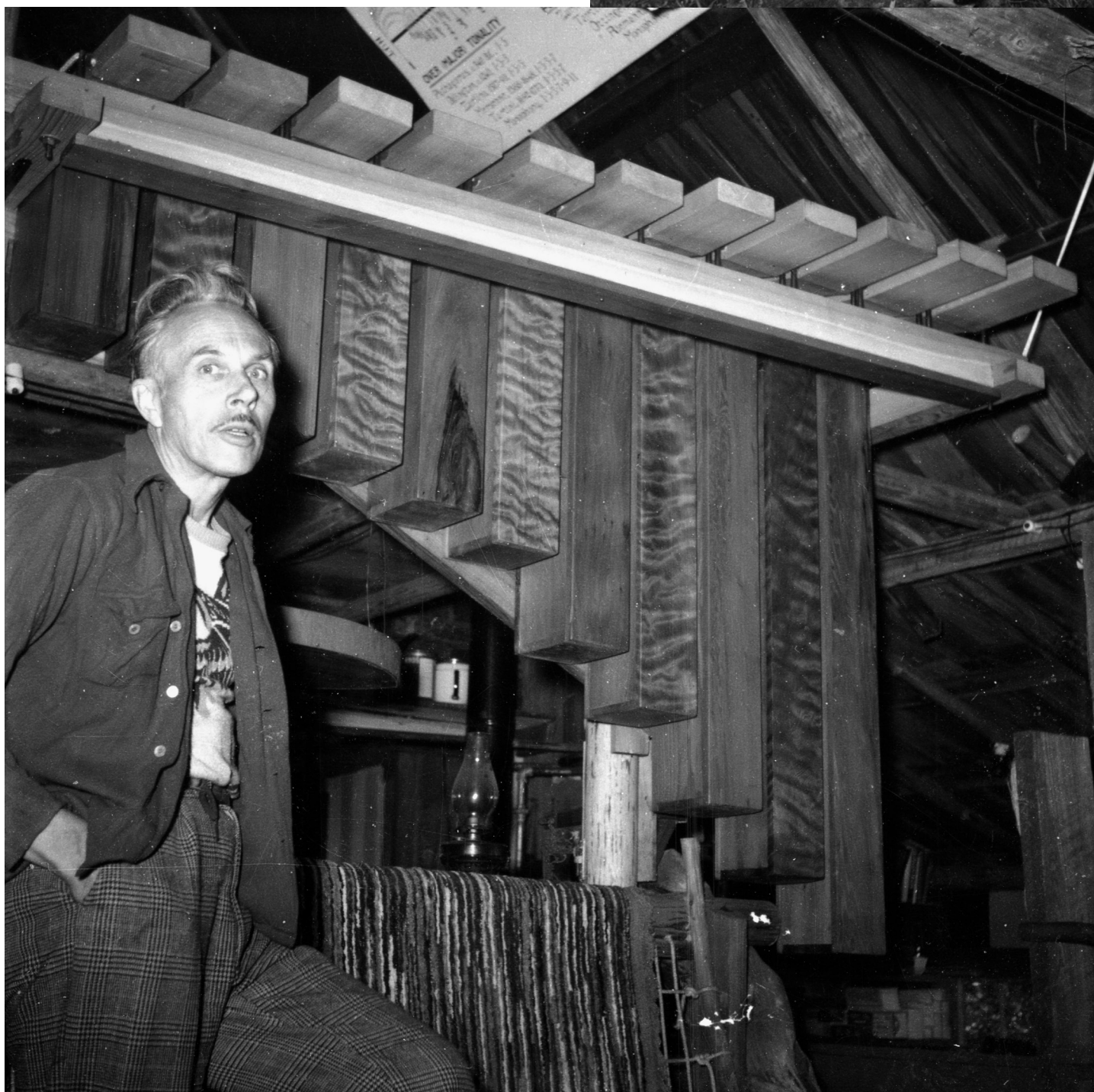
In its brief ten minutes, the music that Partch composed ranges widely: there are quiet moments for Adapted Viola and voice, hearkening back to his very first compositions, extended instrumental interjections with piquant vibrancy from the assembled percussive instruments, and ruminatively tranquil episodes for the strings. Running throughout, he sets the human voice (his own), accompanied at times by the most introspective of surroundings, all the way to full-throated group song. Quiet passion and chaotic whimsy are both in play, and the music, along with the film, goes a great way down the path of providing a good insight into the man who was both subject and author.



Three Intrusions

After the larger ensemble resources of *Dreamer*, we turn to Partch's earlier, more personal style, encapsulated in the oldest recordings we have available to us. The three *Intrusions* are part of a group of eleven short works that were composed and recorded when Partch was living in the coastal forest at Gualala, California, in the early 1950s. This was a middle period for the composer, moving on from his most intimate settings for voice and single instruments to a somewhat larger family of instruments to use. Some of these were being built and used for the first time, including the Bass Marimba and Cloud-Chamber Bowls. For nearly three years, in conditions that were rustic at best, Partch expanded his compositional skills and eventually recorded some of these efforts. At the time, composer Ben Johnston had come to Gualala, ostensibly to study with Partch, ending up being both an apprentice and performer. With the assistance of Larry Marshall, arrangements were made to bring an MGM recording truck and engineer Harry Lindgren up from Paramount Studios in Los Angeles to capture some of the new pieces.

Partch wrote few strictly instrumental pieces, and the "Study on Olympos' Pentatonic" is one of these, initially written for Harmonic Canon a few years before, with a part for the newly-built Bass Marimba added at this time. More simply constructed than the other *Intrusions*, the marimba part lends weight and grounds the excursions of the canon, whose melodies are spun out as successive strings are plucked and strummed. "The Rose" is a setting of a poem by Ella Young, originally set for voice and Adapted Guitar II, revised at this time to include the Diamond Marimba. The open chordal and arpeggiated nature of the instrumental parts give one a sense of the harmonic structures underlying the melody, where Partch sets the text in his familiar manner, using small, microtonal intervals to incorporate a speaker's intonations into the musical fabric. His own singing is personal and evocative, possibly reflecting a bit of the loneliness and difficulty of his physical locale. The final piece of this grouping, "The Street," is a setting of a passage from Willard Motley's novel *Knock On Any Door* for voice, Harmonic Canon, and Bass Marimba. In this work, the canon is tuned to a full setting of Partch's microtonal 43-tone scale, which allows it to closely accompany the singer's minute inflections of pitch, binding intricately with spoken intonations. Sweeps on the strings bring dark colors, while Partch is already experimenting with his new marimba, including passages to be played with gloved hands. In this through-composed piece, the changing scenes of the text are mirrored in ever-changing textures and patterns in the instrumental writing, fluidly moving with the narrator through the images of street life.



*The smithy that Partch lived and worked in while staying in Gualala, 1948-50. Unsigned photograph
Partch with the newly constructed Bass Marimba, Gualala, 1949. Photo: Larry Marshall*

And on the Seventh Day Petals Fell in Petaluma

In 1962, Partch returned to California after a number of years in the mid-West, seeing a number of his works premiered with university ensembles. Coming back to the Bay area, setting up a studio in Petaluma, and working on new instruments were a welcome change (though not without difficulties), allowing him to recalibrate the intricacies of his instrumental and rhythmic writing. As mentioned earlier, Partch showed very little interest in purely instrumental compositions, and created most of those that he wrote as studies for other purposes. The largest, and most complex of these, was about to be created: *And on the Seventh Day Petals Fell in Petaluma*.

Writing in advance of the release of a recording of the work in 1966, Partch wrote the following:

“The instruments used in this work were incubated in a world of their own, almost totally. And the sounds which enliven the audio aspect of their being have become the musical sinews of a larger concept, a full-blown integration—“Delusion of the Fury”—as yet unperformed, unseen, unheard. Here, in the notes to that larger work, nothing is elaborated, nothing is “developed.” An idea is stated in sparest form, and abandoned. Another idea is stated in sparest form, and abandoned.”

It is hard to imagine him composing completely academically, and there are indications that daily life in the Pioneer Hatchery (his studio) influenced an unstated narrative. Nonetheless, what we are ultimately presented with is a unique piece, composed of 34 one-minute verses: the first 23 are duets and trios, and the final 11 are combinations of the previous verses into quartets, quintets, and a final septet. The original recordings were done by Partch, long-time assistant Danlee Mitchell, and percussionist Michael Ranta in Petaluma; later, additional recording was done, and the original duos and trios synched electronically by Cecil Charles Spiller in Venice, California.

The included excerpt of the piece is comprised of the final three verses of *Petals*, consisting of a quartet, a quintet, and a septet; the entire piece is nearly thirty-six minutes in length.



Michael Ranta (rear), Danlee Mitchell, and Partch recording “And On The Seventh Day Petals Fell In Petaluma”, Petaluma, 1964. Photo: Sylvia Spencer
Danlee Mitchell, Harry Partch, and Michael Ranta, Petaluma, 1964. Unsigned photograph

U.S. Highball

Few pieces exemplify the work of a composer as well as *U.S. Highball* does for Harry Partch. The piece itself is based on a freight-train trip that he took in September, 1941, traveling from San Francisco to Chicago; he subtitled it *A Musical Account of a Transcontinental Hobo Trip*. During the actual trip, Partch scribbled in a small notebook to record the events, voices, and impressions of the difficulties of the hobo's life. His first version, for three instruments and voices, had been completed in 1943, in part with help from a Guggenheim Fellowship award. Partch recorded this version in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1946. He later remarked: "Upon studying this recording, I realized a most urgent need—percussion built for this system of music, for these theories. By 1955 I had plenty of percussion instruments and I rewrote the work, putting it in its present form." The recording that follows is this later, last version of the piece.

U.S. Highball falls naturally into three sections, as described by Partch: "The first is a long and jerky passage by drags (slow freights) to Little America, Wyoming. The second is an adagio dishwashing movement at Little America. The third is a rhythmic allegro, mostly by highway (hitchhiking) to Chicago." Throughout the piece, the text is delivered in one of two ways: by the Subjective Voice, who is the protagonist in the true dramatic sense (as well as being the voice of Partch himself); and by several Objective Voices—the instrumentalists, voicing the other hobos on the trip. While the events that served as the source material and catalyst for the work occurred here in the United States, Partch did not view it as "essentially a piece of Americana, a documentary, although if it were only this, I would not minimize it."

Indeed, he viewed it in the larger sense of experience, and as an artistic emanation of that strictly literal expression of life. In his notebook, he had captured the names of stations, hobo inscriptions, and phrases and utterances from the many voices on the trip, only editing out "profanity as repetitive as the sound of wheels on the track." These he set to music, utilizing his instruments to support their speech—never merely as background music—as they would intone them with "the range and speed of the natural speaking voice." Partch always intended a performance of the piece to have the instrumentalists play the parts of the various characters, standing to deliver their lines from their spot on stage, lit. It was very early that Harry Partch had begun to formulate his concept of a truly integrated presentation, intrinsically corporeal. Of this work, he said:

"I have called *U.S. Highball* the most creative piece of work I have ever done, 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 in adult life, there can be no doubt of it. The intensity of the experiences preceding it and the intensity of my feelings at the time forced me into a different welter of thought—one that I had to mold in a new way, and for this one work alone."

And yet, he continued to do just that, for the better part of three more decades: viewing life, and molding it into artistic expression, in a new way. As Arthur Woodbury wrote:

"That Harry Partch is no ordinary person is obvious. If his accomplishments in music had been slight, perhaps it could all end here—but on the contrary, his accomplishments have been considerable. Anyone who has sat in a room, surrounded by Partch's many instruments, and listened to his music—this complete and, to many, alien world of sound and drama—knows what an intimidating experience this can be. The very thought of adopting a philosophical position diametrically opposed to a well-entrenched existing tradition, building a theory of tonal relationships and the instruments to realize this theory, composing the music, staging

the drama, rehearsing and bringing it all to performance, recording the result—all in the face of an uncomprehending public—and then having the perseverance (perhaps obstinacy would be a better word) to continue all this for the better part of a lifetime, is a staggering thing to contemplate. Perhaps it is not so staggering if you consider Harry Partch's ideas about music. Partch and his music are very close to being one and the same thing."

We hope that this recording brings you closer, as well.

—Jon Szanto

Archivist for the Harry Partch Foundation, performer with the Harry Partch Ensemble 1972-1987, and assistant and friend to Harry Partch.
(San Diego, June 17, 2015)



The Rose (Ella Young)

The rose that blooms in Paradise
Burns with an ecstasy too sweet
For mortal eyes
But sometimes down the jasper walls
A petal falls
Toward earth and night
To lose it is to lose delight beyond compare
To have it is to have despair



The Street (Willard Motley)

Over the jail the wind blows, sharp and cold.
Over the jail and over the car tracks the
cold wind blows. The streetcar clangs east,
turns down Alaska Avenue, and at a diagonal
crosses Halstead Street. North and south
runs Halstead, twenty miles long. Twelfth
Street. Boys under lampposts, shooting craps,
learning. Darkness behind the school where
you smarten up, you come out with a pride
and go look at all the good clothes in the shop
windows and the swell cars whizzing past
to Michigan Boulevard and start figuring
out how you can get all these things. Down
Maxwell Street where the prostitutes stand in
the gloom-clustered doorways. Across Twelfth
Street either way on Peoria are the old houses.
The sad faces of the houses line the street like
old men and women sitting along the veranda
of an old folks' charity home.
Nick? Knock on any door down this street.



Opposite page: bobos and freight train, photo captured by Partch himself while riding the rails, Yuma, AZ, c. 1940

Partch with Harmonic Canon II, New York, 1968. Photo: Don Hunstein

The Mazda Marimba, constructed of empty light bulbs, c. 1964. Unsigned photograph



U.S. Highball

A Musical Account of a Transcontinental Hobo Trip

Leaving San Francisco, Californi-o—
 I got a letter and the letter said—May God's richest blessings be upon
 you
 Dtuh dtuh dtuh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh
 Dtuh dtuh dtuh-duh blessings be upon you
 And that's why I'm going to Chicago
 Leaving Sacramento, Califor-nigh-o—
 Going east, mister? Going east, mister? Going east, mister?
 It's the freights for you, boy.
 Leaving Colfax, Californi-ax.
 Let'er highball, engineer!
 Na na Na Na na-na-na-na-na-na-Na—
 Leaving Emigrant Gap, Californi-ap!
 If you wanta stay in one piece sleep on the back end of the oil tank,
 buddy—
 She's tough goin' down the other side o' the Sierras.
 Na na Na na Na-na-na-na-na-na-na-na
 Leaving Truckee, Califor-nigh-ee-ee—
 Leaving Reno, Neva-a-a-a-a-a-a-do-o-o-o-o-o-o O—o-o-o-o-
 La la La la la-la-la-la-la-la-Lo—La la la-la-la-la-la-la Lo—lo-lo-lo
 Lo—lo-lo-lo
 Hey Mac, you'll get killed on that oil tank. There's a empty back here.
 Leaving Sparks, Neva—darks!
 I ain't got no matches, ain't got no tobacco, ain't got no chow, ain't
 got no money.
 Hey, Mac, is that blanket big enough for two?
 Hey, don't sleep with your head against the end of the car.
 You'll get your neck broke when she jerks.
 Leaving Lovelock, Neva-dock—
 She's gonna hole in to let a coupla passengers by.
 There she jerks again. That engineer don't know how to drive this
 train.
 Leaving Imlay, Neva-day—
 Freeze another night tonight, goin' over the hump.
 That's another bad hump this side o' Cheyenne. 'Tsa bitch.
 That Cheyenne, huh. That used to be a bad town, but not any more,
 so much.

They used to have a school there for railroad bulls. But the school's
 moved to Denver.
 It moves back and forth, from Cheyenne to Denver. Stay out o'
 Denver, Mac!
 Leaving Winnemucca, Neva-ducca—
 They've gone and sealed up our empty, and all the rest are sealed
 refrigerators.
 Sh—not even a gondola.
 Moleen, Neva-deen—
 Wait for the next drag—there'll be lots a empties on it.
 Too cold to ride outside this weather.
 Look at them northern lights. See them long streaks up in the sky?
 You can't ride outside in weather like this.
 We'll build a fire so when the next drag stops all the 'bos'll come
 runnin' over to get warm.
 Then we'll know where there's a empty.
 Leaving Elko, Neva-do—
 There she jerks again. I can stand everything but them jerks. They
 make me nervous.
 And the dirt, too.
 Yesterday I washed all my clothes in the Roseville Jungle.
 And I looked so good when I put 'em on that I took a walk, up into
 town.
 Now look at me! Look at all the guys on this drag,
 Not only dirty, but they're old before their time.
 Ridin' freights'll make an old man out of ya, Mac.
 Still, I can stand that, and the dirt. Can stand everything but the jerks.
 Crossing Great Salt Lake, U-take—
 Any thirty-nine hundred engine is going east. That oil tank's a tough
 one to ride, though.
 Leaving Evansting, Wyoming—
 Watch out for those jerks the next fifteen miles, Mac.
 You've got to hang on every second, or you'll go under when she jerks.
 He really balls the jack goin' down the grade.
 Green River, Wyo-mer—
 Can stand everything but the jerks.
 Rock Springs, Wyo-mings—



Going east, mister? Going east, mister? Going east, mister?
 There are lots of rides but they don't stop much, do they, pal?
 Back to the freights for you, boy.
 And, since the drags don't stop at Rock Springs, back to Green River,
 Wyo-mer!
 There are rides on the highway at Green River, but they go right on by.
 There are rides on the freights at Green River too, but the Green River
 bull says:
 You exclamation mark bum! Get your semicolon asterisk out o' these
 yards,
 and don't let me catch you down here again, or you'll get thirty days in
 the jail house.
 Green River, Wyo-mer—S-s-s-s-tuck! in Green River!
 Little America, Wyo-ma—
 Did I ever ride freights? Huh!
 One time I was in the yards in Pueblo, sitting with some other 'bos
 around a fire, waiting for the hotshot on the D and R G. Pretty
 soon an old man with a long white beard come out of a piano box on
 the edge of the yards and come over to warm his hands by our fire.
 He didn't say anything until some of the boys left to catch a drag
 that was just beginning to move out. Then the old man, who just
 come out of the piano box, says—
 It's purty tough to be ridin' the drags on a night like this. I know. I was a
 bum once myself.
 Leaving Little America, Wyo-ma—
 I have a letter and the letter says, May God's richest blessings be upon
 you.
 Dtuh-dtuh-dtuh-duh-duh-du-duh-du-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh
 Dtuh-dtuh-dtuh-duh blessings be upon you.
 And that's why I'm thinking—Chicago—
 Going east, mister? Going east, mister?
 Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago
 Leaving Laramie, Wyo-mie—Yih! hoo—
 Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago
 Chicago Chicago
 Leaving Cheyenne, Wyo-manne!

Chicago-cago Chicago-cago Chicago-cago
 Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago
 Leaving Pine Bluffs Wyo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-muffs!
 Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago Chicago
 Chicago Chicago
 go-Chicago go-Chicago go-Chicago go-Chicago go-Chicago go-
 Chicago
 Leaving Kimball, Nebras-kall!
 North Platte, Nebras-katte—
 Notice to transients: This city allows you two meals and bed for one
 night only.
 Do not leave this place after six p.m. By order of the chief of police.
 Praise the Lord O praise the Lord O praise the Lord O praise the Lord
 O praise the Lord
 O praise the Lord O praise the Lord
 Leaving North Platte, Nebras-ass-katte—
 Praise the Lord
 I can't a ride! To hell with Nebraska. Also to hell with Idaho, Wyoming,
 Colorado, California, Nevada, and Utah.
 Chicago go-Chicago -cago go-Chicago Chicago go-Chicago -cago
 go-Chicago
 Leaving York, Ne-bras-kork—
 ogo ogo aga ogo Chicago aga aga ogo aga Chicago
 ogo ogo aga ogo Chicago aga aga ogo aga Chicago ogo ogo aga ogo
 Chicago
 Leaving Lincoln, Nebras-kon—
 Na na na na na—Na na na na na—Na na na na na—Na na na na na—
 Na na na na na—Na na na na na—Na na na na na—Na na na na na—
 Leaving Iowa City, Io-wuffs!
 Jack Parkin—One-eleven West William Street, Champaign, Illinois.
 Telephone Eight-Four-Two-Six—if hungry when there—
 Yih! hoo—
 Leaving Davenport, I-ee-o-u-wort!
 Dah dah dah blessings be upon you Dah dah dah dah
 Chicago

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- Enclosure Two. Historic Speech-Music Recordings from the Harry Partch Archives.* innova 401 (4 CDs).
Enclosure Five. Contains *Ulysses Departs from the Edge of the World, Revelation in the Courthouse Park, King Oedipus, The Bewitched.* innova 405 (3 CDs).
Enclosure Six: Delusion of the Fury. innova 406.
Revelation in the Courthouse Park. Tomato Records 2696552.
The Harry Partch Collection Vol. 1: Eleven Intrusions, Castor and Pollux, Ring Around the Moon, Even Wild Horses, Ulysses at the Edge. New World Records 80621-2.
The Harry Partch Collection Vol. 2: The Wayward, And on the Seventh Day Petals Fell in Petaluma. New World Records 80622-2.
The Harry Partch Collection Vol. 3: The Dreamer That Remains, Rotate the Body in All Its Planes, Windsong, Water! Water! New World Records 80623-2.
The Harry Partch Collection Vol. 4: The Bewitched. New World Records 80624-2.

VIDEOS

- Enclosure One.* Four films by Madeleine Tourtelot with music by Harry Partch (*Rotate the Body in All Its Planes, Music Studio, U.S. Highball, Windsong*). innova 400.
Enclosure Four. Delusion of the Fury. innova 404.
The Dreamer That Remains: A Study in Loving. Directed by Stephen Pouliot and produced by Betty Freeman. New Dimension Media, Inc.

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For more comprehensive information on Harry Partch, please visit the official Partch Web site, *Corporeal Meadows*, www.corporeal.com.

For information on the original Partch instruments and current activities, under the direction of Dr. Charles Corey, please visit www.harrypartch.com

The Dreamer That Remains was recorded in 1972 in San Diego, California by Mark Hoffman, Ron Quillan, and Bill Blue. First released on New World Records NW 214, 1978.

Study on Olympos Pentatonic, The Rose, and The Street were recorded in 1950–51 in Gualala, California, by Harry Lindgren. First released on *Partch Compositions*, a five-record 78 rpm set by Lauriston C. Marshall, Berkeley, California.

And on the Seventh Day Petals Fell in Petaluma was recorded in 1964 in Petaluma, California, by Mike Callahan, and in 1966 in Venice, California, by Cecil Charles Spiller. Original tape edited by Harry Partch and Cecil Charles Spiller. First released on CRI SD 213 in 1968.

U.S. Highball was recorded in 1958 in Evanston, Illinois, by James Cunningham. First released on Gate 5 Records, Issue No. 6, 1958.

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Front cover/booklet cover: Harry Partch Smoking a Cigar, William Gedney Photographs and Writings, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

Back cover, top left: Hobos and freight, Yuma, AZ, c. 1940. Photo: Harry Partch. Back cover, bottom, left to right: Partch, during “Dreamer” rehearsals, San Diego, 1972. Photo: Betty Freeman / with Bass Marimba, Gualala, 1949. Photo: Larry Marshall / recording “Petals”, Petaluma, 1964. Photo: Sylvia Spencer / riding the rails, location unknown, c. 1930. Unsigned photograph.

Back booklet: Partch Sitting Near Window With Pipe, William Gedney Photographs and Writings, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

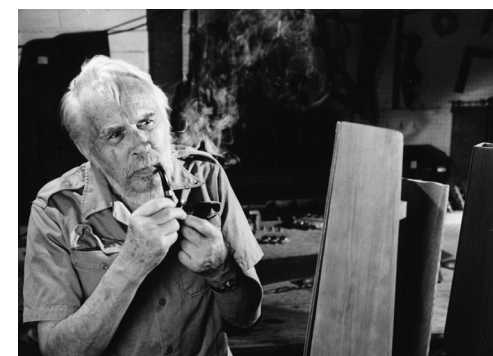
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The Harry Partch Ensemble at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, performing “U.S. Highball”, Los Angeles, 1976. Unsigned photograph



*The Zymo-Xyl, constructed of oak bars, liquor bottles, automobile hub caps and a pot lid, Venice, 1965. Photo: Danlee Mitchell
Above right: Partch during the filming of "The Dreamer That Remains", Encinitas, 1972. Photo: Betty Freeman*



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Instruments of Harry Partch in the studios of KPBS, San Diego State University, during the filming of "The Dreamer That Remains", San Diego, 1972. Photo: Danlee Mitchell

