

Martin Skamletz

“Of course I am a weak shadow of Lee Hoiby as a Kitharist.”

Five letters by Harry Partch, 1948–1958

»Of course I am a weak shadow of Lee Hoiby as a Kitharist.« Fünf Briefe von Harry Partch (1948–1958)

Der amerikanische Komponist und Pianist Lee Hoiby (1926–2011) war während seiner Studienzeit an der University of Wisconsin-Madison 1944–1947 als Kithara-Spieler Mitglied des Ensembles, mit dem Harry Partch (1901–1974) die ersten kommerziellen Schallplattenaufnahmen seiner Werke produzierte. Ausgehend von Partchs Briefen an Hoiby aus der Zeit von 1948 bis 1958, die hier publiziert und kommentiert werden, wird Einblick in eine für Partch entscheidende Umbruchszeit gegeben, in der die Komposition, Aufführung und Aufnahme seiner Werke eng mit seiner Aktivität als Instrumentenbauer und als Musiktheoretiker verflochten war. Hoibys eigene Entwicklung vom Pianisten zum Komponisten, die ihn Ende der 1940er Jahre zum Studium bei Gian Carlo Menotti (1911–2007) in Philadelphia bewegte, wird durch Hoibys Briefwechsel mit seinem pianistischen Mentor Egon Petri (1881–1962) zusätzlich beleuchtet. Das Begleitmaterial enthält Wiederveröffentlichungen von schwer zugänglichen frühen Aufnahmen von Partchs Werken und anderen Dokumenten.

During his stay at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (1944–1947), Harry Partch (1901–1974) recorded several of his works for the first time. The ensemble he directed for these recordings consisted mainly of Madison students. One of them was pianist Lee Hoiby (1926–2011) who would later go on to study piano with Egon Petri in Oakland and composition with Gian Carlo Menotti in Philadelphia. Hoiby continued to maintain contact with Partch through occasional correspondence until the late 1950s. Partch’s letters to Hoiby, as well as some other memorabilia of their collaboration, have only recently become accessible in a private collection and shed new light on their relationship between Partch’s time in Madison and his short stay at Northwestern University in Evanston. They are transcribed and commented on in this article. Petri’s letters to Hoiby from the same period supply additional information, and the aim of this article is to provide a continuous narration of the diverse

yet intertwining biographical strands of the persons involved, giving ample space to quotations from original documents.

As a composer, Lee Hoiby is well known for his operatic works – from his debut one-act piece *The Scarf*, presented at the inaugural Spoleto Festival in 1958, to *The Tempest* after Shakespeare, which was first performed by the Des Moines Metro Opera in 1986. A newspaper review of *The Tempest*'s premiere is characteristic of the general opinion of Hoiby's decidedly traditional style of composition: "The obvious complaint against Mr. Hoiby's music is his seemingly blissful refusal to acknowledge the very existence of musical Modernism."¹ However, his "lush, beautiful and" – at least sometimes – "stratospherically difficult"² vocal writing has won him supporters among first-rate singers like Leontyne Price.³

Hoiby was raised in Madison, Wisconsin, and continued his early piano studies at the University of Wisconsin with Gunnar Johansen (1906–1991), who had been a student of Egon Petri (1881–1962) in Berlin at the Hochschule für Musik during the early 1920s.⁴ Probably encouraged by Johansen, Hoiby started taking occasional lessons with Petri at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, as early as 1944.⁵ Petri had been one of the most important pupils and closest collaborators of Ferruccio Busoni (1866–1924). In 1947, when Petri moved to Oakland, California, and started teaching at Mills College on a regular basis, Hoiby followed him there as a piano student. Already in 1948, Hoiby left Oakland again and enrolled at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in order to study with Gian Carlo Menotti (1911–2007), thus shifting his professional focus towards composition and embarking upon a career that would soon result in his typical "conservative, tonal and post-Romantic idiom."⁶ In spite of having discontinued his piano studies, Hoiby remained in contact with Petri through extensive correspondence that had already started in 1945; their communication endured Hoiby's Fulbright residency in Rome between 1952 and 1953 but came to an end in 1957, when Petri left Oakland after the death of his wife, accepting a new teaching appointment in Basel.⁷

1 John Rockwell: Opera: Hoiby's "Tempest," in Iowa, in: *The New York Times*, July 12, 1986, p. 12.

2 Ibid.

3 Colleen Gail Gray: *The Life and Vocal Works of Lee Hoiby, American Composer and Classical Pianist (1926–2011). Including a Complete Catalog of his Songs*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2015, pp. 45 f. See Martin Skamletz: "I've turned into a great reviser." Lee Hoibys Vertonung von Li Bai's *The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter* und ihr Bezug zu Harry Partch, pp. 371–398 in this volume.

4 Charles Hopkins: Johansen, Gunnar, in: *Grove Music Online* (2001), <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.42599> (all links in this article last accessed March 24, 2021).

5 Receipt of payment of \$125 for piano lessons of Lee Hoiby with Egon Petri during "summer term 1944" at Cornell University, Department of Music, from the Petri-Hoiby correspondence (only Petri's letters preserved, together with some newspaper clippings, concert programs and other documents), private collection.

6 Elise Kirk: Hoiby, Lee (opera), in: *Grove Music Online* (1992/2002), <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O902196>.

7 Petri to Hoiby, June 24, 1957.

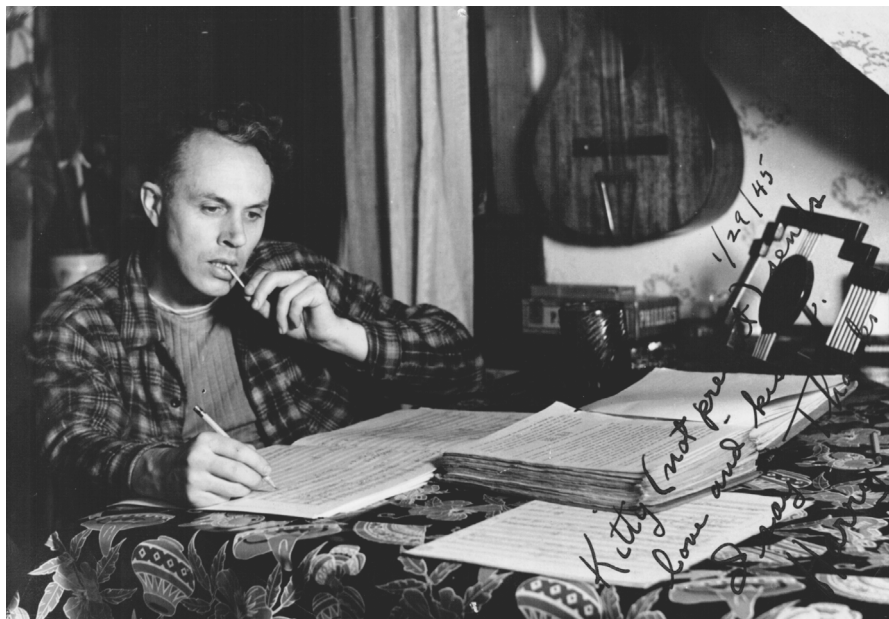


Fig. 1: Photo of Harry Partch, taken in Ithaca, NY, in April 1943, with the Adapted Guitar [I], the Chromatic Organ (music stand on the right) and manuscripts of his treatise and some of his compositions. Copy presented and inscribed to Lee Hoiby in Madison: "1/29/45 / Kitty (not present) sends / love and kisses. / I say: Thanks / Harry"

Gunnar Johansen, Hoiby's piano teacher, was also responsible for bringing Harry Partch to Madison. Impressed by a rehearsal for Partch's performances in New York in 1944, he succeeded in procuring a residency for him at the University of Wisconsin which would last until 1947. During his three-year stay in Madison, Partch was very active: he finished his book (eventually published as *Genesis of a Music* by University of Wisconsin Press in 1949), spent time "repairing, adapting, and building instruments",⁸ experimented with lectures on and performances of his works, and produced a number of recordings. Partch had already staged his manifold activities as a writer on and composer of music, as well as a player and builder of instruments in a photograph taken in 1943, which he also distributed to his friends in Madison (Fig. 1).⁹ The Madison recordings of *U.S. Highball* and *Ten Settings of Lyrics by Li Po*

8 Bob Gilmore: *Harry Partch. A Biography*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1998, p. 165. For short descriptions of all of Partch's instruments that he used until 1952 see "notes on the instruments" (program booklet *Oedipus 1952*, p. [11]), for exhaustive commentary and photographs see Harry Partch: *Genesis of a Music. An Account of a Creative Work, Its Roots and Its Fulfillments*, New York: Da Capo Press, 1974 [1949]. A copy of the program booklet together with a review of the performances of *King Oedipus* at Mills College (Anonymous 1952) can be accessed among the materials under <https://doi.org/10.26045/po-019>.

9 For the first, acoustic Adapted Guitar [I] on the photo see Partch: *Genesis of a Music*, pp. 203 f., for the Chromatic Organ see the photo in Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, p 133; the musical manu-



Fig. 2: 78 rpm disc (side 1 of 6) of Partch's *U.S. Highball*, recorded in 1946
(McGeary: *The Music of Harry Partch*, p. 164)

were acknowledged by Partch himself as his first “private recordings”,¹⁰ even though Partch had in fact recorded a few of his works some years earlier in Chicago in March 1942. They were produced in the home recording studio of Warren Gilson, a specialist in medical electronics, and released as “Gilsonophone recordings” on Gilson’s own label GME (Fig. 2).¹¹

scripts could be e.g. *U.S. Highball* or *Dark Brother* (ibid., pp. 397 f.). The book draft on the table most likely is *Patterns of Music*, the version of Partch’s treatise chronologically situated between *Exposition of Monophony* and *Genesis of a Music* (ibid., pp. 131 f.). Thanks to Eleni Ralli and Chris Rainier for help with the dating of the photo and the identification of the instruments.

10 Partch: *Genesis of a Music*, p. 484; Thomas McGeary: *The Music of Harry Partch. A Descriptive catalog*. Brooklyn: Institute for Studies in American Music, 1991 (I.S.A.M. Monograph 31), pp. 164 f. While Partch and McGeary only mention the 1946 recording of *U.S. Highball* (featured on the Gilsonophone three-disc set and never re-released), there is another recording of this work produced in 1945 with Fralia Hancock (Double Canon) instead of Hulda Gieschen (Harmonic Canon in 1946). This 1945 *U.S. Highball* recording was released for the first time (together with the re-release of the 1947 *Lyrics by Li Po*) on *Harry Partch: Enclosure 2. Historic Speech-Music Recordings from the Harry Partch Archive* (4 CD set, Innova 401, 1995) – many thanks to Chris Rainier for pointing out this difference in a personal communication. In the discography included in the second edition of *Genesis*, Partch decided to omit earlier recordings: “Although a number of acetate records of my music were made during the years 1942–1945, and although most of the masters remain in fairly good condition, these are not listed.” Partch: *Genesis of a Music*, p. 484.

11 McGeary: *The Music of Harry Partch*, pp. 164 f.

Immediately after Partch's arrival in Madison, a student ensemble was established dedicated to the rehearsal, performance and recording of his works. This is where Partch first met Lee Hoiby – in the words of Partch biographer Bob Gilmore:

In finding musicians to form an ensemble Partch was once again helped substantially by Johansen, who suggested to some of his more talented piano students that they meet Partch and try his instruments. Two students who took up the offer were Christine Charnstrom and Lee Hoiby, who learned to play the Chromelodeon and the Kithara, respectively. Soon they were joined by the young singer William Wendlandt, whose voice Partch admired: "He had a kind of a cry in his voice, which I thought was just beautiful." These three, with Partch himself, formed the nucleus of the ensemble throughout his stay in Madison. They began to rehearse together in November [1944].¹²

After a few appearances in presentations and concerts in February and May 1945,¹³ this ensemble started recording:

Their first project was to record most of the works presented in the concerts earlier in the year – *Barstow*, *Two Settings from Joyce's Finnegans Wake*, *By the Rivers of Babylon*, *Yankee Doodle Fantasy*, *Dark Brother*, *San Francisco*, and *U.S. Highball*: some fifty-five minutes of music, which filled sixteen sides on the 78 rpm acetate discs.¹⁴

Pianist Lee Hoiby was the regular Kithara player in this ensemble, and performs as such on almost all of the recordings of the works mentioned in the above quotation;¹⁵ the Kithara was played by Partch himself only on *Two Settings from Joyce's Finnegans Wake*. Furthermore, Partch accompanied William Wendlandt on the *Ten Settings of Lyrics by Li Po*, which were released in 1947.¹⁶ Partch's appraisal of Wendlandt's abilities as a singer in the Madison recordings is corroborated by Richard Kassel in his study on *Barstow*:

12 Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, pp. 159 f.

13 For details see Ronald V. Wiecki: "Relieving '12-Tone Paralysis'. Harry Partch in Madison, Wisconsin, 1944–1947," in: *American Music* 9 (1991), pp. 43–66, here pp. 46–48.

14 Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, p. 167. While only the 1946 *U.S. Highball* and the 1947 *Ten Settings of Lyrics by Li Po* were pressed on records in the respective years, all of the 1945 Madison recordings have been released on *Enclosure 2*. Cf. McGeary: *The Music of Harry Partch*, pp. 164 f., and Richard Kassel: *Barstow as History. An Introduction to the Sound World of Harry Partch*, in: Harry Partch: *Barstow. Eight Hitchhiker Inscriptions from a Highway Railing at Barstow, California* (1968 version), ed. by Richard Kassel, Madison: A-R Editions, 2000 (Recent Researches in American music, Vol. 39; Music of the United States of America, Vol. 9), pp. xiii–lxxix, here p. lv.

15 On *Y. D. Fantasy*, Hoiby was in charge of a percussive instrument called a "Flex-a-tone". Liner notes *Enclosure 2*, p. 26.

16 McGeary: *The Music of Harry Partch*, pp. 164 f.

Wendlandt's unforced, non vibrato, intonationally true singing has the virtue of sounding like a younger Partch with a sweeter tone; the combination of Wendlandt the chanter and Partch the intoner often produces the striking illusion of one performer doing both parts.¹⁷

When Ronald Wiecki began investigating Partch's Madison years, singer William Wendlandt seemed to have all but disappeared,¹⁸ but Wiecki was able to contact Christine Lindsay (née Charnstrom) and Hulda Gieschen (who had played the Harmonic Canon on the 1946 *U.S. Highball* recording).¹⁹ They were also later interviewed by Gilmore during the research for his comprehensive Partch biography. Of all the performers in this Madison ensemble, Lee Hoiby was the best-known and easiest-to-find of the four and became the preferred respondent for the Partch research conducted in the 1980s and 1990s;²⁰ his recollections of this period were drawn upon not only by Gilmore, but also by other authors working on Partch. The information Hoiby provided them with concerning a period half a century earlier may have been somewhat biased, given that in this time he had adopted an anti-modernist aesthetic as a composer himself. He therefore concentrated primarily on aspects of Partch's personal behavior between sociability and eccentricity. Here are some examples of what Hoiby told the Partch biographers:

[Wiecki:] In a personal communication (Feb. 27, 1987) Hoiby writes: "Harry was wonderful to work with, knew exactly what he wanted, and spared no effort in achieving it. He was always pleasant to work with, despite an underlying melancholic world view, and we all loved him."²¹

[Gilmore:] And although capable of great kindness and warmth, he could also by turns be morose and self-pitying, a side of him that Lee Hoiby recalls as being sometimes hard to bear: "In a way, he was really very much like those bums that he hung out with as a hobo: excessive whiners, blaming the world for their self-imposed misfortunes. When things were going well musically, he would never show artistic delight; he would just stop complaining. It was as though for him art didn't elevate, it merely pulled us up out of the mire briefly to a tolerable level."²²

17 Kassel: *Barstow as History*, p. lv.

18 Cf. Wiecki: *Relieving "12-Tone Paralysis"*, p. 63n25: "I have been unable to trace Wendlandt".

19 McGeary: *The Music of Harry Partch*, p. 164; not credited in liner notes *Enclosure 2*, p. 20. Cf. Fig. 2.

20 The present article, as all recent Partch research, is very much indebted to the landmark publications by Thomas McGeary and Bob Gilmore.

21 Wiecki: *Relieving "12-Tone Paralysis"*, p. 63n23.

22 Gilmore: *The Music of Harry Partch*, p. 160, and p. 429n16: "Lee Hoiby to the author, Mar. 25, 1990."

[Granade:] Lee Hoiby, a noted composer who was a student at Wisconsin and played in Partch's ensemble, found little intrinsic musical value in Partch's compositions, but found *U.S. Highball* in particular to be an enticing idea and subject. He also saw the hobo in Partch's daily attitude, remarking that the composer's blaming the musical world for his misfortunes was typical hobo behavior.²³

When interviewed in the context of his own activity as a composer, Hoiby would generally not refer to his association with Partch as an important aspect of his own artistic or personal development. Indeed, in the literature on Hoiby, Partch hardly even figures as a footnote.²⁴

The five letters that Partch sent to Hoiby have now become accessible as part of the correspondence they began in 1948, almost directly after their personal contact in Madison. Further investigation of their communication enables a deeper understanding of their relationship and offers additional details concerning Partch's opinions and activities. It appears that only the last of these letters (dated July 23, 1958) has thus far received scholarly attention: Gilmore quotes Partch's estimation of young Danlee Mitchell's "perception far beyond his years"²⁵ and otherwise states that Partch's missives to Hoiby – like those to many others – "are in private hands."²⁶ In his last letter to Hoiby, Gilmore expresses his gratitude for "copies of three letters from Harry Partch"²⁷ that had been sent to him by Hoiby; a further mention of the place Gualala suggests that Gilmore also knew the first letter from September 1948 (which was sent from there), but it is not clear which of the three letters in between was the second that he had read.

*

Between his stay in New York and his arrival in Madison during the summer of 1944, Partch had already visited Gunnar Johansen's ranch in Gualala, California. After leaving Madison in 1947, Partch returned to Gualala. It was not until the following summer, after having spent a whole year in Southern California, that he decided to remain there for a much longer period:

23 Samuel Andrew Granade: *Harry Partch. Hobo Composer*, Rochester NY: University of Rochester Press, 2014 (Eastman Studies in Music, Vol. 120), p. 269, and p. 324n59: "Lee Hoiby, interview by the author, November 8, 2001."

24 For a review of the Hoiby literature, see Gray: *The Life and Vocal Works of Lee Hoiby*, pp. 7–16.

25 Gilmore: *The Music of Harry Partch*, pp. 267 and 440n38. On the back of the envelope of this letter by Partch, Hoiby noted the address of Gilmore in Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland (see Fig. 8).

26 *Ibid.*, p. 412.

27 Gilmore to Hoiby, June 27, 1990, private collection.

In the middle of August [1948 ...], he started north up the coast. The abandoned smithy on the Johansens' property was Partch's home for the next two and a half years, although throughout he was simply living from month to month with little feeling of permanence or stability.²⁸

Lee Hoiby had also spent the year 1947–1948 in California, where he was Petri's piano student at Mills College in Oakland. While still in his former position at Cornell, Petri had answered to Hoiby's enquiry in this matter:

I am very happy that it is your wish to study with me again and shall certainly be delighted to take you as a student. How this is going to be arranged is not quite clear to me at present. All I know is that I have to have eight pupils at Mills before I am allowed to teach privately.²⁹

This response suggests that Hoiby was not intending to enroll at Mills College as a regular student, but would rather take private lessons with Petri. Their correspondence had started in 1944 and was taken up again after Hoiby had left Oakland already in 1948, having studied with Petri for only one year. Hoiby used to spend his summers at home in Stoughton, Wisconsin, passing along news of Madison. He also recommended fellow pianist and former chromelodeonist Christine Charnstrom for study with Petri. As in the Partch correspondence, the contents of Hoiby's own letters can only be surmised through Petri's answers:

Of course you are very welcome to sit in at my private lessons as often as you like. The only thing that is impossible is to let "auditors" come into the [regular Mills] classes. They have to pay \$10.00 for each two-hour session and show their receipt before I am allowed to let them in. [...] I am looking forward to hearing and meeting Christine, and I am very grateful to you for persuading her to come. Your description of her playing is certainly fascinating and this is the kind of pupil which I really love to teach. And that Gunnar is coming is of course wonderful.³⁰

Christine Charnstrom held an equally high opinion of Hoiby, as she told one of his biographers much later:

I liked this tall Scandinavian-American from the very start: his good looks, cherubic face, self-assured manner and enthusiasm made for a winning combination. I soon discovered what a keen mind and sharp

28 Gilmore: *The Music of Harry Partch*, p. 185.

29 Petri to Hoiby, May 17, 1947.

30 Petri to Hoiby, June 16, 1948.

wit he had and particularly, how quick he was to react to a stimulus. [...] His posture at the keyboard revealed a fundamental self-possession: sitting granite-like, moving his tall frame discreetly, not spilling all over the instrument, he commanded the black beast before him, permitting nothing to get between himself and the music.³¹

In the summer of 1948, about a month after Partch's arrival in Gualala, Hoiby had apparently returned from Stoughton to Oakland where he received Partch's first extant letter (Fig. 3).

First letter³²

[Gualala, before Sept. 15, 1948]

Dear Pal Lee

Your letter came today and I was very happy to have it. It is really quite lonely up here. When I am busy I don't mind it, but rassling redwood logs ten times my size gets old fast (That shit gets old fast – my mechanic friend used to say), and the hours that I'm too pooped to raise a little finger over a tea cup are just too numerous to mention. That's when I get lonely.

Well, I learn today – through Gunnar – who engineered it – that I can stay here a year without economic worry. Two years if I can live on twenty-five a month. Dear old Gunnar!

Sure, I'd like to see you, and I know Christmas is coming – it always is – but why wait till Christmas? Though I must say that until I make the smithy livable – in 2 to 4 months and 200 to 400 redwood logs from now – it will be sheer chaos around here. You could take the bus up (from S.F.)³³ [verso:] Friday or Sat. and return Sunday noon. I hope, though, that you won't bring Bill. I am very fond of Bill, as I am very fond of you, but the chemical effect of your conjunction is something else. I hope you will forgive me – I am very humble about it – and I

31 Richard Crosby: *The Piano Music of Lee Hoiby*, PhD diss., University of Cincinnati, 1990, p. 4 (as quoted in Gray: *The Life and Vocal Works of Lee Hoiby*, pp. 22 f.).

32 Two pages (r/v), ms. in pencil on 26-line typewriter paper (starting on verso of paper). – Envelope (ms. pencil): Partch / c/o McNamee / Gualala, Calif. – Lee Hoiby / 5931 Monadnock Way / Oakland 5, / Calif. – Postmark: Point Arena / Calif. / Sep 15 / 1948 / 1 PM. – Cf. Gilmore: *The Music of Harry Partch*, p. 185: “The proprietors of the general store at the foot of the hill, Jamie and Ruth MacNamee, [...] offered him a job in their store. Partch declined, but the MacNamees' store was to become one of his lifelines; it had a telephone, and it served as his postal address.”

33 “Gualala was then a small lumbering town in an isolated area 140 miles north of San Francisco.” *Ibid.*, p. 180.

am only exposing my own limitations. My limitations being that I am allergic to wisecracks and arguments over the tempos of Mozart. Please scrub around me in your list of “bright talent.” I belong neither to this age nor this culture, as a comparison with any of my contemporaries will show. Or else they don’t belong. But if I do project myself into this age I can’t agree with your choices at all – at all. Except Barber, whom I know only slightly. You ignore the only contemporary Americans I can admire (with reservations). Anyway, it was kind of you to think of me.

Please drop in at 2466 Telegraph Ave. (book shop) when you are in Berkeley and ask for George Leite (pronounced Late). I’m sure you would like [*continued on left margin:*] each other (He sold U.S. Highball, or I guess he did – he bought 20 sets).³⁴ Love to you too dammit!
Harry

Partch’s feeling of being isolated in Gualala was a frequent topic in his letters, also to other people, such as his Berkeley friends, the Marshalls: “This dreadful loneliness bothers me more now than when I was knocking myself out every day with hard work.”³⁵ There is no information in the accessible biographical material to clarify whether the “hard work” that Partch mentions in these letters was connected to his restoration of the smithy or incurred by making a living in general (“twenty-five a month”). “Rassling redwood logs”, about a hundred a month, sounds more like a job for the local lumberjack than merely occasional cutting of wood for instruments and the other items he might have required for the restoration of the cabin. But Partch’s financial situation was improved in 1950, when he and Marshall received Guggenheim funding to develop an electronic organ: “Since his arrival in Gualala Partch had been scraping by on thirty dollars a month: his monthly allowance now worked out at eighty-five dollars.”³⁶ Concerning the felling of redwood trees, Ben Johnston (1926–2019) tells a story about an “outdoor privy” built by Partch, “which had a commanding view of a mountain meadow with the Pacific Ocean visible in the distance through the redwoods. The view had been achieved by Partch isolating the exact trees that were originally blocking the way and chopping them down.”³⁷

34 If George Leite (1920–1985) of *daliel’s Gallery and Bookstore* (1945–1952) in Berkeley indeed bought twenty sets of the 1946 *U.S. Highball* recordings, he was in possession of a fifth of the total impression: “Gilson did not do any serious advertising for the records, and they sold purely by word of mouth: yet all one hundred sets (which retailed at \$6.75 each, plus tax) were sold in the next few years.” *Ibid.*, p. 169. In 1948, Leite published an essay that Partch had written in Madison, *Show-horses in the Concert Ring*, in the tenth and last issue of his *Circle Magazine* (Partch: *Genesis of a Music*, p. 483); in 1950, Partch would set Leite’s poem *Lover* to music as part of his *Intrusions* (McGeary: *The Music of Harry Partch*, p. 55).

35 Partch to Lucie and Larry Marshall, December 31, 1949, as quoted in Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, p. 189.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 191.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 193.

1. Friday or Sat. and return Sunday noon.
 2. I hope, though, that you won't bring Bill.
 3. I am very fond of Bill, as I am very fond
 4. of you, but the chemical effect of your
 5. conjunction is something else. I hope you
 6. will forgive me — I am very humble about
 7. it — and I am only exposing my own limitations.
 8. My limitations being that I am allergic
 9. to wisecracks and arguments over the tempos
 10. of Mozart.
 11. Please scrub-around me in your list of
 12. "bright talent." I belong neither to this age
 13. nor this culture, as a comparison with any
 14. of my contemporaries will show. Or else they
 15. don't belong. But if I do project myself into
 16. this age I can't agree with your choices at all
 17. — at all. Except Barber, whom I know only
 18. slightly. You ignore the only contemporary
 19. Americans I can admire (with reservations).
 20. Anyway, it was kind of you to think of me.
 21. Please drop in at 2466 Telegraph Ave. (book shop)
 22. when you are in Berkeley and ask for George Leite
 23. (pronounced Late). I'm sure you would like
 24.
 25.

I send a love (He said N.S. Hillball, or I guess he did — he fought 20 acts). Love
 to you too Lemmit! Harry

Size type, 1700 characters
 Elite type, 2025 characters
 Type is this fine because...
 Do not type beyond this line

Fig. 3: Letter from Harry Partch to Lee Hoiby, [Gualala, before Sept. 15, 1948,] verso

In this first letter to Hoiby, Partch applies a somewhat grumpy tone not only in the proclamation of his own aesthetic positions, but also in his response to Hoiby's personal advances. His writing seems to oscillate between a general cordiality and an occasional aggressiveness, with very sudden changes between them. Unfortunately, only Partch's side of the correspondence has been preserved and the corresponding letters are lost. Therefore, other sources must be consulted in order to understand

Hoiby's manner of writing that elicited this reaction from Partch. The only accessible letters written by Hoiby are two addressed to Petri from the earliest stages of their acquaintance in 1945 and 1946, on the occasion of one of Petri's solo recitals in Chicago. Hoiby had asked Petri for tickets, and received in return a rather sarcastic response because Petri mistakenly believed that Hoiby wanted the tickets for free. Hoiby's answer to Petri provides us with an example of his writing style and a possible tone of his letters to Partch:

But first I must tell you that the "thoughtlessness of youth" (if of such I am guilty) has caused me utmost despair and sorrow. For to receive [sic] such a message from him [i.e. Petri] I most revere among mortals, whom I champion as vigorously as I know how, and who is my model and chief inspiration in my life's work, was a blow which I do not deserve and which I shall not soon surmount.³⁸

Hoiby's misunderstanding with Petri was eventually sorted out. He assisted at the recital in Chicago, which elicited another utterance of worship:

I feel I must say one thing further, and that to appease my wretched ego for having been really without rest since the night in Chicago after your recital when I was too excited to talk straight, and too embarrassed to write you afterwards. I trust you will understand and know that the trouble I asked you to undergo was really {indeed} "worth it" inasmuch as the impression I got *reami* remains to this day and is in no danger of diminishing; it was quite the most joyful and wonderful time I ever had, from the moment I saw the program.³⁹

Some decades later, Hoiby could look back at his admiration for Petri with more perspective: "I had his recordings and I just worshipped that man and his playing. I listened to them a lot, and I just couldn't help myself. I tried to play things like he did. Well, my fingers wouldn't do what his fingers would do, so I was in terrible trouble."⁴⁰ Hoiby's style of writing to Petri may have become more normal after actually having been part of the "eager group of Petriots",⁴¹ that is, one of his piano students in Oakland between 1947 and 1948. But in 1945 however, he still addressed him somewhat awkwardly as the "most revere[d] among mortals". Furthermore, Hoiby must have written to Petri about Partch at a very early stage of their relationship, as can again be seen from Petri's answer:

38 Hoiby to Petri, September 24, 1945.

39 Hoiby to Petri, January 14, 1946 {ms. correction}.

40 Bruce Duffie: *Composer/Pianist Lee Hoiby. Two Conversations with Bruce Duffie*, online, 1980/1991, www.bruceduffie.com/hoiby.html.

41 Hoiby to Petri, January 14, 1946.

About Partch, I know very little except by hearsay. It would be interesting to listen to the results, though I doubt very much that an old man like me would be very much drawn to this kind of innovation.⁴²

In Hoiby's letters to Partch, similar worship was combined with manifest erotic undertones, causing somewhat impatient responses by Partch like "You love me; okay, I love you. Now that that's settled I'll go on" (June 6, 1950, see below) or "Love to you too dammit!"

The "Bill" mentioned in Partch's first letter was most likely the singer William Wendlandt; rehearsing, performing and recording in the Madison ensemble must have built strong interpersonal connections. It cannot yet be determined whether Wendlandt was staying in Oakland for a longer period of time or simply visiting Hoiby from Wisconsin, if Hoiby actually went to see Partch in Gualala and whether he brought Wendlandt along with him or not. Presumably, their visit would have been met with the ambiguity that Partch described in a letter to Lauriston Marshall about a year later: "I find myself hoping someone will come weekends, and then being sorry they did come. Incipient psychosis."⁴³

A testament to the rather close relationship between Partch, Wendlandt and Hoiby in Madison is a copy of one of the records produced by Gilson in Madison in 1945 that has survived in Hoiby's legacy: the disc contains *By the Rivers of Babylon*, is inscribed "To Bill 5/24/45" and initialed by Partch (Fig. 4).⁴⁴ This date indicates that at least some of the 1945 recordings were made already during the spring of that year, following the concerts at the University mentioned above.

Douglas Moore (1893–1969), the composer of the work recorded on the flip side of this disc (*Come Away Death*), would most likely have figured on Partch's imaginary list of contemporary American composers that he admired at least in part: Partch had met Moore for the first time in New York in 1943 and recorded his piece in Madison in 1945.⁴⁵ According to Gilmore, they shared "a common interest in Americana themes and in popular musics".⁴⁶ Partch further mentioned Moore's song also in *Genesis of a Music*:

42 Petri to Hoiby, February 27, 1945.

43 Partch to Lauriston Marshall, July 11, 1949, as quoted in Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, p. 187.

44 This recording of *By the Rivers of Babylon* has been released on *Enclosure 2*.

45 This recording was released on *Harry Partch: Enclosure 5. Ritual Dramas from Ancient Greek Roots* (3 CD set, Innova 405, 1998). Although here dated to Chicago 1942 and attributed to the tenor George Bishop (liner notes *Enclosure 5*, p. 19f.), it was in fact sung by William Wendlandt in Madison in 1945. Once more thanks to Chris Rainier who cleared up the confusion.

46 Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, p. 147.

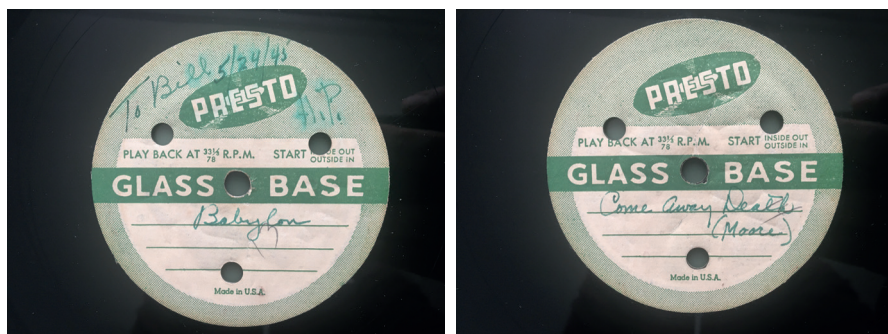


Fig. 4: 78 rpm disc of Partch's [*By the Rivers of*] *Babylon*, recorded in 1945 in Madison. Flip side: "Come Away Death (Moore)"

It must be said that Corporeality is present beneath the Abstract habiliments of many other compositions. Douglas Moore's unaccompanied song *Come Away Death*, truly a Monophonic concept even though its words are not treated as spoken words, is an example.⁴⁷

In addition to Moore, Partch surely held Howard Hanson (1896–1981) and Otto Luening (1900–1996) in high esteem. Probably Henry Cowell (1897–1965) would also be on his list, although certainly "with reservations", even before Cowell's negative review of *Genesis of a Music*,⁴⁸ as well as Henry Brant (1913–2008), who had helped Partch prepare his New York concerts in 1944.⁴⁹

By drawing up a list of "bright [compositional] talent" himself, Hoiby probably intended to give notice of his imminent reorientation towards composition, looking out for advice from his former mentor Partch. There is little doubt that alongside Samuel Barber (1910–1981), Hoiby's future composition teacher Gian Carlo Menotti, Barber's life partner, figured on the list: Partch discusses him further in his second and third letters. It is possible that there was even more correspondence between 1948 and 1950 – at the very least another one of Hoiby's letters that Partch left unanswered. However, the question whether Partch had called Menotti's music "mediocre" or "trivial" to Hoiby as he does in the following letter could also go back to a personal conversation that might have taken place in the time since the first letter had been written.

47 Partch: *Genesis of a Music*, p. 36. On the re-release of the recording of Moore's song cf. liner notes *Enclosure 5*.

48 Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, pp. 84, 187.

49 *Ibid.*, pp. 148 f.

Second letter⁵⁰

[Gualala,] Tuesday, June 6, 1950

Dear Lee--

It was very good of you to write. I have not written to you because, despite my affection for you, I find it very hard to communicate with you. You love me; okay, I love you. Now that ~~{s}~~^r that's settled I'll go on.

I consider you, in your way, the most talented person I've ever known. If you don't know what way I mean, I'll tell you some time. Perhaps I should have said considered. You, as of 1947 are not necessarily you, as of 1950. People are dynamic, like everything they do. Perhaps you mature slowly, despite your physical precocities, and I am always ready to be pleased and surprised at what maturity brings.

I expect my friends to reach their own conclusions, with thought and deliberation, without the aid of known reputation or the word of authority, which is identifiable as authority by its state of constant error. This is an ability which, in my opinion ~~{,}~~^p is prerequisite to use of the word mature, in regard to a person.

What am I getting to? Well, I've given very little thought to Menotti since your last previous letter. I've heard only fragments of his type of music-drama, not enough to have an opinion. What symphonic work I heard I considered trivial--I think that is the word I used, not mediocre. It is in regard to his remark that what we need is not more tones but fewer, that I am pointed. Anyone who, as a composer, says this ~~is~~ guilty ~~either~~ of a flippant remark about a serious subject or he is incapable of thinking deeply about his art. I would like to see you come to that conclusion, yourself, without any help from me. I do not consider it arguable. This remark is so shallow that a pollywog could hardly survive in it.

What he needs is not what I need, and may not be what Joe Doaks⁵¹ needs, and that fact should be recognized. He is re-soaping the runners of tyranny--same old soap, same old runners, same old tyranny. I give Menotti so much typewriter space, and time, only because you seem to admire him, and I like you.

If you are on the list of Marshall Glasier that you mention (and I doubt it), it is not for the reason you give. I know. As for Huppler I un-

50 Two pages (r/v, v see Fig. 5), typed, with ~~typed corrections~~ (letters or words crossed out by x), ~~typed corrections~~ (letters or words overwritten with other letters or words), [typed additions between the lines], {ms. additions, corrections, additional signature and P.S.} in pencil,^p red^r or blue^b crayon. – Envelope (typed): Partch / Gualala / Mendocino Co. / Calif. – Lee Hoiby / R 1 / Stoughton / Wisconsin – Postmark: Point Arena / Calif. / Jun 7 / 1950 / 1 PM.

51 Colloquial term for “the average man” (cf. the title of a popular TV show of the time: *Joe McDoakes*, 1942–1955).

derstand exactly how Marshall feels. I do not dislike Huppler, and I wouldn't knowingly offend anyone, so I trust you will not repeat this. He strikes me as a typical sophisticate, with a facile command of words, phrases, and ideas already thrown around quite a bit. I do not know how "famous" and "successful" he has become, but I shouldn't imagine it would be too hard for him, and I certainly do not begrudge him his "success." But I share with Marshall the his suspicion of fas[h]-ions, and success, and I think we both have good grounds, in our experiences and historically. It would be damned difficult to name any salient evolution in any art of the last 150 years the creator of which was not {generally}^b despised in his lifetime. No, it is not impossible, yet the chances are very good that any work which gains the immediate approval of the American public has no value beyond its calendar year, save as a radio reminiscence.

I found Huppler's attitude toward my music a trifle precious, and I saw with dismay that both you and Bill Wendlandt were reflecting it. He had no insight into the real significance of my direction, which embodies my criticism of him. Whether I'm doing anything worth while in my direction is of course anyone's opinion, but I like to have the direction understood--perceived, at least intuitively.

After stating vehemently what I believe I am ready, after all, to say that I am an utter failure, because I am quite aware that there is little chance that my ideas will ever be understood, which, of course, is |reveals| my limitation. But I am old~~m~~, and quite weary, and opinions do not oppress me too much, not even my own. I think Bill Archer put into words, probably better than anyone, the direction I am taking,⁵² and I have a deep affection for Bill, for that reason. He is apparently annoyed with me, not having answered my last letter--many many many months ago.

[*verso*:] I've been pretty inactive for some two months now. Illness, an operation down in San Francisco,⁵³ and I'm not strong enough yet to do much work. Yes, I built a bass marimba this spring, and wrote a sonata⁵⁴ and half a dozen Intrusions.⁵⁵ Gilson has {also Gunnar}^p a snapshot of the marimba--I have no more or I'd send you one. I am alone,

52 See Archer: Review of U.S. Highball recording, in: *The Daily Cardinal*, October 11, 1948, reprinted in Wiecki: *Relieving "12-Tone Paralysis"*, pp. 60 f.

53 "On May 1[, 1950] he was admitted to the hospital at the University of California, where surgeons removed a suspected tumor of the adrenal gland, which turned out to be a cyst." Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, p. 192).

54 *Sonata Dementia* "of 1949-50". McGeary: *The Music of Harry Partch*, pp. 100 and 105, no. 27.

55 In June 1950 the "half a dozen Intrusions" consisted of *The Rose*, *The Crane*, *The Waterfall*, *The Wind*, *The Street* and *The Letter* (newly composed or reworked from older pieces), where-as *Lover*, *Soldiers/War/Another War*, *Vanity* and *Cloud-Chamber Music* were to be composed

and I rebel against every minute of it, but when I'm not in a condition of inward mental panic I'm quite reconciled to it. In July or August a young man (and wife) are coming, he to write music for my instruments. I wish I could go to sleep till then.

yours,

harry {harry}

{Good luck to you with your composing. I'd like to hear it.}b

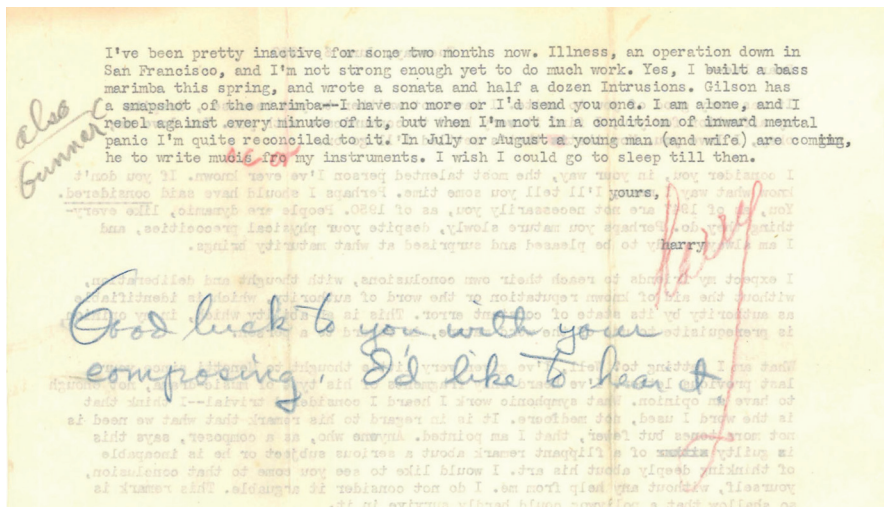


Fig. 5: Letter from Harry Partch to Lee Hoiby, [Gualala,] June 6, 1950, verso

The visual artists Marshall Glasier (1902–1988) and Dudley Huppler (1917–1988) were members of a young Madison art community cultivating a “magic realism,”⁵⁶ as opposed to the more conservative ‘regionalist’ artist-in-residence at the University of Wisconsin, John Stuart Curry (1897–1946). It is not certain who else in addition to Hoiby might have been included on the list Partch mentions and which Glasier compiled; but it is clear just how Partch and Hoiby became part of this circle: “1944–47[: Huppler spends much time at Glasier’s salon for artists and eccentrics. Composer Harry Partch [...] is introduced to Glasier and his circle. Hoiby becomes part of his ensemble and performances are given in the Glasier home. [...] 1953[: ... Huppler travels to Italy to stay with Lee Hoiby who is in Rome on a Fulbright fellowship.”⁵⁷ Hoiby

later that year. The *Studies on Ancient Greek Scales* had been written already in Madison. Ibid., pp. 52–61, no. 13.

56 See Robert Cozzolino: *With Friends. Six Magic Realists, 1940–1965*, Madison: Elvehjem Museum of Art, 2005.

57 Robert Cozzolino: *Dudley Huppler. Drawings*, Madison: Elvehjem Museum of Art, 2002, pp. 91, 93 (with a photo of Huppler taken by Hoiby in Rome). Cf. Cozzolino: *With Friends*, p. 146.

had closer relations with Huppler for some years and describes his “brilliant conversation” and “his rock-solid belief in the superiority of his own opinions.”⁵⁸

The source of Menotti’s quotation about “fewer tones” may never be known, but it is clear that his and Partch’s aesthetic beliefs were completely incompatible. Hoiby appears to have defended Menotti in his letters to Partch. However, it is interesting to see that Hoiby’s own credo as a composer was not exclusively Post-Romantic from the start. In 1948, after he had already begun his studies with Menotti, Hoiby reported to Petri his attempts at employing Partch’s tonal system, as can be gleaned from Petri’s response:

I am very glad you like{d} Mr. Menotti and that he has taken such an interest in you. [...] What you say about your experiments with the forty-three tone scale, sounds very intriguing. There is no use in my commenting on that, I shall simply wait until I see some tangible results.⁵⁹

Many of the protagonists of the aesthetic discussions exposed here were homosexual men. At the time that all of these letters were written, homosexuality was illegal and even, what later would be called underground “gay communities”, hardly existed. They were therefore forced to hide their sexual orientation. Yet, openly gay couples were a great exception, as they were sometimes tolerated as glamorous:

[Menotti] had a similarly famous partner, the composer Samuel Barber. They had met as teenagers at Curtis. They lived together for most of their joint lives – the only example I know of two prominent composers doing so. They gave celebrated parties in a long, thin house in upstate New York with his & his music rooms at the far ends so they could work without disturbing each other. And to a surprising degree for 1950s America, they were welcomed as a couple. In the grandest places.⁶⁰

In the 1940s, such social acceptance would have been even more unlikely – on the contrary: the case of Henry Cowell, who was made an example of and sentenced to several years in prison before eventually being pardoned in 1942, was still very present. In this context, the contents of Hoiby’s letter to Gilmore in 1990 about his experiences with Partch in Madison 1944–1947 are particularly revealing:

58 Hoiby to Robert Cozzolino, February 1, 2002, as quoted in Cozzolino: *Dudley Huppler*, p. 7.

59 Petri to Hoiby, December 9, 1948 {ms. correction}.

60 [Anon.]: Gian Carlo Menotti remembered, in: *Gramophone*, August 26, 2011, www.gramophone.co.uk/features/article/gian-carlo-menotti-remembered. “From 1943 until 1973, Menotti and Barber lived at their house called Capricorn [...] in Mt. Kisco, New York.” Peter Dickinson (ed.): *Samuel Barber Remembered. A Centenary Tribute*, Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010, p. 57.

Hoiby also recalls that Partch was quite open about his homosexuality which was “taken quite for granted among us, his co-performers. And considering the repressive atmosphere of the period we were all pretty nonchalant about it. ... I can remember only a couple of specific references to the subject. Once in my presence he produced an unforgettable drawing that he had done [in 1937] of a man masturbating on a beach. The other instance was a remark he made about someone he had met as a hobo, who was ‘the best-hung man I ever knew.’ At the time I didn’t know what that meant, but have since learned. He never made the slightest advance to either me or Bill Wendlandt.”⁶¹

In the light of the letters discussed here, it can be assumed that if Partch really “never made the slightest advance”, then Hoiby must have done so. Otherwise the discussion of “love”, Partch’s hints at Hoiby’s “physical precocities” and expressions like the “chemical effect of the conjunction” between Hoiby and – probably – Bill Wendlandt are hardly understandable, and there are several other more explicit references throughout the letters. Sometimes Partch’s writing gives the impression that he may have made advances on the young men with whom he was working. Indeed, Hoiby must have had reasons to be discrete about his relationship with Partch even decades after the events.

Similarly, Partch’s announcement of Ben Johnston’s arrival in Gualala in the summer of 1950 – “in July or August a young man (and wife) are coming” – has erotic undertones, albeit of resignation: on the one hand, the addition of “and wife” to the “young man” might have been designed as a means to mitigate any jealousy on Hoiby’s part; on the other hand, it suggests Partch’s own frustration, as is corroborated by Johnston (related by Gilmore):

Subsequently Johnston realized that some of Partch’s curtness might have had to do with the fact that his arriving in California with a wife had put an end to Partch’s “pipedream that I might become his lover”: Partch’s letters to Johnston prior to their arrival had expressed dire warnings about the wisdom of his decision to get married, which Partch considered a “biological trap.”⁶²

According to Partch, Johnston planned to “write music for [Partch’s] instruments”. But in the chronology accompanying Gilmore’s edition of Johnston’s writings, the focus lies on “studying with him”:

61 Hoiby to Gilmore, March 25, 1990, as quoted in Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, p. 160 [Gilmore’s addition].

62 *Ibid.*, p. 193, 433n38: “Ben Johnston interviewed by Thomas McGeary, Urbana, July 1983”.

In August [1950] he begins a six-month “apprenticeship” with Partch on a ranch in Gualala, northern California. Johnston and Betty [Hall Johnston (1927–2007)] are pressed into service undertaking repair work around the ranch, a novel experience for both. Johnston helps Partch tune his instruments every morning and occasionally succeeds in discussing matters of music theory with him. He and Betty perform in recordings of Partch’s *Eleven Intrusions*, *The Letter*, and *Dark Brother*.⁶³

The recordings made with help of the Johnstons and Marshall in Gualala in October 1950 and January 1951 were issued as a set with the title *Partch Compositions*.⁶⁴ In addition to the *Intrusions*, it also contains a new recording of *Dark Brother*, as well as – not mentioned by McGeary – an introductory “discourse” incorporating a *Menuet* by the German Baroque composer Johann Krieger (1651–1735) that is performed using Partch’s tuning system.⁶⁵ Hoiby owned a copy of this record set (Fig. 6) – either presented by Partch or purchased on his own.

Using the example of the little *Menuet* by Krieger, Johnston’s contribution to these recordings can be demonstrated in a nutshell: its inclusion was his initiative and an early instance of his systematic grasp of Partch’s tuning system:

Partch’s student Ben Johnston had been taking musicology classes at the University of California, Berkeley, and had borrowed several collections of Baroque music to study in Gualala. He recalls that the *Menuet* had a “comma problem” (an issue with modulation in Just Intonation) which was solved by allowing the piece to go flat by the interval of one comma. In a letter to his colleague Larry Marshall, Partch praised Johnston’s part in the proceedings, adding: “The *Menuet* by Krieger on the Harmonic Canon was his idea but it was made at 11:59 by the clock...”⁶⁶

At the time, the music library of University of California at Berkeley probably owned two editions of the *Menuet*: one in the volume of *Denkmäler der Tonkunst*

63 Ben Johnston: “*Maximum Clarity*” and *Other Writings on Music*, ed. by Bob Gilmore, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006, p. xxviii.

64 McGeary: *The Music of Harry Partch*, pp. 165 f.

65 Because the re-release on *Enclosure 5* presents the *Menuet* by Krieger out of context (and only the opening statement of the “discourse”), the additional materials to this article provide the complete “discourse and sample passages” including the *Menuet* (sides 1 and 2) and *Dark Brother* (sides 9 and 10): <https://doi.org/10.26045/po-019>. The other pieces on the *Partch Compositions* record set, the actual *Intrusions* (side 3: 1. *Greek Anharmonic* [sic] *Scale*, 2. *Phrygian Suite*; side 4: 3. *The Rose*, 4. *The Crane*, 5. *The Wind*; side 5: 6. *The Waterfall*, 7. *The Letter*; side 6: 8. *The Street*, 9. *Vanity*; side 7: 10. *Lover*, 11. *Soldiers*; side 8: 12. *Cloud Chamber Music*), have been re-released on *The Harry Partch Collection*, Vol. 1.

66 Liner notes *Enclosure 5*, p. 19.



Fig. 6: 78 rpm discs (sides 2 and 9 of 10) of *Partch Compositions*, recorded in Gualala in 1950

in *Bayern* published in 1917 but restricted to use in the library⁶⁷ and another in the three-volume collection of miscellaneous *Cembalo Music of 17th and 18th Century* [sic] edited by Kurt Herrmann. Here, Krieger's *Menuet* in G major is included in the first volume, which is today missing in the Berkeley music library that must have held all three volumes originally.⁶⁸ Therefore it is possible that Partch and Johnston played from the very edition shown in Fig. 7 in a volume borrowed by Johnston from Berkeley and not returned to the library afterwards.

This collection also contains a *Sarabande* and a *Courante* by Johann Jakob Froberger (1616–1667), which would explain Johnston's memory lapse when he recalled the event to Heidi Von Gunden more than thirty years later:

One of Johnston's projects was to tune a Kithara so that he could play a minuet by Johann Froberger that would be used as a demonstration of just intonation on the 78 r.p.m. record that Partch was preparing. The minuet would show how Partch's tuning was part of the evolutionary progress of the history of music. Johnston immediately had difficulties. After tuning several triads, he encountered the problem where the supertonic does not work both after the subdominant and before the dominant. It was 22 cents sharp, a tuning error that is called a syntonic comma. Partch silently observed how his apprentice

67 *Johann Krieger, Franz Xaver Anton Murschhauser und Johann Philipp Krieger: Gesammelte Werke für Orgel und Klavier*, ed. by Max Seiffert, Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1917 (Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Bayern, Vol. 30), p. 19. US-BEm M2 .D45 ser.2 v.18 (library use only), <http://oskicat.berkeley.edu/record=b10656607~S61>.

68 *Klaviermusik des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts/Musique pour clavecin des 17^{ème} et 18^{ème} siècles/Cembalo Music of 17th and 18th Century*, ed. by Kurt Herrmann, Leipzig: Gebrüder Hug & Co., 1934, Vol. 1, p. 11. US-BEm M1378.H468, <http://oskicat.berkeley.edu/record=b10558340~S61>.

Menuet

Johann Krieger
(1651 - 1735)

Lieblich

Fig. 7: Johann Krieger: *Menuet* in G major, from: *Klaviermusik des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, Vol. 1, p. 11. The performance indication is added by the editor, as are the regular bar divisions and the fingerings, cf. the first edition *Johann Kriegers Sechs Musicalische Partien*, [4.] G^h Partita, p. 8

worked with this problem. Johnston's solution was to use extra notes that would accommodate the comma when he returned the Kithara.⁶⁹

The “several triads” tuned by Johnston first were doubtlessly the tonic, subdominant and dominant triads of G major, all in just intonation, using elementary ratios of the harmonic series: fourth, fifth and major third:

Tonic: G (1/1), B (5/4), D (3/2)

Subdominant: C (4/3), E (5/3 = 4/3*5/4), G (2/1 = 4/3*3/2)

Dominant: D (3/2), F# (15/8 = 3/2*5/4), A (9/4 = 3/2*3/2)

The second part of the *Menuet* modulates to the key of the supertonic, A minor, in bar 11, and remains there until a full cadence in bars 15 f. This is where the “comma problem” occurs: The *a* derived from the dominant chord (9/8, when transposed by an octave) cannot be used in an A minor triad derived from the subdominant chord, using the latter's *c* and *e*. This is what Johnston means when he says “the supertonic does not work both after the subdominant and before the dominant”. Here the adequate *a* (10/9 = 4/3*5/6), a minor third lower than the *c*, would be a “lesser tone” 10/9 over *g*, as opposed to the “greater tone” 9/8, their difference being 81/80 = (9/8)/

69 Heidi Von Gunden: *The Music of Ben Johnston*, Metuchen, NJ/London: Scarecrow Press, 1986, p. 12. Thanks to Marc Kilchenmann for pointing out this quotation and for his advice in understanding the acoustic implications.

(10/9), called the “syntonic comma”. The *a* in the D major chord is a comma sharp compared to the *a* that would fit in the A minor chord.

Because Johnston needs an *a* that works in the key of A minor for several bars and because he has to modulate back to G major via D major, whose fundamental should be a perfect fifth lower than *a*, he decides to allow “the piece to go flat by the interval of one comma” from the last beat of bar 11 on. To do so, he apparently also uses alternative strings (“extra notes”) tuned accordingly. In an interview with Bruce Duffie in 1987, Johnston describes the implications of working with just intonation, by chance exactly using the same example of an *a* that “[wi]ll move [...] within a piece”:

B[ruce] D[uffie]: Have you got absolute pitch?

B[en] J[ohnston]: Yes, but this doesn’t help. In fact, it hinders. Absolute pitch is simply a very good tonal memory, and if you are synched into it too well, then you know where A is, and you’re impatient with any other A, which [is] in most music really not the case because, as you know, A moves.

BD: From orchestra to orchestra it’ll move.

BJ: Oh yeah, and not only that, but within a piece. So it’s just not feasible to do it that way. I found that I had absolute pitch in Partch’s system by the time I was through working with him, so I could say, “That’s a 16/11 ratio.” I knew that note, and what it did was to focus me on a very, very careful cultivation of relative pitch.⁷⁰

The point where Johnston “was through working with” Partch in Gualala came quite abruptly in the beginning of 1951:

In 1949 and ‘50 I went out to California and worked for six months with Harry Partch [...]. It was going to be a whole year, but he got ill and closed up his studio. So I went to Mills and studied with Milhaud for the balance of the year. Then I got a job at the University of Illinois, and within a few years we brought Partch there and did some of his large works.⁷¹

Partch’s health problems that caused him to leave Gualala were related to his allergic reaction to tick bites. Another reason for his relocation to Oakland was the prospect that his *King Oedipus* would be produced at Mills College in the spring of 1952. He also helped Johnston to enroll there as a student.

70 Bruce Duffie: *Microtonal Composer Ben Johnston. A Conversation with Bruce Duffie*, online, 1987, www.bruceduffie.com/johnston.html.

71 Ibid. The described events clearly took place in 1950 (not in 1949), cf. the chronology in Johnston: “*Maximum Clarity*”, pp. xxviiif.

The éminence grise at Mills was the composer Darius Milhaud, who had been offered a teaching post there when he fled from Europe in 1940. Partch and Johnston were introduced to him at a dinner party given by a mutual friend, Agn[è]s Albert, who was on the board of the college, and thanks to her intercession Milhaud was able to accept Johnston as one of his students, even midway through the academic year.⁷²

Johnston became Milhaud's student only at the end of the academic year 1950/51 because Milhaud taught at Mills College and at the Paris Conservatoire in alternating years since 1946. Therefore, he was in Oakland in 1950/51 and in Paris in 1951/52. Partch mentions this in his third letter to Hoiby, written in the autumn of 1951, when Partch was well into the preparation of *King Oedipus*. Here, Milhaud is ironically addressed as "God"; in accordance with Partch's general "distance from the Frenchman".⁷³

Third letter⁷⁴

[Oakland,] October 17, 1951.

Dear Lee--

Thanks for your good letter. This is going to be short, because I want to get it off right away. Along with your letter came one from Otto Luening, saying he wants to do *King Oedipus* at the Brander Matthews Theater at Columbia U. in May, then last night came a telegram demanding a wired answer. I told him I'd like to, if there is time for rehearsals and all the many details could be arranged. Would it be possible for us to borrow you for a month or six weeks? To play Kithara, Diamond Marimba, or Bass Marimba, either consecutively or simultaneously?⁷⁵ What could be done to pay you, your expenses, I don't know. I thought I'd find out first if it's at all possible. No date has been mentioned, but the dates here are March 14-15,⁷⁶ and I and the instruments would leave immediately thereafter. However, I don't think the instruments could get to New York before the middle of April.

72 Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, p. 199.

73 Ibid., p. 199, 433n48: "HP to Ben Johnston, Aug. 2, 1952".

74 Two pages (r/v), typed, with typed corrections (letters or words crossed out by x), typed corrections (letters or words overwritten with other letters or words), {ms. signature} in black ink¹. – Envelope (ms. ink): Partch / 4428e MacArthur / Oakland 19 / Calif – Lee Hoiby / 2011 Chestnut St. / Philadelphia 3 / Pa. – Postmark: Oakland 4 / Calif. / Oct 17 / 1951 / 3 PM.

75 For the musicians playing in the Mills production see program booklet *Oedipus 1952*, p. [4].

76 The program booklet lists three performances at Lisser Hall of Mills College on March 14, 15 and 16, 1952.

Sure, I could use--or abuse--Danny,⁷⁷ however he wishes it. But unless he comes soon it will be too late. I'm beginning to get quite impatient about the casual attitude at Mills. Out of the eighteen or twenty I need I have only two or three for ~~assure~~. And Marchant⁷⁸ tells me that most of those under his care who might help me are too busy--he refuses to allow ~~the~~ them to do outside work. Ha! There's no use telling him that it would be to their advantage! The drama students are not musicians, and so it goes. Many who might have helped have already tagged along to Paris, to be near God. What a laugh!

I heard Gian-Carlo in an interview on the radio. He sounded quite likable, kind, warm, naive, non-intellectual. I'm glad he wants you to get going on your scores. Best of Luck. I haven't seen Kinch,⁷⁹ but I ran across his poems--guess where. Arthur Carson⁸⁰ had a sudden attack of ap[p]endicitis, and was operated upon. Barbara⁸¹ informed me, saying that the first thing Arthur said as he came out of the anesthetic was that he wouldn't be able to hear parts of Oedipus and records played for a drama class yesterday. Barbara is one of these who has been especially nice to me. She invited me to dinner last summer, and--altogether I couldn't fail to call on Art at the Cowell Hospital--U.C.⁸² Anyway, Kinch's poems--A Beginning--~~was~~ere on his bedside table.⁸³ He's getting along okay, and will be out tomorrow.

Really, everything is just as it was when you left. You sang out, "O you'll meet lots of people and find lots of friends." Ha! Sure, I meet lots of people, but there is not a person at Mills that I feel free to call on spontaneously. In other words, they are quite interested in my work, but as a human being I do not exist. Yesterday was an example, some twenty persons came, listened, and at the end trooped out in a body.

- 77 Probably Daniell Revenaugh (born 1934), see below (letter of December 12, 1951).
- 78 Luther Brusie Marchant (1888–1957), at the time "chairman of the Mills College Music Department" (Program booklet *Oedipus 1952*, p. [11]).
- 79 "The brilliant young poet Robert Horan (1922–1981) lived at Capricorn from the early forties through 1948. His book, with a foreword by W. H. Auden, is the first published collection of Horan's early work and carries the dedication: *For Samuel Barber and Gian Carlo Menotti*. Horan's nickname was 'Kinch,' an allusion to his Irish roots." Barbara B. Heyman: *Samuel Barber. A Thematic Catalogue of the Complete Works*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 233f.
- 80 Arthur Carson, poet. 4th prize UC literary competition, 1953. See *University [of California] Bulletin* 1, No. 29 (March 23, 1953), p. [143]; Arthur Carson: Bullfighter story, in: *Poetry* 86 (1955), pp. 92f.
- 81 "Barbara" was possibly Arthur Carson's spouse. "Helen and Sandy" in this letter and "Jim Grove" (in the letter of December 12, 1951) could not be identified.
- 82 University of California, Cowell Memorial Hospital (founded in 1930, demolished in 1993).
- 83 Robert Horan: *A Beginning*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948.

Not one remained to talk, be friendly, suggest anything, a glass of beer, or even a mutual glass of water. Well, you know what I mean. If I didn't have some good friends in Berkeley--Helen and Sandy particularly--I'd be too disgusted to continue. H. and S. were swell to me the other night. plied me with endless amounts of liquor, which I badly needed. I haven't seen Sylvia.⁸⁴ I guess she's through with me. Write soon. Love, {harry}ⁱ

Here, Gian Carlo Menotti is among the subjects of the Partch-Hoiby correspondence for the final time. While Partch acknowledges Menotti's apparent personal qualities after having heard a radio interview with him, the letters of Petri to Hoiby indicate that there was an interruption of Hoiby's lessons with Menotti at Curtis Institute in spring 1951:

What a strange person Menotti is to leave his post and not even send a word of explanation. It is lucky indeed that Samuel Barber offers to take care of his pupils. I have never met him and do not know much about his works, but I have an impression that he really is somebody. Do tell me about his teaching after you have studied with him for some time and when you feel impelled to write again. You are one of the few correspondents whose letters I really love to read.⁸⁵

Menotti's opera *The Consul*, his first worldwide success, premiered in the United States in 1950. The following year saw several European productions of the work in quick succession, such as those in Basel (Jan. 3), Hamburg (Jan. 13), Milan (Jan. 22), London (Feb. 7) and Vienna (Mar. 2), all of which the composer probably attended. Of all these performances, that of Milan's La Scala was among the most memorable for the public's controversial response:

The Consul, which had been designed for a smaller opera house, was received by the Italian audience with cheers and ovations, boos and hisses. The magician scene [...] caused near pandemonium.⁸⁶

Perhaps Petri listened to the same radio interview with Menotti that Partch had heard – after Menotti's return to the States and to his teaching post in Philadelphia later in 1951, as this letter shows:

84 Sylvia Fein (born 1919), "magic realist" painter. "1951: Through composer friend Lee Hoiby, Fein meets Harry Partch. Partch is a frequent house-guest during this period as he prepares for the premiere performance of *King Oedipus* at Mills College in Oakland (1952). Partch builds musical instruments in Fein's studio, and she later donates one of Partch's instruments (a double canon) to Mills College. Partch helps Fein make frames for her paintings". Cozzolino: *With Friends*, p. 149.

85 Petri to Hoiby, May 16, 1951.

86 Barbara B. Heyman: *Samuel Barber. The Composer and His Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 319.

I was very happy to hear that you have started your lessons with Menotti again, and that he was so encouraging about your compositions. I certainly do hope that you won't have to wait too long for a performance by an important conductor. By the way, I knew that Menotti was back because I heard his interview during intermission time on CBS. His description of the row during the performance of the "Consul" in Milano was very amusing, although it shows a horrible state of affairs. As advertising material of course it is wonderful.⁸⁷

Partch's addition in his letter, "I'm glad he wants you to get going on your scores", points to the fact that Hoiby had to write counterpoint exercises in Palestrina's style for a longer period while studying with Menotti, before being allowed to present his own compositions to his teacher at all.

Hoiby related how Menotti required that he write note-against-note counterpoint compositions every week for years to teach him to make every note count: "I went to my first lesson with Menotti and he said, 'Okay, now you have to learn to do counterpoint.' I said, 'I'm sorry, Mr. Menotti, I've already done counterpoint: I did it all the way through college and I know it backwards.' [- ']You have to do note-against-note - Palestrina - counterpoint. What you did was Bach counterpoint and you don't learn anything from that.' Well, he gave me these *canti fermi*, and I had to go home and for a week do nothing but one note against the other, living in this dingy room in upper Philadelphia. [...]" Hoiby composed nothing but fugues and madrigals for Menotti for an entire year. For the next two years, although Hoiby continued composing sixteenth-century modal counterpoint exercises with up to eight-part florid voicing, Menotti also allowed Hoiby to bring his own compositions.⁸⁸

Strictly speaking, the "fugues" that Hoiby had to write were probably motets, but this is an interesting testimony from a young composer exposed to such diverse influences as Renaissance counterpoint and forty-three-note scales at the same time early in his career.

Both of Partch's letters to Hoiby in autumn 1951 are mainly concerned with the preparation of *King Oedipus* in Oakland. A follow-up production of the work intended for New York by Partch's long-time contact Otto Luening was never realized, nor was any collaboration with choreographer Martha Graham (1894–1991): in his letter to Hoiby, Partch mentions the possibility of her choreographing *King*

87 Petri to Hoiby, November 2, 1951.

88 Gray: *The Life and Vocal Works of Lee Hoiby*, pp. 27–29 (quoting Crosby: *The Piano Music of Lee Hoiby*, p. 8).

Oedipus for the planned New York performance. Gilmore relates the story of an additional project with Graham planned for New York in 1953 that would have incorporated new music by Partch as well as the *Two Studies on Ancient Greek Scales*.⁸⁹ Delays in communication, financial strain and impatience eventually caused disagreement and put an end to the potential collaboration. From the perspective of the preparation of Partch's *The Bewitched* at University of Illinois in 1957, Johnston remembers:

We were unable to obtain either of the choreographers Partch preferred: Martha Graham or Doris Humphrey. I actually approached both of those august personages for him, but without success. He did earlier have Martha Graham's interest, but then he offended her.⁹⁰

Hoiby seems to have been Partch's contact link to the young pianist Daniell Revenaugh, most likely the "Danny" mentioned in the letter dated October 17; it was also Hoiby who had brought Revenaugh to Petri earlier in 1951:

Thanks also for your recommendation of Daniell Revenaugh. He wrote to me and to Mr. Marchant, but we don't know yet whether he has decided to come or not. If he does, I shall try my best to help him over his difficulties, in case he has any.⁹¹

Revenaugh did indeed go on to study with Petri at Mills College and has since then emerged into one of the leading experts on, and promoters of, Busoni and Petri.

Fourth letter⁹²

[Oakland,] Dec. 12, 1951.

Dear Lee--

Art Carson spent about six hours with me yesterday. Some days ago he had finally given me a sheaf of some three or four hundred poems to look at. I wasn't surpr[i]sed that I found some of them very good, but I was amazed to see that he has a bent toward what I and I alone (it seems) consider poetry. He is going straight in the face of modern idioms and trends to write simple, direct and subtle groups of words that now and then bowl

89 Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, pp. 209–214.

90 Johnston: "Maximum Clarity", p. 225.

91 Petri to Hoiby, May 16, 1951.

92 Two pages (r/v), typed, with typed corrections (letters or words crossed out by x), typed corrections (letters or words overwritten with other letters or words), {ms. signature} in pencil.
– Envelope (typed): Partch / 4428c MacArthur / Oakland 19, Calif. – Lee Hoiby / 2011 Chestnut St. / Philadelphia 3 / Pa. – Postmark: Oakland 4 / Calif. / Dec 12 / 1951 / 5³⁰ PM.

me over. Well, we talked at great length about this and many other things. He is currently annoyed by some guy who likes him who is living with Jim Grove, who sleeps with Jim and his girl on alternate nights (according to Art). I am leaving for San Diego Friday for two weeks,⁹³ and Art for Coronado about the 21st, so I'll probably see him down there.

Is Danny Revenaugh still intending to come back to Mills this winter? If he is I can use him, either on the Chromelodeon or Marimba Eroica (the new one)⁹⁴ or the Harmonic Canon. Roslyn Frantz is too damnably arrogant, and the other little girl on the Chrom. not very adaptable. I still have no cellist--a dreadful headache.⁹⁵

No further word about Oedipus in New York except that it wont be in May at Columbia. Time too short. It will either be at Juilliard later (next fall or winter), or, if Martha Graham will do choreography, possibly in a downtown theater. At least that's what Otto Luening has in mind. He says Columbia isn't well enough equipped. But, gratifyingly, he's even more enthusiastic since studying the score.

Art tells me that "since Friday I've been passionately in love with Darlene Mahnke."⁹⁶ I said, okay, why in hell don't you do something about it. Said he, "O I don't like to rush--I'm a romanticist." I said, speaking of romanticists, do you know the theme song of the man who left his motor running while hurrying into a whore house? Horus Staccato. Over this he chewed a bit, then at widely separated periods chuckled (the kind of chuckle you have to get a hearing aid to appreciate.)

Do write soon--and tell me news of Danny

Love,

{Harry}^p

My San Diego address--

1625 Chalcedony

San Diego 9

93 Cf. "Over the Christmas period he went south to visit friends." Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, p. 201 with more details.

94 Cf. "a 'marimba eroica', with keys as large as ironing boards". [Anon.]: *Goblin Music?*, in: *Time*, March 24, 1952, p. 44.

95 Roslyn Frantz, pianist and Petri student, did not participate in the production of *King Oedipus*. Probably she is mentioned by Partch because Hoiby knew her. Also Daniell Revenaugh was not part of the ensemble. The program booklet names Patricia Carey (Chromelodean Sub-bass), Angela Thorpe and Nancy Wiebenson (Chromelodeon). The cello was eventually played by Ellen Ohdner (Program booklet *Oedipus 1952*, p.[4]).

96 "Darlene Mahnke (bass marimba) is a pianist and composer, and studies with Egon Petri." (Program booklet *Oedipus 1952*, p. [11]). Composer Leland Smith remembers: "Darlene Mahnke was a piano student at Mills College when I taught there in 1951-52. I remember her impressive senior recital which featured Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. She also conducted the orchestra for the Mills College Centennial celebration for which I wrote the music." (Liner notes *Leland Smith: Chamber Music*).

Although not mentioned by name, Hoiby is indirectly criticized as a Kithara player by Richard Kassel in his study on *Barstow* because of the “virtually inaudible” Kithara part Hoiby performed in the 1945 recording of this piece:

Indeed, taking into consideration the mediocre recording quality, the already sparse Kithara part may have been reduced further from its notated version; it contributes virtually nothing musically. Perhaps the recording documents another stage of the work, never written down or now lost, or perhaps the player was not up to par. In any case, by the next version the Kithara had been eliminated and its part re-written for another instrument.⁹⁷

Nevertheless, Hoiby remained for Partch the ideal Kitharist for a long time, and his letters illustrate his attachment to the players of the ensemble at University of Wisconsin. Another one of them, Christine Charnstrom, who also stayed in contact with Partch, is mentioned in the same sense in Partch’s last letter to Hoiby from 1958. Wiecki comments on Charnstrom:

She corresponded with Partch for about ten years, and, in a letter of April 30, 1957, he complimented her Chromelodeon playing: “I have never had a Chromelodeonist who attacks the instrument with the kind of fertilizing [?] fury you gave to it in 1945–1946...”⁹⁸

Plans for a later reunion of the Madison ensemble with Partch were never realized.⁹⁹ Even if the New York performance of *King Oedipus* had taken place, Hoiby could not have participated in it even if he had wanted to: he spent the academic year 1952/53 in Rome on a Fulbright Scholarship. Petri had written references for him as early as 1950:

My correspondence seems to consist of writing out recommendations for Fulbright Scholarships. Naturally, I don’t like that kind of task, but when people write such charming, warm letters as you, it makes it a pleasure. Let me know how everything turns out.¹⁰⁰

97 Kassel: *Barstow* as History, p. lv.

98 Wiecki: Relieving “12-Tone Paralysis”, p. 63n24 [Wiecki’s addition], referring to “a personal communication (March 21, 1987)” by Charnstrom and quoting from a letter by Partch to Charnstrom (April 30, 1957).

99 Cf. “While in Urbana [in 1957] he had written to Christine Charnstrom, one of the musicians he worked with twelve years earlier in Madison, asking her to play the Chromelodeon part in the projected film of *U.S. Highball*. Now married with children and living in Binghamton, New York, she replied that it would be impossible for her to come to Yellow Springs.” Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, p. 255.

100 Petri to Hoiby, October 25, 1950.

When Hoiby was awarded the scholarship in 1952, it was originally intended for a stay in Venice, but he had the grant transferred to Rome, as can be learned from another of Petri's letters:

You don't know how happy I am that you have received the Fulbright at last. I can understand your desire to spend that year in Rome rather than in Venice, although even that would be a wonderful experience. I have enjoyed that city, in spite of its evil smelling canals, when I played there at the Conservatory at which you are supposed to be affiliated.¹⁰¹

Petri had not provided the only reference. In Rome, Hoiby experienced the controversial standing of Menotti in his country of origin:

On the basis of recommendations from Menotti and Virgil Thompson, Hoiby was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to study composition at the *Accademia di Santa Cecilia* in Rome. However, after traveling to Rome and submitting examples of his work, Hoiby was refused admission. [...] The director, Ildebrando Pizzetti, later told American composer Samuel Barber that the *Accademia* rejected him because "the Italian modernists hated Menotti."¹⁰²

In 1952, before leaving to Italy, Hoiby was awarded the first of several shorter fellowships for the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire, an institution still offering artistic residencies to this day.¹⁰³ His career as a composer developed owing to such opportunities, and when he received the last of Partch's letters in the summer of 1958, he was already living in New York City and had just returned from the first *Festival dei Due Mondi* in Spoleto, Italy, where his one-act opera *The Scarf* had been premiered.

After leaving the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign in spring 1957 and a brief sojourn in Yellow Springs, Ohio, and before arriving at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, in March 1958, Partch spent time in Chicago, visiting Shirley Genter, "a friend from Madison days"¹⁰⁴ whom he mentions in his last letter to Hoiby.

Early in November [1957] he left for Chicago [...]. As on his previous visit, he stayed first with Charles and Shirley Genter, who had an apartment in Mies van der Rohe's building at 860 North Lake Shore Drive.

101 Petri to Hoiby, August 23, 1952.

102 Gray: *The Life and Vocal Works of Lee Hoiby*, p. 31.

103 Hoiby stayed in Peterborough in 1952, 1954, 1957, 1958 and 1959, see [Anon.]: *Music Composition. Lee Hoiby*, online, 2020, www.macdowellcolony.org/artists/lee-hoiby.

104 Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, p. 258.

Charles was an architect and a partner of Mies, and at the parties he and Shirley hosted they introduced Partch to the artistic circles of Chicago.¹⁰⁵

There is a photo from 1949, available on the website of the Wisconsin Historical Society, crediting “Shirley Genter, instructor in music theory and dance at the University of Wisconsin, with a musical instrument called a double canon, invented and constructed by Harry Partch, musical researcher who worked at the University [of Wisconsin-Madison] in 1946 and 1947.”¹⁰⁶

In Chicago, Partch started working with filmmaker Madeline Tourtelot (1915–2002) and continued to do so in Evanston, where *U.S. Highball* was recorded for the third time. Altogether, Partch’s stay at Northwestern University lasted only for half a year: he left again for New York in mid-September, only two months after his last letter to Hoiby, on which a new red address stamp had left the delusive impression of stability.

Fifth letter¹⁰⁷

[Evanston,] July 23, 1958.

Dear Lee:

I am planning to visit New York after my U.S. Highball records are distributed, about August 20-Sept. 15, and I am wondering if you will be around. I might even move to that vicinity, if I can find some sort of congenial milieu.

The stereo recording is sensationally good, I think. How it will come out on records remains to be seen (monaural). I thought of you often, and wished that you could be at your old place on the Kithara. But I knew it would be useless to inquire. Mike Colgrass¹⁰⁸ came because someone brought him.

The percussion section could hardly have been better, but the strings! I was playing Kithara, Harmonic Canon, and Surrogate Kithara at various times, because there was neither time nor aptitude to get the job well done. Therefore, we had to stop every few measures so that I and others could move from one instrument to another. Editing and

105 Ibid., pp. 261 f.

106 Shirley Genter with Musical Instrument, online, www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM56960.

107 One page, typed in red, with {ms. signature} in black ink¹. – Envelope: [red stamp] HARRY PARTCH / P. O. Box 989 / Evanston, Illinois – [typed in red:] Mr. Lee Hoiby / 200 W. 108th St. / New York / N. Y. – Postmark: Evanston / Ill. / Jul 23 / 1958 / 3³⁰ PM. – [Verso of envelope, in pencil, upside down:] Bob Gilmore / 6 Dobbs Park / Carrickfergus / Co[unty] Antrim / Ireland UK / BT38 8DF.

108 Michael Colgrass (1932–2019), percussionist and composer.

splicing all those sections consumed 15 hours. Yet our recording engineer was so good that one is not in the least aware of this. The chromelodeonist doesn't begin to compare with Christine, and of course I am a weak shadow of Lee Hoiby as a Kitharist.

Since I haven't heard from you--since the visit at Shirley's last December--I haven't the vaguest idea what you're doing. Shirley I've not seen since I moved to Evanston last March. She ignores my notes, and I refuse to pester her with phone calls.

The subscription drive is so far very encouraging, and if it keeps up at the present rate I'll achieve some freedom of movement. Danlee Mitchell has saved my life this past six months. He devoted his entire time to all the Partch problems--he's only 21, but has a perception far beyond his years. He played many instruments, all well, and when I felt trapped on the fifth floor of the Northwestern U. Sch. of Music (!)¹⁰⁹ he rented a garage, a truck, and virtually single-handed moved about 2000 pounds of instruments into the garage. He left for his home in Tacoma two days ago.

Please let me hear from you. I hope your health and your musical prospects are rosy.

Love

{Harry}ⁱ

[red stamp:] HARRY PARTCH / P. O. Box 989 / Evanston, Illinois

At least one person turned out to be a permanent factor in Partch's life: Danlee Mitchell, who – like Hoiby twelve years earlier – started out as a musician in a university ensemble. Eventually, Mitchell became Partch's heir and administrator of his legacy.

Danlee Mitchell (born 1936) met Harry Partch in 1956, at the University of Illinois, when Mr. Mitchell (class of '59' and '62') entered the School of Music as a music major and performed in the world premier of Partch's *The Bewitched*. From 1958 until Partch's death in 1974, Mitchell was Partch's assistant, ensemble manager, music director and conductor, personal consultant and manager, and pal.¹¹⁰

109 “[Elizabeth Gentry] first persuaded the dean at Northwestern to allow the use of the condemned top floor of the old Victorian music school building, which was thought to be unsafe, as a studio for Partch's instruments, so that *U.S. Highball* could be rehearsed and filmed. In mid-March Partch moved his instruments there and simultaneously moved into the four-room student basement apartment in Evanston where Elizabeth lived with her then husband Thomas Coleman.” Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, p. 266.

110 [Anon.]: *Danlee Mitchell*, online, [s. a.], www.corporeal.com/dm_bio.html.



Fig. 8: Letter from Harry Partch to Lee Hoiby, [Evanston,] July 23, 1958, envelope

“Dear Pal Lee” is also how Partch addressed Hoiby in his first letter in 1948. It is interesting to see how Partch used exactly the same phrases in his correspondence with different partners in a certain period of time. In a letter to Marshall written some days after the last letter to Hoiby, Partch writes about his new companion: “Danlee rented a garage, paid for it himself and virtually single-handed moved my instruments into it. He really saved my life.”¹¹¹ The words are pretty much the same, but Hoiby received the slightly more exhaustive information than Marshall.

As a conclusion and in order to return from this historical voyage to modern Partch research, a reproduction of the envelope of Partch’s last letter to Hoiby is included here (Fig. 8). This is intended as homage to Bob Gilmore (1961–2015), without whose comprehensive work on Partch’s biography a small study like the present one would not have been possible:¹¹² Before sending three of Partch’s letters to Gilmore in 1990, together with an account of his own Partch recollections, Hoiby had jotted down Gilmore’s address on the back of the envelope.

Gilmore had written to Hoiby, who responded – as suggested by Gilmore himself – by recording a tape cassette with his recollections. In doing so together with Christine Lindsay (née Charnstrom) and her husband,¹¹³ Hoiby was at last achieving some sort of reunion of the Madison ensemble after 45 years. Unfortunately, this recording is not accessible, but apparently it was Hoiby who brought up the subject of Partch’s homosexuality in it, which would be elaborated during his further correspondence with Gilmore, eventually causing the latter to conclude:

You have been generous beyond the call of duty in answering my questions on Partch, and the various materials you have given me provides [sic] a clear picture of our attitude to the man, and something of his attitude to you. And such interesting letters; poor Menotti – will he ever recover??¹¹⁴

111 Gilmore: *Harry Partch*, p. 269, 440n46: “Partch to Lauriston Marshall (Aug. 5, 1958)”.

112 Cf. Roman Brotbeck: [Obituary] Bob Gilmore (1961–2015), in: *Dissonance* 129 (March 2015), pp. 39f.

113 Gilmore to Hoiby, March 13, 1990.

114 Gilmore to Hoiby, June 27, 1990.

We do not know if Hoiby answered to Partch's last letter at all; by 1958, parallel to his growing acceptance as a composer, he most likely had already concluded a first stage of his coming-to-terms with Partch's influence on his personal life and on his artistic beliefs.¹¹⁵

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115 See Martin Skamletz: "I've turned into a great reviser." Lee Hoibys Vertonung von Li Bais *The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter* und ihr Bezug zu Harry Partch, pp. 371–398 in this volume.

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Martin Skamletz studied music theory and flute in Vienna as well as traverso in Brussels. In addition to his activities as flautist in baroque ensembles, he has held teaching positions for music theory at various institutions including the Swiss Music Pedagogic Association and the Trossingen University of Music in Germany. Since 2006, he is professor at the Vorarlberg Music Conservatory in Austria and as of 2007, he has been head of the Institute Interpretation as well as lecturer for music theory at the Bern University of the Arts HKB, Switzerland.

Der doppelte Po und die Musik

Rätoromanisch-chinesische Studien, besonders zu
Li Po, Harry Partch und Chasper Po

Herausgegeben von

Mathias Gredig, Marc Winter,
Rico Valär und Roman Brotbeck

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