



REDCAT

Patch

JUNE 14, 2012 8:30 PM

presented by

REDCAT

Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater

California Institute of the Arts

**CaLARTS**

MicroFest 2012 & REDCAT present



BITTER MUSIC

Act I

- June 11, 1935 - Santa Rosa, California.  
"Hand me down my walking cane..."
- June 13  
"I check out and go to the State Relief Bureau..."

***San Francisco: A Setting of the Cries of Two Newsboys on  
a Street Corner (1941)***

- June 15 - Harrington Ranch, San Joaquin Delta
- June 24, 1935  
"Today is my birthday. I am thirty-four..."  
*New York, London, Dublin,*

***By the Rivers of Babylon (1931)***

*London, Cornwall, New York, Indianapolis, St. Louis,  
Los Angeles, Santa Rosa*

- - - intermission - - -

## Act II

- Harrington Ranch, June 24, 1935  
"Today we hoe weeds in the potato patch..."
- July 20 - Heading north, between Sacramento and Redding
- July 25 - Blue Ox Lodge, Seattle, Washington
- July 26 - Camp Milan, Cascade Mountains
- August 5 - Toledo
- August 15 - State Emergency Relief Administration's Camp Ingot
- October 22 - Nearing Monterey

### ***The Letter*** (1943)

- November 12 - Santa Barbara
- November 23 - Los Angeles
- February 1, 1936 - San Bernardino

- - - postlude - - -

- Harry Partch (1969 interview) - "I was going to tell you..."

**Barstow** (1942), 2<sup>nd</sup> draft / 1<sup>st</sup> performance

## **Bitter Music** (excerpt from CD liner notes)

It is an astonishing gift of fate when a creative artist, known to the world for a particular achievement, is suddenly shown in a quite different light thanks to the existence of a single document that has somehow escaped the ruthless culling mechanisms of time. Harry Partch's *Bitter Music* is such a document, a "diary of eight months spent in transient shelters and camps, hobo jungles, basement rooms, and on the open road". The light it casts exposes its author's vulnerability: he talks to us in the first person, jokes with us, tells us stories, gets drunk, boasts, complains, confesses, all the while showing us as intimate a side of his personality as we will ever experience. Partch's more public achievement was, of course, the creation of forty years' worth of astonishing music as well as the construction of some twenty-five new musical instruments to play that music: almost none of his compositions can be satisfactorily performed without them. All the various facets of his legacy—the compositions, instruments, and his theoretical writings—powerfully question the whole operating basis of western classical music and suggest vigorous new ways of redirecting and refreshing that tradition. *Bitter Music* shows us, as no other Partch work does, the human cost of that achievement: the struggles (both inner and outer), the small joys and triumphs, and above all the desolate aloneness of the pioneer artist, misunderstood and ridiculed both by the powers-that-be and by the wider "sea of chaotic humanity".

That we have *Bitter Music* at all is little short of a miracle. The diary was written in 1935–36, and chronicles eight months of hobo existence at the beginning of what would be, for Partch, a very long "personal Great Depression". In the autumn of 1940, still living a vagabond existence and roaming the western states, he put up temporarily at Anderson Creek, near Big Sur, and readied the manuscript for publication. However, because of the United States' subsequent entry into the war and attendant paper shortages, the publication contract was cancelled. Partch thereafter began to lose belief in the diary, which seems to have outlived its usefulness to him—especially after the creation in the early 1940s of his great "Americana" compositions, *Barstow, U.S. Highball, The Letter, San Francisco* and others, works that fully exemplify his artistic ideals. He destroyed the manuscript of *Bitter Music* around 1950, saving only the two dozen pages of elegant, characterful ink drawings he had made in the hobo camps and on the road. It is not clear if he realized that his friend Lauriston Marshall had, a short time previously, made a microfilm copy of the journal along with a collection of music manuscripts Partch had loaned him for the purpose. Thanks to Marshall's microfilm, the text of the journal, minus the drawings but with all its passages

of music notation, was finally published in 1991 by the University of Illinois Press. (The present release is the first time the book and the drawings have been brought together again since their divorce.) In any case, for the last quarter-century of his life Partch himself never again set eyes on the journal, and struck it from the list of his works—while occasionally speaking highly of it, as is made clear by remarks in interviews with Jean Cutler from 1969, included here... Despite the sometimes exasperating attitudes and bursts of inflated self-importance of its protagonist, despite his occasional descents into ranting and his moments of near-madness, two qualities above all lift *Bitter Music* well above the level of much self-revelatory writing by artists whose inner lives we might finally have preferred not to know about. The first is the beauty of Partch's music and his prose, with its heart-stopping moments ("When a friend who has lived with me has suddenly gone, he is still present in my mind—he is in the feeling of the rug underfoot and between the leaves of my manuscripts, and I cannot shake him out overnight"). The second is the relentless honesty of his account of himself—an honesty that may not win him many friends, but that shines a laser beam into his innermost self, confronting the darkness as well as the light. The diary ends memorably in the pouring rain as Partch stands by the roadside attempting to hitch a lift towards Los Angeles, saying to the anonymous drivers who flash past him, "Do you passers-by know what is in my soul? Rain, rain, rain—my swift darlings—and bitter music". *Bitter Music* chronicles a slice of a life lived with utmost intensity, in the conviction that even the unbearable things of life—the rain, the bitterness—may eventually pass, and the pursuit of artistic truth sustain us again in its brilliance and vigour.

—Bob Gilmore, author of *Harry Partch: A Biography* (Yale University Press, 1998)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Partch". The letters are fluid and connected, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

*is a unique ensemble that specializes in the music & instruments of the iconoclastic American Maverick composer Harry Partch who, between 1930 and 1972, created one of the most amazing bodies of sensually alluring and emotionally powerful music of the 20th century. Partch wrote music dramas, dance theater, multi-media extravaganzas, vocal music and chamber music—all to be performed on the extraordinary orchestra of instruments that he designed and built himself. They have performed for Chamber Music in Historic Sites, the LA County Museum of Art, UCLA's Partch Centennial Celebration, Sacramento's Festival*

of *New American Music*, Minnesota Public Radio's *American Mavericks*, Mills College, the Getty Center, Santa Cruz Festival, Guadalajara I.B.F., & most recently with the San Francisco Symphony. Their premiere recording of *Bitter Music* was funded by the National Endowment of the Arts and the Aaron Copland Fund.

**JOHN SCHNEIDER** (narrator/baritone, Adapted Viola, Adapted Guitar) is an internationally recognized guitarist, composer, author and broadcaster whose weekly television and radio programs have brought the sound of the guitar into millions of homes for the past twenty years. He holds a Ph.D. in Physics & Music from the University of Wales, music degrees from the University of California and the Royal College of Music (London), and is past President of the Guitar Foundation of America. A specialist in contemporary music, Schneider's *The Contemporary Guitar* (University of California Press) has become the standard text in the field. He works as a music professor at Pierce College in Los Angeles, is music director for Just Strings and PARTCH, and is the founding artistic director of MicroFest, the annual festival of microtonal music. His radio show *Global Village* can be heard Thursdays 10am-12noon on Pacifica Radio's KPFK at 90.7fm in Los Angeles, and worldwide at [www.kpfk.org](http://www.kpfk.org).

**GARRY EISTER** (voice, piano) The music of composer/performer Garry Eister has been played by the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, the USC New Music Ensemble, Just Strings, flautist Fred Lau, tenors Jonathon Mack and John Duykers and many others. His *Quintet for Glass and Strings* was recorded by the Emerson String Quartet and glass armonicist Dennis James for Sony Classical's "Cristal: Glass Music Through the Ages". Eister has written a number of operas: *Moby Dick*, *The Glass Harmonica*, a one-act opera commissioned by and premiered at the San Luis Obispo Mozart Festival; a monodrama entitled *Like Writing on Water*, premiered at the Weil Concert Hall at New York's Carnegie Hall by mezzo soprano Jacalyn Kreitzer, with Susan Davies and Nancy Nagano. Eister has toured Europe four times with Daniel Lentz's ensembles. He earned his Ph.D. in Music Composition from the University of California at Santa Barbara. When he's not composing, he works as an artist-in-residence in Santa Maria and Arroyo Grande schools, teaching folk songs and musical games to children.

**RICHARD VALITUTTO** (piano) is active as a soloist, chamber musician, accompanist, improviser, experimental musician, teacher, and performance artist. He holds degrees in piano performance from the California Institute of the Arts and the

University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. He has performed in the Bang on a Can, Brevard, and Eastern Music Festivals, and has premiered numerous works for solo piano and ensemble, most recently Chinury Ung's *After Rising Light*, which was dedicated to Richard Valitutto and the composer's daughter, soprano Kanean Ung. He performed in the West Coast premiere of Iannis Xenakis' only opera *Oresteia* and was the soloist in Sofia Gubaidulina's piano concerto, *Introitus*, at REDCAT (Disney Hall complex) with the composer present.

**DAVID JOHNSON** (chromelodeon) is a composer, marimba/vibraphone soloist, percussionist and keyboard player known for his unique touch and approach to new classical music, improvisation, and blending of jazz and classical sensibilities. David plays with a wide range of ensembles including PARTCH, XTET, the New Century Players, the Kim Richmond Jazz Orchestra, the Vinny Golia Large Ensemble, Dark Wing, Roger Williams, the Lian Ensemble and the Nate La Pointe Band. He was a member of the historic Blackearth Percussion Group and has worked with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, John Zorn, Pierre Boulez, Wadada Leo Smith, Yusef Lateef, Stuart Copeland, Green Day, Dave Brubeck, and the California Ear Unit among others.

**ERIN BARNES** (kithara) is a multi-instrumentalist and vocalist smitten with beautiful music. (She is not, however, smitten with writing biographies.) Ms. Barnes enjoys spending her time singing Swedish herding calls to imaginary goats and cows, playing Irish and Scottish music on the hammered dulcimer, whistling professionally, and, of course, exploring microtonal metallophones and marimbas. This year, in addition to the aforementioned pursuits, you may find her playing lots of equal-tempered xylophone and glockenspiel (and even some mandolin and cello), accompanying herself in a one-woman cover band that specializes in the popular music of her youth. She is also likely to be found teaching children and grownups alike the ways of Music and/or frolicking in forests near and far.

**T.J. TROY** (voice) combines an eclectic knowledge of percussion from around the world with his innate musicality to create a distinct and powerful voice in the Los Angeles musician's community. An uncanny multi-instrumentalist and composer, T.J. has traveled and performed the world over, in projects spanning a wide breadth of style and genre. He received his Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Michigan, and his Master of Fine Arts degree from the California Institute of the Arts.

• special thanks •  
Robert Portillo, Adapted Viola; Kent Arnold, Chromelodeon; &  
Scott Hackleman, Kithara

In Memoriam  
Kent Arnold  
(1959 ~ 2012)

**[www.MicroFest.org](http://www.MicroFest.org)**

## UPCOMING PERFORMANCES AT REDCAT

**June 28 – July 1**

Ntare Guma Mbaho Mwine: *A Missionary Position*

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