# MUSIC AS REVELATION

## PHONETIC COMPOSITION AND THE EARLY CORPOREALITY OF HARRY PARTCH

*Sean Patrick Ignatius Tartaglia*

Surveying the critical studies of Harry Partch's work, a glut of material has been written on his intonational theories and, perhaps owing to their spectacle, as well as the flowering of his music in Europe through Ensemble MusikFabrik's careful replication of his instruments, his late dramatic works; however, very little has been made of his concept of corporeality—aside from his own words and the words of those who knew him, such as Ben Johnston and Danlee Mitchell—or of his works prior to the critical darlings, *The Bewitched* and *Delusion of the Fury*; moreover, for those interested in the arguments and ideas that ground the corporeality of the early works, and how said corporeality influenced Partch's manner of composition, there is no sizeable body of critical work on the pre-50s works[1], which includes Partch's early masterpieces: *Seventeen Lyrics by Li-Po*, *Barstow*, and *U.S. Highball*.

Though in no way a total survey of all these works[2], which perhaps would require a few hundred pages, this meager work will highlight the aspects of Partch's early, pre-stagework, corporeality that are found in his unique, individual approach to composition as a process of recognizing the musicality of speech, as well as place him in his rightful place as an important

[1] An exception being Bob Gilmore's highly important study on the development of Partch's *Seventeen Lyrics by Li-Po*: Gilmore, Bob. "On Harry Partch's "Seventeen Lyrics by Li Po"." *Perspectives of New Music* 30, no. 2 (1992): 22-58.

[2] Indeed, I regret to admit that I, with my current resources, cannot come across a copy of *Bitter Music*, which is important in drawing on the speech of itinerants; however, though a study of that must come another day, some aspects of this can be found in *The Wayward*.

exponent of Pre-Socratic natural philosophy in the 20th century, which I believe is as intrinsic to the early corporeality as the oft described shamanistic, Dionysion qualities are to the late corporeality of his post 50s stageworks. And one can see in this the sense of logical continuity that Partch believed in his own compositional development, as it all remains tied to a pre-Platonic, tangible world that must be experienced first hand as opposed to one simply conceived of as logical conjecture.

To begin, it would be beneficial for us to know what ideas and attitudes lead to the compositional style that I argue Partch takes up, and it is through Ben Johnston, who worked with him in Gualala, California between 1949-50, that we find the most convincing evidence of his early compositional method. In an interview with Bruce Duffie, Johnston stated:

> BJ: When I began to deal with Partch, he was using small intervals to represent the inflections of speaking voice, the melodies of a spoken line.
>
> BD: With the rise and fall and everything?
>
> BJ: Everything was without any exaggeration, as it is when you set it to recitative, or even to any kind of traditional vocal setting. This naturalism interested me quite a lot, not so much because it was naturalistic, but because it was so precise. And it did, indeed, sound the way he sounded when he spoke. He had put his own vocal inflections into those melodies, and there they were notated[3].

And there is, in some sense, a relationship to this individual expression of one's own voice in Partch's oft described interest in Chinese, as a tonal language, as well as the possible qualities of spoken inflection found in the Yaqui indians he so admired.

This makes up the standard background of Partch, one we have come to know through his own words in the preface of *Genesis of a Music*, and so this idea becomes part of the mythology: that Partch denies equal temperament because of his deeply felt non-western influences, perhaps a symbolic reflection of the apostasy of his father, and thus finds the true path in just intonation, in a world that is not predetermined by some dogmatic force, but by his own will, facilitated by his personal studies of Helmholtz's acoustic investigations as an outlet for his own innate need for inquiry.

[3] http://www.bruceduffie.com/johnston.html

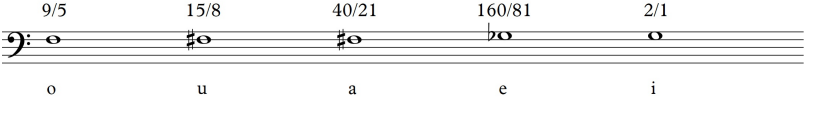
However, despite the words being from his pen, and my own debt to Partch for his words influencing my own personal musical path, I would like to offer, as the result of observation, a slightly altered interpretation of Harry Partch's development: because his voice—and later on the voices of others—was the defining factor of the music, not the ratio itself, and that he interpreted his voice according to the ratios he had previously defined through the chromelodeon and adapted viola to notate it, the pure ratio, though a legitimate interpretation, is not necessarily the correct sound, but the closest available sound to the one he alone perceived in his own vocal inflections and his experiences of the voices of other; thus, his early Corporeality is an expression of himself physically—and, in extension, his experience of the physicality of the world around him—as opposed to a composer who expresses himself intellectually through compositional games, systems, or procedures.

Therefore, I might then be able to state that Harry Partch, in the manner in which he composed his works ranging from the early adapted viola music to the ensembles of *The Wayward*, expresses a "revealed" music, one that does not manifest within the intellect, composed at will, but reveals itself as to be written according to how one understands it as it is; that is to say, a composition's "truth" only exists in the way in which the composer, in this case Partch, comprehends it, and his skill as a composer is understanding what it is in such a way that he can effectively notate it to convey its "truth."

If this idea is bizarre, even preposterous, to the reader, I might offer them a basic way of understanding this concept of "revealed" music in a few short examples of two smaller musical works: *The Letter* and *The Lord is My Shepherd*.

However, first, is of importance to understand how one recognizes, and properly conveys, one's revelations. To do so, I, through the same technique that Partch used to interpret his own voice, have used a viola to find the corresponding ratio to each relevant vowel, using my best judgement to interpret it according to a definite pitch; consequently, according to the standard English vowels in the IPA alphabet, a e i o u (Fig. 1), I found the pitches of my own voice by intoning them and comparing them to the ratios in Partch's 43 tone scale (Ex. 1).

Ex. 1 Vowel height according to my voice (1/1 = G)



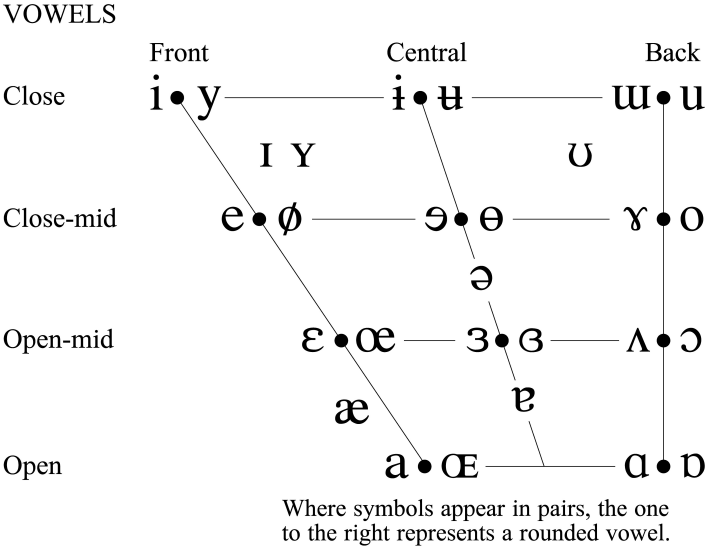
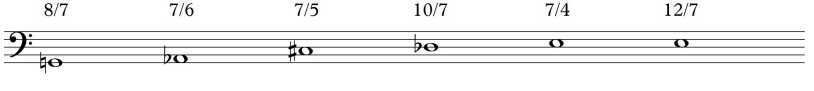



Fig. 1 IPA chart of vowel height

What makes this revelation a unique method of musical expression is that each voice retains a certain unique quality not found in others, despite the material, because it is from my own voice, interpreted by my own senses.

If this is strange to say, note that Partch did the same in *The Letter* for the voice of his hobo friend, Pablo (Ex. 2). Partch does not define them according to IPA vowel phonemes as I do, but he does define the pitches of the line according to how he perceives the accent of Pablo's voice, according to his own intonation.

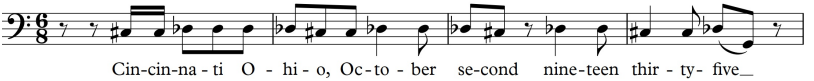



Ex. 2 Partch's pitch ratios

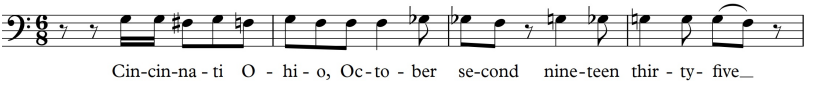
If it is not already obvious, the quality of one's voice, and, even moreso, dialect or accent, determine the sound, so that it is not the text that is important, but rather the reading of the text; after all, Partch defines a set of vowel sounds that the music is notated according to, meaning that the part is not intoned as if the reciter

simply reads the text, as in pieces of music written for instruments and speaker, but that the manner in which the hobo speaks is highlighted in such a way that the vocal part must take on the Hobo's accent in performance.

This is to say that, if I were to recite this without any notated pitches, the results would be intrinsically different than following a series of finely defined pitches. For example, on the first page of *The Letter*, if I say "Cincinnati" (Ex. 3) it does not line up with Partch's transcription (Ex. 4), in which the "na" rises, whereas mine falls. My own pronunciation of the word is quite different from the voice of Pablo, not simply due to region or time, but education and path of life.




Ex. 3 My voice with ratios




Ex. 4 Pablo's voice with ratios

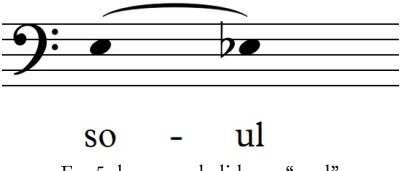
The "revealed" quality thus appears in the natural interpretation of a text according to one's voice alone, and the consequent attempt to relate that to the understood spectrum of frequencies. Pablo, Partch, and I would all encounter different pitch values in readings, and how we interpret our voices in terms of ratios will also be different. As we already understand, I came to interpret my vowel vocalization in a smaller range of ratios than Partch interpreted Pablo's, but my interpretation is also highly determined by seeking to most equivalent sound in my voice to the IPA standard, whereas Partch is more interested in how individuals speak, not in how they speak relates to how we should speak if we are to take IPA as truth. Partch might actually interpret this as me not listening to myself, but to how others define how I listen to myself (though, in my defense, I choose it as a standard simply because it is a standard, not because I believe it to be exact, true, or perfect, as I will explain later). In some sense it would be best to offer these standards as ways of identifying vowel distance[4], not definite points, and that these distances could be

[4] Additional musing on these attributes of composition according to IPA can be found in a brief speculative essay of mine, "Vowels As Tonal Resource In Phonetic Chant Composition."
https://vocesnaturalis.com/Supplements/Tartaglia_IPA_composition.pdf

arbitrarily understood as any possible range as long as its relationship with the other vowels in terms of distance remain unaltered; that is, as long as e is considered to be below i tonally, but still above a in a direct relationship, then the distance between e to i might be as large or as small as it appears to be.

This in mind, *The Letter* is quite literal in its phonetic qualities: Partch only provides six ratios for the voice, corresponding to vowel inflection; however, *The Lord is My Shepherd* comes from a different background than speech: the musical intonation of what Partch terms a truly "Hebraic" cantillation; and from this one finds a form of revelation that is not necessarily objective, or phonetic, but subjective, or rhetorical and emotional.

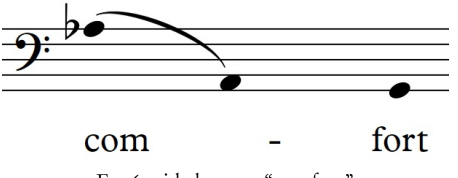
That is not to say that there are not very clear moments of phonetically derived moments in the work, for there are situations as in example 5, in which a word with an inherent glide within its inner vowel phonemes will be represented by a slight drop.




Ex. 5 downward glide on "soul"

And Partch acknowledges this is a phonetic, not a rhetorical, trait, as he notes himself that "one of the salient characteristics of spoken words--perhaps the most salient--is the tonal glide" (Partch 1974, 45).

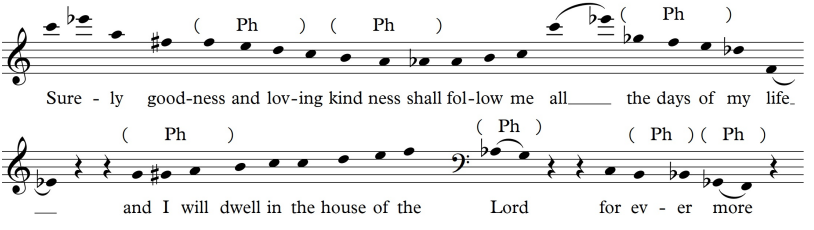
Yet, in comparison to *The Letter*, which is highly, and perhaps, precisely, phonetic, the setting of the psalm reveals exaggerated interpretations that point to similar effects in the later *Seventeen Lyrics by Li-Po*, such as wide downward leaps or melisma on single syllables that do not exist in the phonetic enunciation (ex. 6).




Ex. 6 wide leap on "comfort"

And it should be clear that the examples from the two works might, at some point, be combined into a single melodic line, so that it

might be understood as a push and pull between expressive sounds and phonetic sounds; therefore, a line will flow freely according to the meaning, but the next two syllables may flow according to the phonetic relationship between two vowels, and the line following that might become expressive again. This can be underscored in example 7, which highlights sections that are possibly phonetic in nature, owing to their vowel sounds being relatively higher or lower than one another, in contrast to sections of an expressive nature, determined by a reading of the meaning of the words as opposed to their sounds.




Ex. 7 Final two systems showing contrasting styles of phonetic and rhetorical composition

I have chosen these two examples because they underline the two polar points within which Partch would continually gravitate toward in the rest of his music: the objective experience of speech itself, and the subjective experience of knowing and expressing a text. If I were to define these myself, I would do so:

> **Phonetic (Objective-Subjective)** - the phonetic sound of speech as it is, with no altered inflection, determines the melodic line

> **Expressive (Subjective-Objective)** - the way in which one reads the text, moved by a rhetorical or emotional quality, alters the inflection of speech and determines the melodic line

In other words, the former category assumes an objective stance—the true phonetic sound—but the comprehension and interpretation of that sound is subjective, based upon one's perceptual faculty; however, the latter assumes a subjective stance—the inflection of a syllable being incongruous with its true phonetic sound—so that,

because the speaker is consciously aware of that inflection, the comprehension of that sound is objective.

Partch's early corporeality comes to fuse these two so that the emotional intensity of his music relies on the discernible contrast between purely phonetic and expressive inflection; yet, as we will come to understand, these contrasts are not so clear cut; rather, it will appear that his individual pitches will reflect one or another in a sequence: a phonetic pitch can be a literal phonetic statement, as in the example from *The Letter*, but a phonetic music can also be highly relative—so that it might follow an expressive phrase—and thus the difference between i and a is not determined by their objective sound, but by the fact that the composer has effectively treated that intervallic relationship musically; that is, that they rise or fall at different intervallic rates than the vowels naturally occur at, but still do rise from a to i and fall from e to o. It might be no different than word painting, for one is conveying to the listener a sense of height among phonetic values, one that is obvious even if the listener is not searching for those qualities.

Thus, the melodic line with become an amalgamation of the two, and the results end up quite unlike the more "composed" melodic line of the music of the Florentines—Galilei, Caccini, and Peri—of Walton's *Façade*, or of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, so that melody appears in how one expresses the text, and the sounds that they make in the act of expressing it become the basis for what he considers the pinnacle of musical expression. However, to compare Partch's methodology with these composers is not totally accurate, for he readily confirms that:

> Corporeal music is emotionally "tactile." It does not grow from the root of "pure form." It cannot be characterized as either mental or spiritual. (ibid. 8)

Thus, I would like to posit that, unlike these other composers, and perhaps most composers prior to the 1950s, Partch was not interested in what might be defined as "cerebral" attitudes, e.g. the prevailing Anglo-American extension of the German tradition of taking a theme and transforming it incessantly; rather, Partch was only interested in the sounds that we make at the most microscopic level, not the greater macrostructural forms. To an extent much of his larger music, especially to the listener of 20th century America, appears as without

formal cohesion, or perhaps even fickle, unable to decide upon something and always moving on to the next moment, so that works such as *U.S. Highball* might actually seem like a barrage of incoherent musical information[5]; however, this neglect of those structural norms is in line with Partch's attitudes about the development of music in the Western tradition and what he views as of importance in musical expression.

[5] As an aside, and as a final note to this topic, the preposterous notion that music which is an "amalgamation" of disparate points is formally incoherent is nonsense. Composers as traditional as Ockeghem possess no formal structure outside of a generic macrostructure in the Mass, yet continually spin out tunes to the delight of the listener. To propose that Partch is somehow inferior musically because his music lacks formal cohesion, but then accept the formal whimsies of the Medieval era, in which the only strict formal qualities are poetic form, a five movement Mass, and techniques such as canons and imitations, is insulting and dismissive.

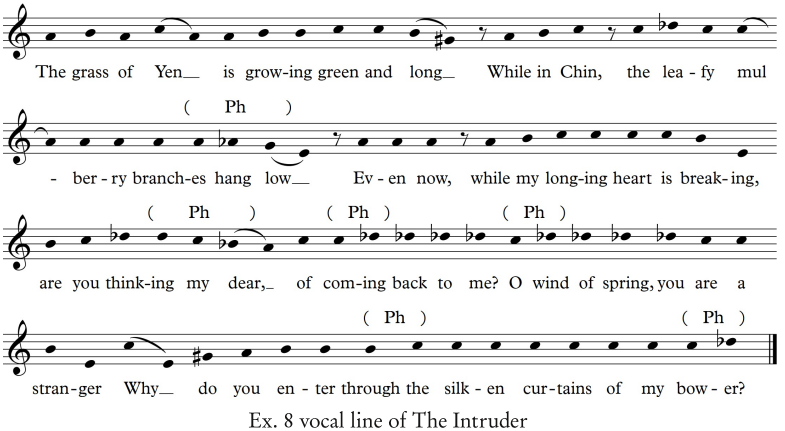
*Seventeen Lyrics by Li-Po*, written during the same time Partch wrote the first edition of *The Lord is My Shepherd*, 1931-1933, reflects the same compositional attitudes as the earlier glance at the latter's merging of phonetic and expressive contour; however, as a prefatory note, I would not expect the reader to think of this work as revealing the traits of a fully developed phonetic music like that of the later works; for, this early Partch still shows signs of being in a phase of mostly expressive declamation with phonetic sections of one to three pitches.

Owing to it being a massive work, I am arbitrarily choosing three pieces from the set, one from each year of composition, and, in reference to the phonetic-expressive tides of *The Lord is My Shepherd*, will take note of the relationship between the two types of composition.

# THE INTRUDER

Santa Rosa, August, 1931

"The Intruder" does not provide much of interest in terms of the relationship between the two poles. Certainly there are six sections of overtly phonetic material, but only two are substantial, the rest being two pitch phrases, only three of which exist as two separate syllables.



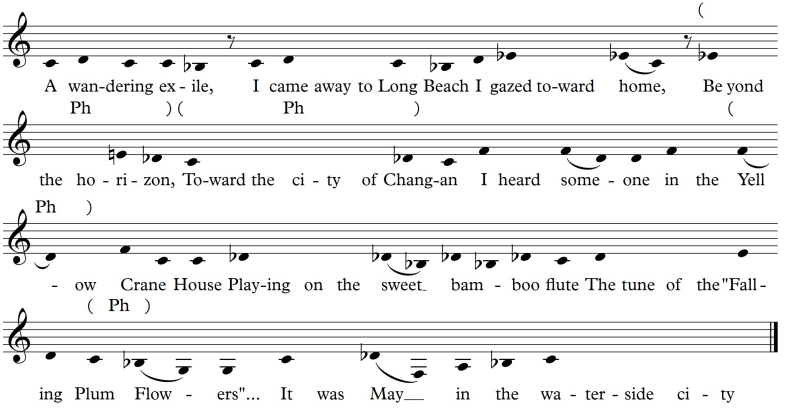

Ex. 8 vocal line of The Intruder

The little movement in the piece is clearly illustrative: ascending at growing grass, thinking of someone, and longing; descending on branches hanging. That being noted, despite a lack of explicitly phonetic material, there is an obvious interest in a semi-phonetic approach in focusing on intoning one pitch.

# ON HEARING THE FLUTE IN THE YELLOW CRANE HOUSE

San Francisco, February 17, 1932

This work directly follows *The Lord is My Shepherd* by a month—January 5th—and resembles it the most in terms of its melodic contour and inspiration.




Ex. 9 vocal line of On Hearing the Flute in the Yellow Crane House

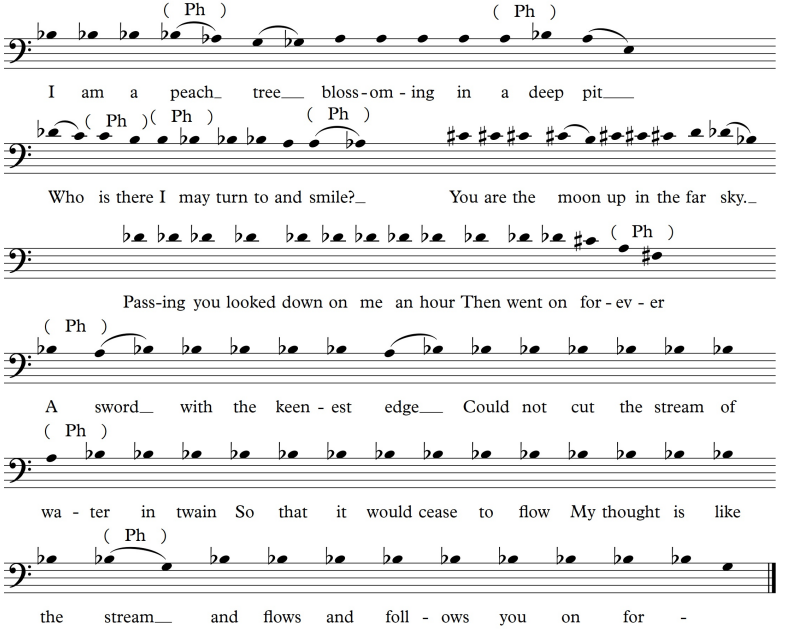
Much of the line is expressive, with allusions to the bamboo flute in thirds and the descent representing the tune, as well as the obvious exaggeration of a sixth at "May"; yet, there are a few sections of phonetic phrases that are not simply repeated pitches, usually appearing in the relationship between the vowel that begins a phrase and the vowel that finishes it, e.g. In the second system "To" is below "Chang." Though the pitches are not next to each other (we can note that another o vowel sound appears next to "Chang" in "of" however), because the first determines the pitch content, with the others following it, the second pitch serves as an indirect phonetic interval.

# I AM A PEACH TREE

Gloucester, Massachusetts, August 11, 1933

Part of the final set of pieces written in Massachusetts, "I Am a Peach Tree," though similar to the others in possessing a steady reciting pitch, is a work that one might otherwise assume possesses very little of interest in the voice part. Partch's accompaniment is rather athletic

here, meaning that it would be rather complicated for a more florid vocal line, and most would probably find greater interest in the adapted viola technique; however, this little of note is, for our purposes, of profound importance in understanding the development of Partch's melodic patterns.



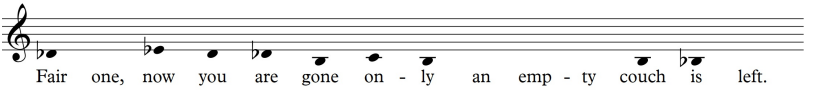

Ex. 10 vocal line of "I Am a Peach Tree"

Perhaps of interest in this brief glance is that much of the music written does not contain the wide pitch range of *The Lord is My Shepherd*, rather exploiting a more limited set of pitches that favour a more precise phonetic relation as opposed to exaggerated leaps. I specifically chose "On Hearing the Flute in the Yellow Crane House" as an example precisely because it featured a greater pitch range per phrase than the others seemed to contain; however, it is important to note that, overall, "The Intruder" has a more varied contour.

Beyond this surface analysis, "I Am a Peach Tree" is of note as one of the last pieces written, as it serves as a prefiguration of the later hobo influenced speech (Ex 26) , in which entire sections or phrases will rest on one note like a reciting tone, sometimes possessing an intonation or termination on a short three note pattern, turning the central section into a mediant. Especially interesting in the example of "I Am a Peach Tree" is the alterations of neighbor tones within the distance of a third from the main recitation in the final three systems,

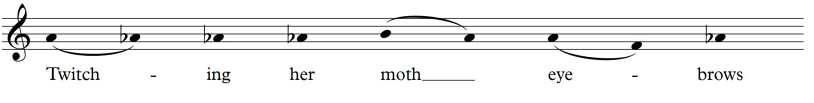
which are quite similar to the melodic contour of the aforementioned reciting tones in Catholic liturgy, and possibly similar to Hebrew cantillation as a precursor.

Of note, in "On Hearing the Flute in the Yellow Crane House" the vocal line reflects a recitation pitch with terminations on two to three note phrases, and perhaps ideally one would like to place these similarities as a result of Partch's short engagement with Hebrew cantillation in San Francisco, but it would be too much to say that he studied it for any period of time, rather it would be more realistic to admit that reciting tones, as tropes or melody types, are noticeable in most practices worldwide in the ancient styles of recitation, and Partch would most likely be keen to those forms of melodic construction. After all, "The Long Departed Lover," from 1930, has features of a long declamatory line on a single pitch, but no real intonation or termination; rather, the lines are spaces among other sections of the text.

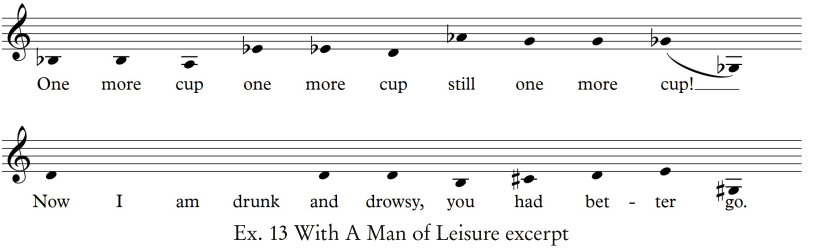



Ex. 11 The Long-Departed Lover excerpt

Moreover, two pieces from a year later, "The Night of Sorrow" and "With a Man of Leisure," contain more exaggerated, illustrative lines.




Ex. 12 The Night of Sorrow excerpt



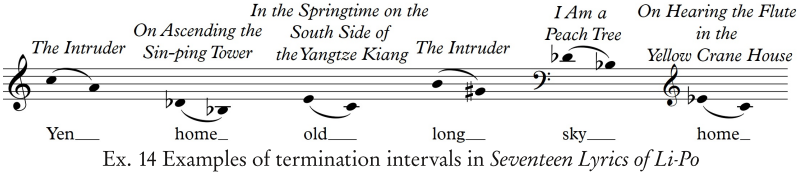

Ex. 13 With A Man of Leisure excerpt

The trend in these excerpts is their highly expressive lines, those that are somewhat similar in their jagged contour to the excerpt from *The Lord is My Shepherd* in example 7, and one can definitely begin to note, even in a superficial analysis, that the melodic patterns Partch wrote became, over time, less focused on the illustration of the text,

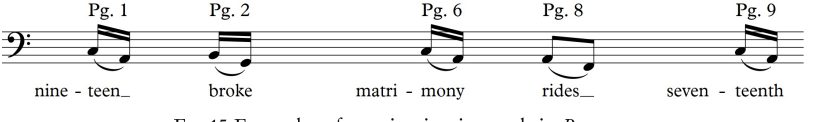
and more focused on the aspects of the recitation of the text, as in "I Am a Peach Tree;" therefore, despite what seems like a lack of hard evidence that Partch studied and applied existing tropes, the reciting tone comparison is actually rather apt, as Partch's music begins to show in *Seventeen Lyrics*, in the pieces written 1932 and on, signs of personally developed melodic formulae, with both internally and externally consistent appearances according to word type.

As observed in the melodic language in *Seventeen Lyrics*, especially in relation to the interval types found *The Lord is My Shepherd*, there are consistent appearances of the tone or semitone descent in words made up of an internal glide between phonemes, e.g. soul, dear, stream, peach, road, etc; in addition, there is the less frequent appearance of the semitone rise in words made up of a single or separate vowel phonemes, e.g. all, sword, edge, etc.

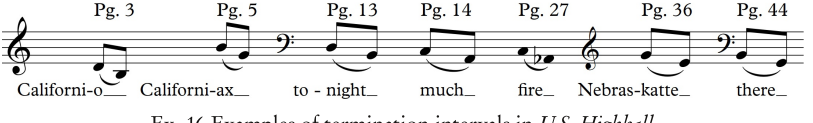
However, what is not seen as frequently in *The Lord is My Shepherd*, but begins appearing consistently in *Seventeen Lyrics*, and, significantly, appears in terminations in *The Wayward*, is the descent of a third in single syllable words made up of a single or separate vowel phoneme, as well as appearing as termination in the final syllables of words.




Ex. 14 Examples of termination intervals in *Seventeen Lyrics of Li-Po*




Ex. 15 Examples of termination intervals in *Barstow*




Ex. 16 Examples of termination intervals in *U.S. Highball*

And, in much of Partch's early recitation, aside from the wide intervals of *The Lord is My Shepherd*, it seems that another quality equivalent to Hebrew cantillation and Catholic reciting tones beyond the two to three phrase intonations, terminations, and mediant lilts is that the distance between the tenor, the pitch that makes up much of the reciting tone, and its neighbor pitches is often within the distance

of a third, and that much of the intervallic movement, outside of interword glides, is stepwise, a type of movement that allows for an easier to comprehend declamation of the text while still allowing for the sort of pitch variations that illustrate the emotion and rhetoric of the text.

Though perhaps a lengthy detour, I do think it important to understand the development of these melodic patterns, because making them known allows for us to recognize that, at this point, arriving at the melodic language of *The Letter* from that of *The Lord is My Shepherd* does not seem so far fetched, as it seems that Partch's musical language between the years of 1930 to 1933 was slowly working away from a sort of disjunct, mellifluous wave, one frequently found in late 19th century styles, to a more grounded, realistic, and eventually deeply phonetic manner of conveying the text.

Beyond that supposition, however, there is also the phonetic quality of the third glide, as well as the glide of the (diminished) fifth that appears in the excerpt from *The Letter* (Ex.4), that I would like to propose a more individualistic aspect, one that we will find further in the developments made in *The Wayward*, to both *Barstow* and *U.S. Highball* in that Partch's glides and descents are related to the qualities of speech, and that he, attempting to highlight the unique nature of the American voice, captured that drop in many cadential points.

Composition beginning ten years after *Seventeen Lyrics*, the works making up *The Wayward* reveal a musical language with much more rhythmic drive, perhaps owing to the development of the plucked and percussive instruments for the ensemble, and one even more precise than that found in the 1930s, using meter almost exclusively for the first time in ten years. Disappeared, to a large extent, have the highly expressive and emotional lines of *Seventeen Lyrics*, now replaced by a rapid recitative, highly similar in notational appearance to Florentine monody. With the development of new instruments, Partch's ensemble is employed to take the role of emotional expression, and the voice is free to accurately depict the speech patterns of the people that he met in the decades he spent traveling America.

Yet, this is not to say that the music is more phonetic and less expressive; rather, it conveys something that one might otherwise lack in "expressive" music, especially in the "romantic" sense, that the manner in which we act and speak expresses us just as much as our intellectual expressions. It is true there is an objective phonetic conception of speech according to the IPA, but the individual will never truly express themselves in speech according to the generalized nature of the IPA, as accents and speech patterns do not conform to perfect specimens. Thus, the expressive quality of Partch's early music, as I wish to convey to the reader in this section, develops away from the emotionally "expressive" music of the 1930s to the phonetically "expressive" music found in The Wayward, knowing that neither is more or less deficient in human expression. And this might be better understood through Partch's own notion of the value of a word:

> A word has four properties: (1) a rhythm (that is, its natural pattern of dynamics, and a reasonable length of time for its speaking to cover); (2) phonics; (3) an intrinsic meaning; and (4) drama (the obligation along with its fellow words to hold the interest). (Ibid. 19)

It is as expressed earlier, when I defined the two poles: there is no significant difference between an exaggerated expression or a phonetic expression of a text, because both represent a certain aspect of a word and its greater meaning within its context. One might express a word as it is or with an exaggerated lilt, but one is still expressing the

nature of that word, for it is not only its phonetic quality, but what that word means to us when we express it—if it were otherwise we would be linguists, not composers—and that aspect of one's expression takes the form of this "revealed" quality that was placed before us at the beginning. As Partch puts it:

> Throughout history the Monophonic concept has been consistently manifested through one medium: the individual's spoken words, which are more certainly the juice of a given identity than anything else in the tonal world. Of all the tonal ingredients a creative man can put into his music, his voice is at once the most dramatically potent and the most intimate. His voice does not necessarily mean his own voice and it certainly does not mean the specialized idiosyncrasy known as "serious" singing. It means his conception as expressed by the human voice and it means one voice. (Ibid. 7)

At this time I actually would like to posit, perhaps comically, that there is very little in Partch's work that is really there to be analyzed in the traditional sense that we might analyze much of Western music. Obviously in the examples of the vocal line of *Seventeen Lyrics* there was very little to take note of that was not already clear to the reader, and in the coming two works much of my work will simply be making aware to the reader the ways in which speech will create vocal patterns, and thus that part of Partch's compositional method is an expression of something revealed to him.

We are not necessarily viewing the scribbling of a genius who put into paper great musical riddles to be discovered and solved, as the fetishistic fervor of our Western Tradition often drives us to; rather, Partch is a highly sensitive and investigative composer who does not attempt to peddle inventions where they are of no vital significance, but instead seeks and conveys to us what he finds, and I believe an understanding of that certain attitude is of the greatest importance in viewing the coming works.

Yet, before that, to reiterate: like *Seventeen Lyrics*, the two works

to be briefly discussed, *Barstow* and *U.S. Highball*, are so massive that a paper of this scope could not fully dissect their intricacies in earnest, so I will be picking sections of the works that I believe are of interest in relation to the poles of phonetic and expressive composition.

## *BARSTOW*

In comparing the phonetic content of this work, I am going to highlight the three traits gleamed in *Seventeen Lyrics* and take note how they appear, whether planned or not, in various sections of *Barstow*. What I mean when I use that qualifier, "whether planned or not," is that, by this point in time it is clear that Partch's compositional method is not necessarily one "planned" in the sense that we might assume the average composer plots out their work and attempts to piece it together to create a something they consider meaningfully coherent; rather, it appears that Partch came across the text first, read it, and that was the composition itself (any possible later refinements notwithstanding), so much so that any appearances of these highlighted traits are not necessarily "planned" for some sort of compositional effect, but instead are the result of vocal inflection. Essentially, what might tie together the apparent strands of these works is not an intentional motif, but the quirks and qualities of one's voice, and his unconscious way of handling words that developed over the course of the works we previously discussed became ingrained in how he identified the qualities of the text.

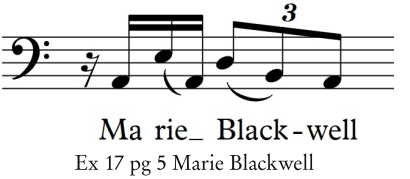
Thus, what I mean to say is that Partch, though he uses a very "objective-subjective" method of composition, most likely worked from the starting point of the "subjective-objective" in his manner of speaking taking upon certain traits over time, which he then objectively identified in composition. Therefore, it might be said that *Barstow* and *U.S. Highball* reflect a cohesive manner of revealed composition that might otherwise be overlooked.

### Phonetic glide, exaggerations, or expressive transformations

The trait most apparent in this stage of work is Partch's use of the gradations inherent within the phonetic glide of vowels. Previous examples of this include the e-a glide in "I am a Peach Tree," e.g. pe-ach, stre-am, etc. In *Seventeen Lyrics* these were used rather sparingly,

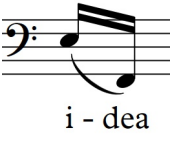
and there are certainly times where they rarely appear, such as "Yellow Crane House," wherein the glides are much more expressive exaggerations of speech than any real phonetic glide. It seems that at this point in time, in dealing with the words of hobos, Partch adopted a less romantically expressive attitude toward the words in favor of much more direct glides. That is not to say that the texts are not exaggerated at all, but rather the tools required for this work to properly convey its texts were not as expressionistic as a collection of Chinese poems.

One of the most prominent glides in this work, perhaps owing to the texts themselves, is the i-e. For example it appears commonly in the phrases relating to a hobo speak ing of a woman he wishes to be with, Marie Blackwell. This itself is a great example of the relativity of vowel height: both a and e are provided as the same pitch because it is not the actual pitch that is necessarily important, but the relationship between it and the pitch that occurs prior. A pitch such as a, if placed in a phonetic context before i, would be lower, and a pitch such as e, if placed in a phonetic context after i, would follow the same pattern. Yet, it is not that a and e are the same, but rather that they are juxtaposed with a vowel that allows them to possess the same pitch. The apparent value of the vowels in Partch's music is often their relativity, that a pitch is lower not based on measurable difference, but simply through the quality of being lower.




Ex 17 pg 5 Marie Blackwell

Again, to confirm this, look to example 18, "idea." This, like "Marie," is a leap derived relatively: the e and a become a single syllable, a compound vowel, and though the distance according to vowels is essentially similar, Partch again treats it relatively, not strictly.




Ex. 18 pg 7 idea

In addition to this, another Marie can be found in example 19, which allows for us to determine, to a limited degree, that there is a sense of

similarity to these phonetic combinations; moreover, these results might be contrasted with "rides," (Ex. 24) which contains an i-e, but follows a glide of a third, very different from the fifth and seventh of the last two examples. This leads to a remark that could be made about the phonetic makeup of the words themselves. If one says these words, "Marie," "Idea," and "Rides," they might notice that even in the situation where e follows i, the rate at which they glide from one vowel to the next might be different in each case, and the phonetic quality of the word is not apparent in its vowels alone, but in the total makeup of the syllables, including the manner in which the consonant acts upon the vowel, or, beyond that, how a vowel appearing before another might prepare a higher or lower sound; after all, compare the difference between a-i-e in "Marie" with i-e-a in "Idea." These are the same vowels in a different combination, and that combination seems to alter not simply height but glide, as well as our relative understanding of the distance between those traits are. Does a seem lower than e in "Marie?" More than it does in "Idea?"

This discussion of relativity comes back again to the distinct difference between some of the text setting here and that found in *Seventeen Lyrics*. As stated before, the earlier work is clearly expressionistic, for it is about the poems themselves and what they convey more than the words themselves, but here we find that sort of expressivity not apparent; indeed, the expression comes across in a new way, one that is not overtly emotional or rhetorical, but one that is naturally expressive, or rather one that is, in conveying the manner of speaking, imparting the inherent expression of speech into the music. So, while I have discussed phonetic glides, those that are either accurately or relatively similar to the sort of IPA standard we accept, it is noticeable in even the first example that not every glide is meant to necessarily follow the abstract phonetic classification, but rather the highly idiosyncratic ways in which people speak, the ways in which they alter the tone of their voice to accentuate certains syllables or even whole words.

When a glide or gradation is not phonetically accurate in this manner, i.e. does not follow the apparent descending tones of *i e a u o*, I consider that mixed or exaggerated. This has already appeared prominently in the earlier example 17, where the pitches for Blackwell fall where they would rather rise according to the IPA.

In this there is something about this phenomenon in Partch's body of work that is worth discussing: that the IPA standards, as written before, are not necessarily the exact way in which a pitch might fall, but are simply a highly refined distillation of an amalgamation of phonetic material, noting the spaces at which each

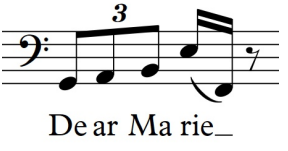
appear to fall consistently. The IPA vowels are not totally abstract truth, nor should they be treated as such, as if they might be mathematics, because they are entirely based upon the human, upon the voice, something that is highly inconsistent and so intimately personal to each human, not simply to their vocal cords or their language, but to the shape of their mouth, of their lips, even their teeth.

Without exterior influence, say “Blackwell” to yourself. Perhaps you might say it in a way that will appear similar to that glide. Perhaps you might follow the IPA. Perhaps you might not.

There is something intriguing about Partch's music, one that is so intrinsically important to this work and those to come, that must be discussed here and now before moving on: the exaggerations, the strange, apparently non-phonetic moments that I have been highlighting so far, are actually not that. There is nothing necessarily fake or constructed about these exaggerations, and though it would be true that if you were to compare it to the IPA, as I have before with my own voice, then, yes, you would find them incorrect; however, if you were to identify them not according to hard, abstract phonetics, and instead as the words of humans,

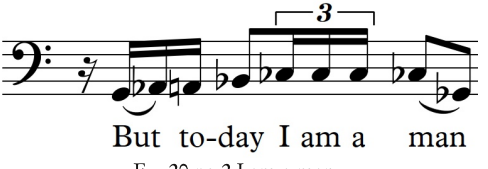
whose voices are not as cut and dry as the charts would have you believe, and who often alter their speech in a way that might clash with the IPA, then you might instead say that these inflections are the truth, and not constructed, as long as they accurately represent the manner in which one speaks, whatsoever that might be, for the truth in this music is the tonal quality of the voice, and Partch seeks to put that to paper. It is rather correct to remember that Partch’s own words on the word are that it possesses those four main traits of rhythm, phonics, meaning, and drama. If we only seek to identify that phonic element, if only because it is the quality of words that we have decided is of the most value, and strip the word of these remaining qualities, then the word is no longer really a word, but a phonetic sound. A word is made up of a series of sounds, but those sounds do not determine whether or not that word has impact; rather, it is the way in which we express that word that gives it a value, phonics be damned.

So, with that in mind, note again the second use of the Marie text (Ex. 19), in which the i-e is correct, but the three pitches prior to it exaggerate the phonetic qualities of the e-a relationship.



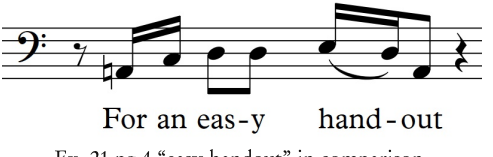

Ex. 19 pg 7 dear marie

This is to be the first of many instances where Partch provides a voice that uses rising tones and glides to accentuate the nature of the voice, and Partch, as expected of his expressive style of intonation, gets quite a bit of mileage out of this, rendering some phrases highly irregularly in comparison to what might identify as their standard forms. Take not of this example, "But today I am a man," in which Partch places u below o, slowly rises phonetically from o-i, places a on the same tone as i, and then resolves it down a fourth by exaggerating the miniscule drop that occurs in the vowel of "man."



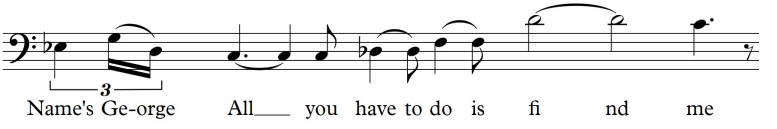

Ex. 20 pg 2 I am a man

However, a majority of the examples are not as extreme as this, but instead will mix in one or two out of sequence vowels within others that fit the standard, such as the following, "For an easy handout," where a majority of the setting is phonetic with the exception of "easy," where the phonetic distinctions between ea and y are ignored so that the peak of the phrase is on the glide down in "handout".



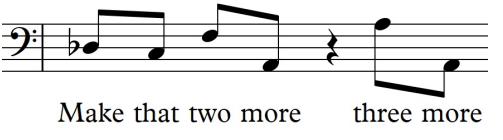

Ex. 21 pg 4 "easy handout" in comparison

Another wonderful example is "Name's George." Here, the namesake follows glide exactly, a-e up and e-o down, but what follows is an alteration of a mixed with a phonetic glide, a-ou a-o o-i, all culminating in two tones that follow the phonetic direction of i-e




Ex. 22 pg 13 “name’s george... all you have to do is find me”

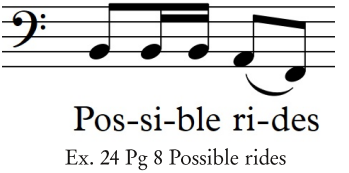
At times Partch will make use of a totally phonetic series of tones, but highly exaggerated so that the tones become split by values larger than what would be considered standard for vowel glide. Thus, instead of my understanding of e-o being maybe a tone or two according to what I can infer from my voice, the distance is essentially, at minimum, doubled. This perhaps can allow for greater emphasis and exaggeration of a line without doing away with the qualities found within its phonetic relationships. A highly effective form of this appears in the “make that two more...” line, in which Partch expands the range of his e and o to an octave to create a melodic line that rises with the count of the text




Ex. 23 pg 17 “make that two more..”

## Recitative like structure

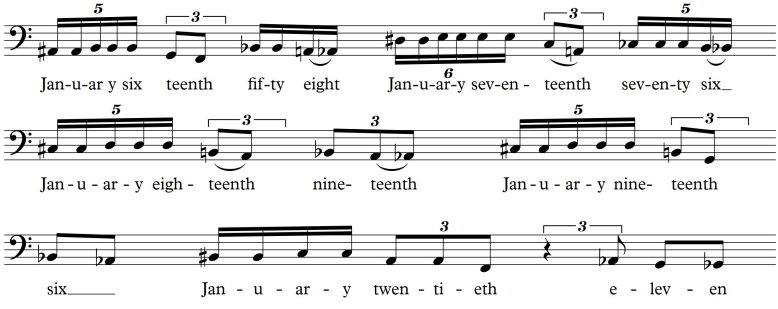
Something touched upon in Seventeen Lyrics that appears consistently in Partch’s compositional style is the use of a recitative-esque structure wherein Partch eschews the directly phonetic or exaggerated styles of vocal setting in favor of placing the text in a series of patterns, often appearing similar to forms of Hebraic and Christian chants. For example, take a look at example 24, which prepares an ambitus of a fifth:




Ex. 24 Pg 8 Possible rides

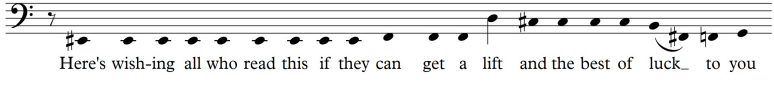
This is followed by what I call the “January” pattern (Ex. 25), in

which the pitch content gradually increases while the shape of that initial pattern and its ambitus remains similar.




Ex. 25 pg 9 The "January" pattern

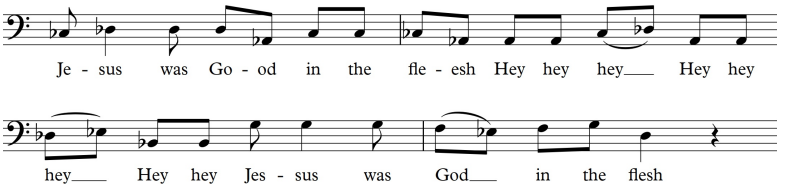
There is another recitative like structure (ex. 26), in which the pitch content does not represent a pattern or totally phonetic relationship, but a more expressionist, expressive one similar to those found in the *Seventeen Lyrics*.




Ex. 26 pg 14 here's wishing

## Expressive, non phonetic lines

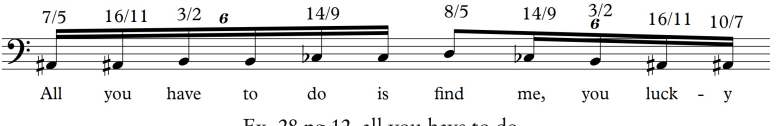
There is a second technique that Partch uses to build upon the expressive way in which one might speak, which highlights the altering the tone of voice for a specific purpose. When Partch wants to convey the experience of hearing a certain person he will, as far as I might surmise, notate as closely as possible the tones of their original phrase. I can only surmise this because it appears that the melodic patterns in these sections do not reflect any of Partch's other standard compositional practices, and are thus outliers in his body of material. Note this example of a street preacher, who, though possibly sharing similar motifs—which should not be surprising, as they all come from the phonetic quality of the music itself—I believe is a voice exterior to Partch, one where he does not convey his interpretation of the words heard or read, but as they were uttered at first and then understood.




Ex. 27 pp 10-11 Jesus was God in the flesh

## Remaining curiosities

The only use of ratios in the voice in this work appears as shown in example 28. The reason why I single this out as an oddity is that, despite ratios for the voice being somewhat uncommon in *Seventeen Lyrics*, by the time of *The Wayward* it seems that Partch, interested in conveying the voice as it is, began to apply very specific tones to the voice to capture that sound as he heard it. In *The Letter* ratios exist to guide the performer to the tonal qualities of Pablo's voice, and here too there is this oddly specific set of pitches in a work that otherwise is very "free," not in the sense that the performer might do anything, but that they are not obliged to directly latch onto this voice, but to find their way around it, to catch it as it happens. Often this is enough, I believe that most of the naked pitches, those without ratios, are easily understood, especially as we understand the glide of vowels as an intrinsic part of the melodic contour, but these are not enough if the accent is of value, not the phonetic quality of the word itself, because, again, the IPA phonetics are standards, the average of many voices explained as simply as possible, but voices are their own thing, just as unique as those who hold them, and Partch, if he is to properly convey, must be specific, he must point the performer to that which is outside the standard.

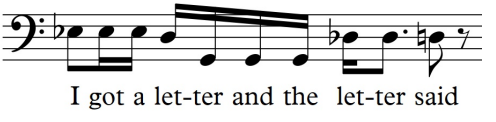



Ex. 28 pg 12 all you have to do

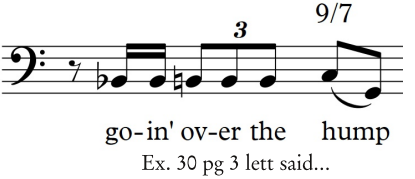
## *U.S. HIGHBALL*

## Phonetic glide, exaggerations, or expressive transformations

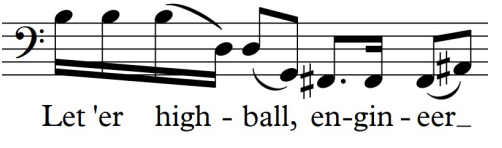
As before we will begin by looking at the phonetic glide found within phrases. Just as in Barstow, these are short and self-contained, often mixing pure phonetic glides with mixed or exaggerated ones, often even alternating between the two for dramatic effect. So we might find examples where a majority of the phrase possesses no phonetic glide until the end, as in examples 29 and 30, among other phrases like example 31 that are filled with phonetic glides.




Ex. 29 pg 12 goin over the hump

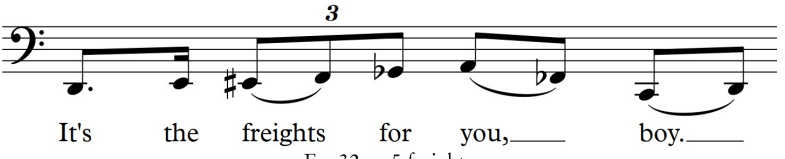



Ex. 30 pg 3 lett said...

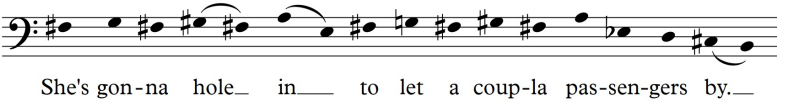



Ex. 31 pg 5 let er highball

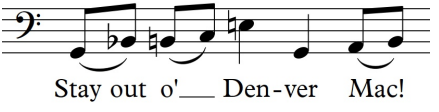
Therefore, unlike *Barstow*, Partch's weaving of these two types of glides is highly sophisticated, and is so idiosyncratic and unique that there is simply no way that they were not the voices of those he might have met on his travels, and examples 32 and 33 highlight an two astounding lines that truly come off as of spoken, flowing along with the rhythmic ebbs of their respective speech patterns. Here it seems that the phrase terminations often, as they have appeared in *Seventeen Lyrics* and *Barstow* before, terminate in intervals of a third, with instances of fourths or fifths occasionally occurring, depending on the quality of the glide. There are certainly examples, even provided here, where the glide of a word will result in an interval of a second, such as in 32-34.




Ex. 32 pg 5 freights




Ex. 33 pg 11 passengers by




Ex. 34 pg 15 stay out of denver

Despite bringing these up, I do believe that it is not necessarily fruitful to seek these termination patterns as any concrete proof of Partch's compositional tools or even a bag of tricks—especially so knowing the limited examples I have provided from these works—rather, it is much more valuable to identify these qualities of intonation as part of Partch's expression of the qualities of speech than as Partch's craft as a composer.

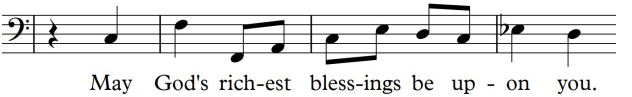
## Recitative like structure/Termination on a third

However, those words about compositional craft being put aside, nested in the center of *U.S. Highball* is actually one of Partch's most successful developments of the pseudo-recitative that he began working with during *Seventeen Lyrics* (Ex. 36). What Partch approaches here is the closest he comes to any sort of liturgical recitative, which, while eschewing any intonation, clearly reveals a mediant and termination structure. Each section, as marked by the blank measures, provides a very clear tenor, or reciting tone, from which and around which the lines orbit, rise from or fall to: In the first, B; the second, G; the third, F#; the fourth G. The distance between the final and the other tones always sits within that very

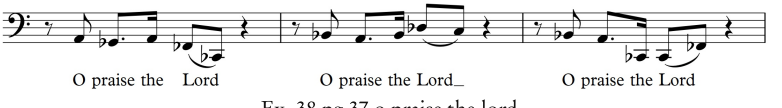
common interval of a third, and the terminations are generally stepwise or that same third. At some level, if one wanted a summation of Partch's work until now, this single section provides many of the important traits of his vocal music at this point in time: highly phonetic and realistically derived tonal glides, exaggerations and alterations of the voice to fit the way one might speak, and the subtle ways in which the four qualities of a word, especially those of meaning and drama, affect not only our expressions, but our impressions.

## Expressive, non phonetic lines

Though a small footnote in the work, just as in *Barstow*, a series of totally aphonetic material appears, this too in the form of preaching or otherwise religious crying out as in example 27. None of these phrases seem to have any basis in how the voice itself sounds when these words are uttered, but instead seem to be paraphrases or transcriptions of how those men might have altered their voices to express the emotional quality of their meaning.



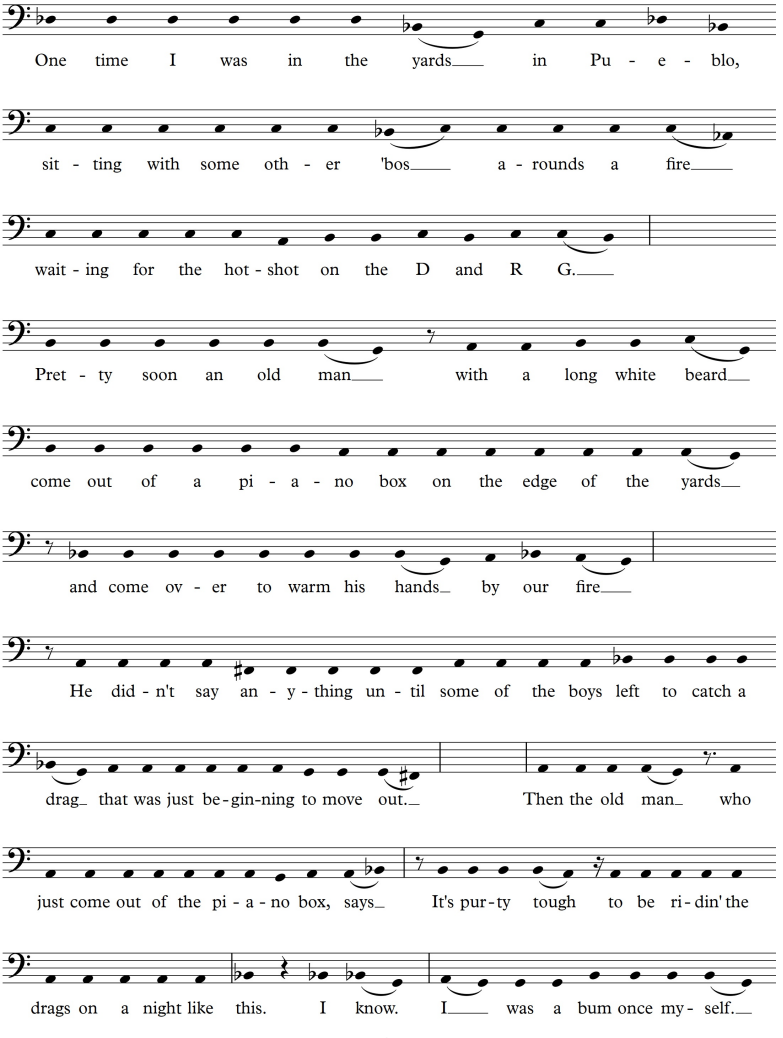

Ex. 37 pg 3 May gods...




Ex. 38 pg 37 o praise the lord

## Remaining curiosities

The limited use of ratios in *Barstow* is not true in *U.S. Highball*. Just as in The Letter, the ratios are employed to direct the voice to speak with a specific accent (Ex. 39-41), and this is a fitting place to complete my somewhat meager set of analysis, for it is the point we have been looking for as we surveyed his early work, as in this work I find that Partch properly begins to convey the essential necessity of his early corporeality: this One Voice being the voice itself, the expression of a man, himself, through himself, with himself. Not simply through any sort of emotional expression or mechaniations of the mind, but through the innate, inherent qualities of that man's

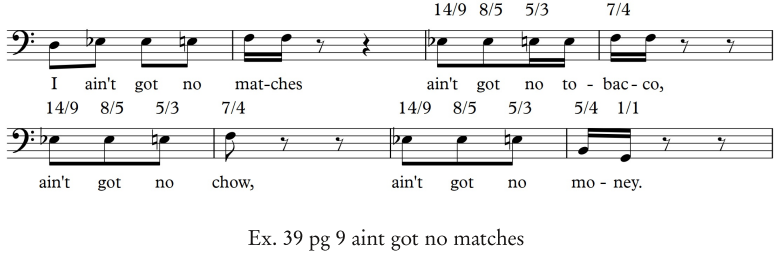

One time I was in the yards in Pu - e - blo,
sit - ting with some oth - er 'bos a - rounds a fire
wait - ing for the hot - shot on the D and R G.
Pret - ty soon an old man with a long white beard
come out of a pi - a - no box on the edge of the yards
and come ov - er to warm his hands by our fire
He did - n't say an - y - thing un - til some of the boys left to catch a
drag that was just be - gin-ning to move out. Then the old man who
just come out of the pi - a - no box, says It's pur - ty tough to be ri - din' the
drags on a night like this. I know. I was a bum once my - self.

Ex. 36 Pg 27-28

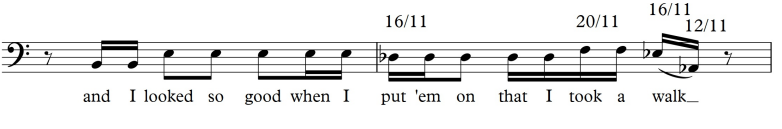
body, something that only he possesses, that which makes him unique and original.

Yet, what I believe is necessary about this is not that specificity of the ratios, as if complexist music—and this apparent necessity for the complexity of the ratios as some pure goal in themselves is perhaps a problem with much microtonal music following Partch; rather, what I believe is necessary about this is that it signals that Partch fully understands that to move forward on his compositional path he must begin approaching the voice from this point of view of capturing the human in music, or rather, the music within the human. If one does not step beyond, then one becomes no more than a new Janacek, a composer who takes patterns of speech and uses them freely, as opposed to one who accurately, and with integrity, puts forth things as they are, without any sort of compositional artifice.

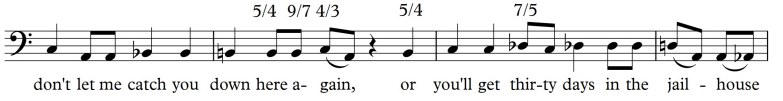
And so you find him using these specific ratios to mark these tones between the phonetic sounds that we are used to, because the voice itself is highly microtonal. It is practically impossible to notate the qualities of certain regional American accents, especially those of the turn of the century, prior to mass communication homogenizing the manners in which we speak, without resorting to these degrees of minute detail, and these are degrees that Partch could only determine after delineating his 43 tone scale, after using the adapted viola and chromelodeon to find these tones by painstakingly matching the sounds of his voice to the ratios that he derived from Just Intonation. It is not that his tuning is for it in itself, that microtonality is some sort of art for art's sake creation, but rather that his tuning becomes the necessary tool for unlocking a means of accurately conveying these sounds as they are, so that they might be expressed time after time.




Ex. 39 pg 9 aint got no matches




Ex. 40 pg 19 and i looked so good




Ex. 41 pg 25 don't let me

In addition, what we find in *U.S. Highball* is Partch's most expressive flowering of putting forth to the listener the totally of revealed experience: here he gives not simply to words of others, their jagged and twisted pronunciation, their innate alteration of the pure phonetic material of the english syllabary, but also the sounds of that world in which they inhabit; if *Seventeen Lyrics* is a song cycle, and *Barstow* a fantasia, then *U.S. Highball* must be the tone poem; yet, An American in Paris this is not.

Partch's world is not a representation of something, he is not using motifs necessary to invoke something. Indeed, the music does not convey an idea to the listener as the horn does of Till Eulenspiegel, but instead represents itself; that is, the way in which he puts forth that which is revealed is in the same manner in which an Edison cylinder brings forth the actual thing-in-itself: a voice as it was engraved into wax will emerge as it was spoken into wax. Indeed, the object of the impression is not such a thing-in-itself, but rather the feeling or emotional state such a thing imparts, and music does this quite well only in the state in which one already understands its own purpose. *Jeux* without a choreographed scenario imparts nothing but a series of melodic and harmonic threads fondled by Debussy through a ceaseless succession of drastically disjunct tempi. However, to not invoke something, but to outright put it forth is to convey the object of the expression; that is, the direct experience, not the feeling, not the emotional state, of perceiving the object-as-it-is.

This is that "tactile" quality that Partch wrote of. It is not something simply thought of and understood, distilled into some pure form, but something so complex and multifaceted that it is unfathomable. The voice, whether from the mouth or the wax engraving, is much more than the sound that is understood and comprehended, the pure form, the "re" that we identify, and such is no more a proper expression of a sound than a glance at a man on the street. In an interview that now escapes me, Gerard Grisey said that there are two kinds of composers: those whose music is often more rhetorical and those who were composing as if to say, "this is the world." Partch certainly falls within the latter, but he says something more important than that alone: this is me within the world; this is my comprehension of the world.

Earlier I skirted around the notion of there being no form to

Partch's music, that the formal considerations were not of importance, but the actual pitches in themselves. I hope in some sense that these examples have highlighted the primary facet of his music as an expression of the totality of the experience of the qualities of tone, but moreover, I hope that it reveals something highly valuable to our experience and perception of music: there is more water in a glass than in all of the sea; that is, it is not the form or shape in which a thing is provided, but the quality of it itself that gives rise to its value.

So I believe this is the great revelation of this analytical journey: Partch comes to perceive, understand, and identify something, and thus he conveys it as so! The quality, the vitality, of the music is directly intertwined with the very necessity that what comes out in performance is essentially equivalent to what was first revealed; therefore, we might say, a revelation of a revelation. Such a cycle is endless, because revelation itself is endless: an expression can be, if properly perceived, continually be expressed in the same form as it was at any time. The unbroken lineage of a traditional theater relies exclusively on this factor, otherwise such living national treasures could not accurately represent their forms! A thought that comes to mind is the purported loss of Togaku, something that entirely rests on the transformation of it into Gagaku. It is documented that Togaku survived through Gagaku, but that Gagaku, as an aesthetically altered form of the source, no longer can accurately represent it, and furthermore, cannot point us back to it without undoing the damage done. The certain expression as initially expressed must be maintained as understood in order for any other expression of it to reflect the initial expression. Once such a thing is altered, be it aesthetically or physically, as to no longer represent it as it was initially understood, it can no longer be the same essential thing expression, but instead a totally new expression. In Partch we might say we have these, after all I deem them "expressive transformations," but I would say that difference is in the point in time in which the object is expressively transformed. If it be artistic, it is the alteration of it after the revelation—to choose to slow down Togaku to a crawl to align it with exterior aesthetics—but if it be an innate transformation, it would be done by the initial actor to create the object; understand, when we compare an IPA vowel phoneme with one spoken, we can find two interpretations: that which is accurate to the general categorization of it as it is universally sounded, and that which is articulated inaccurately for some reason or purpose innately connected to the body and expression of the speaker. The universal constant is the exception, it is an abstraction of many into one. It is rather that the personal expression is the standard insomuch

as it is the only way in which the speaker might express himself: Pablo's ratios are not mine, and not Partch's, they are directly tied to him. Music as revelation acknowledges this and best seeks to identify the first so that the second and the third still retain the essential qualities that tie them to the root cause, thus, no matter the distance, one can still identify that core expression, perhaps that of Pablo, as it was when it was first expressed.

All of this musical discussion, however, is really nothing more than a prefatory remark on what is truly of value in critically engaging with Partch's early music: the concrete understanding of what his early corporeality represents. The reason why I have split Partch's work in these two groups is because a greater instrumental facet of his musical output appears following the final revisions of these works. The works of The Wayward were written and revised in two periods[6]: 1941-43 and 1954-55. Between the first version and the revision, Partch wrote his first three major works of what I consider his second development of corporeality: *Two Studies on Ancient Greek Scales* (1946), *Plectra and Percussion Dances* (1949-50, 1952), and *Oedipus* (1950/1952-1954/1967). The first two of these are important in developing a more instrumental approach to his musical language, one that might have been noticed in a embryonic state in the instrumental sections of The Wayward, and one that was highly focused on the physicality of playing Partch's new instruments, which by the 1950s were growing in number, as he had received material support and storage space from his residency at the University of Michigan; however, by *Oedipus*, Partch had fully realized the earliest notion of corporeality being staged ritual, the development of which to him was "the most logical" (Ibid. vi).

The difference between the two, in some sense, is the total aspect of the music: the early corporeality is built upon how one's body expresses itself through speech, the late corporeality is built upon an expression of the whole body, not simply how it expresses itself through speech. Therefore, why I believe it worth the effort to investigate a wide variety of work within this first stage of Partch's work, is that it is of value in considering them as degrees of separation, or steps, from the intellectual to the corporeal; from music being totally worked out within one's mind and put to paper, to music being readily available as part of one's actions that simply require proper listening to catch, in such a way that it becomes "found" music. I actually do not believe this quality appears as obviously in the stageworks (I still do believe they are present) owing to their nature in being gesamtkunstwerk; that is, the greater the scope, notably in the number of instruments and the problems of staging, the less the focus becomes on a singular object such as the voice, and the more the focus must shift to the total textural body, the more abstract and purely instrumental the musical composition, and we find that we lose some this "found" or "revealed" music when we begin to separate ourselves from the voice as the primary conceptual framework.

[6] Barstow was later revised a third time in 1967

Tangentially, this is where it might be prudent for Partch's interpreters to alter their own views of his notion of corporeality, for it seems of greater value to highlight those aspects of performance where the total body is engaging the audience and the performer's movements are in sync with the highly rhythmic impulses of Partch's percussive ensembles, drawing parallels to a taiko performance. The inability to reconcile these two stages as essentially equivalent, as if they are the same with more, is why we might find those unable to lucidly explain what Partch meant in his definitions of corporeality and thus simply swat away the problem by stating that Partch was inconsistent or unable to properly communicate it, even though it is very clear that this early corporeality is embedded within the later, that Partch simply surrounds his early ideas with more instruments in order to properly develop them.

Consequently, if we are to understand some of these conclusions, the early stage of corporeality that Partch speaks of can become a concrete aesthetic concept; for, his early corporeality becomes a form of music that is built upon what I believe is the investigative method of pre-socratic natural philosophy. And when I discern the importance of investigation, I do not simply mean to note that one goes out seeking for material to place into works, as if Messiaen transcribing birdsong for a piece for piano; instead, I mean to point to the fact that he sat with his instruments and attempted to determine the exact ratio of his inflection means that he engaged in perceptive and reflective investigation, and that itself resulted in the music. A Messiaen, while fantastic, is always caught in that mode of reworking material as to create music highlighting an impression of something (after all, he is the successor to Debussy in the attitude of creating musical works from one's impressions of the world around him), but a Partch denies this sort of alteration of the object as he engages with it and instead seeks to point the listener to the source as it expresses itself, not an impression of it as he wishes to express. It can be understood like this: one does not need to go out and seek natural phenomena, for natural phenomena makes itself known, expresses itself, in such a way that it "reveals" itself to them, and that itself is the musical expression, not the work that comes after the initial experience.

Thus, when I describe Partch as a composer of revealed music, I am trying to note that, contrary to the standard composer of western music, he is not one who applies systems or processes, methods of working out, because he is not seeking something, but reacting to that which already occurs. Understand it just as we understand his comparison of just intonation to equal temperament: those theories

that lead up to equal temperament are focused around finding a solution to the problems of tuning in tonality, of the spectre of the stacking of fifths to produce the Pythagorean, but Partch's theories are focused around identifying and properly comprehending the qualities of sound that already appear within the harmonic series. As stated before, the interest in Just Intonation is not for the sake of the tuning itself, but is rather part of the greater investigation for those things that exist exterior to the world that we have chosen to wall ourselves within. For one interested in natural investigation, the beliefs that we already hold, those presumptions we have made through abstract reasoning, are faulty, because one begins to recognize the discrepancies between the world as it presents itself and the manner in which we choose to identify and interpret it. As Brakhage wrote: how many colors exist to a baby who does not know of the color "green?"

Therefore, I believe this attitude is intrinsically tied to Xenophanes conception of knowledge, not a supposition of the mind, but a truth revealed to the viewer, which they must then come to comprehend. The theoretical collection of his statements about the ability of comprehension and knowing are found in fragments B34 to B36, in which he argues that there cannot be a knowledge of total truth, but still implores us to go out and see those things that have been made evident for us to view. The value of inquiry to Xenophanes is that it is a way of coming to know, and a first hand experience of something is of greater value than baseless suppositions that more often than not reflect our own biases concerning how things ought to be. The ability held in highest esteem is not necessarily creativity in the sense of pure supposition or wild fantasy, of great shows of learning and logical constructions, but in intuitively, and critically, engaging with what is, even if our perceptual facilities cannot fully apprehend it. To approach that which is as it is, to the best of our ability, is of greater consequence than reasoning proofs or beliefs without ever engaging with what we are reasoning in the first place, a sort of proto-critique of pure reason, because there are certain predispositions, certain aesthetic, numerical, geometric qualities that were are all, in some sense, attuned to that sway how we come to reason. Our reason will only be able to progress as far as we are willing to accept it as plausible, but the world itself is beyond that possibility of plausibility because we will reason how we feel is best, built upon what we believe is true as opposed to a clear vision of what is. Thus, to some the stars will be causes, to others they will be patterns in the sky; celestial bodies or distant deities with messages from heaven; yet, to see and experience the stars

as they are, to the best of our ability, without first attempting to reason or believe? That is coming to know them. All else is putting ourselves upon them; or, put into better words, as Xenophanes was recalled by Clement of Alexandria: if the oxen had hands and the power to paint and sculpt as men, then would they not make their gods in the same image and sculpture as the bodies they possess?

So, in music it could be the same, no? That the aesthetic qualities that we value are inherently founded upon such a bias? Chinese create Togaku and the Japanese Gagaku, and each express not music, but their cultural tastes and values. And the same could be said in the opposite, that that displeasure of another is fed by the pleasure of one's own. Xenophanes navigates the narrow path of personal and cultural distinctions by stating that nothing other than the thing, as it is made apparent as to be understood, should be grappled with. In music it is perhaps a very Cagean idea, that pure vision of all possible things being music, with neither belief nor aesthetic as the arbiter of quality or taste.

Consequently, through engaging with these Pre-Socratic values, the quality of genius is altered from one of towering intellect, of inherent talent, of one's ability to spin out invention after invention, to one of an individual's ability to properly come to know truth, and it is in the words of Partch, that we might better define genius: one's skill and desire for investigation, investigation, investigation.

So it might be said, as I have written before, there are several levels of musical reality: what is (a waveform), our perception of what is (physically hearing a waveform), our comprehension of what is (recognizing a waveform), and our final judgment (acceptance or denial of a waveform). The first is not so apparent, as in the second and third we fail to perceive certain frequencies at all; however, it is the final step that is key to Partch, who denies the judgment of certain tones being arbitrarily superior according to intellectual, as opposed to corporeal, reasoning, e.g. the arbitrary nature of Equal Temperament developing from an cerebral gesture, not one's reflection of the natural world. Though his could be argued that his use of Just Intonation was cerebral, I would say that it was perhaps necessary to confront one hierarchy with another—certainly, now that we live in a post-Tenney landscape, an alternative hierarchy needs not be put forth, as the holarchy is of greater magnitude. Consequently, an interpretation of his argument of corporeality can be directed tied to the experiential nature of revelation, a re-orienting of oneself, as opposed to the state of pure intellect, in which one acts in the context of one's own suppositions, as if a vacuum. The appreciation of music then requires a coming to terms with the object

that one comes to face, and one's musicianship is then directly tied to one's ability to comprehend properly, as well as to the qualities that were of the highest esteem to Partch: experience and intuition.

And it is necessary to begin to view musical experience and musical life as determined by one's ability to, even without fully developed theoretical proofs, understand through intuition alone. In a purely intellectual sphere, the coherent musical structure follows a series of suppositions, a theoretical framework based upon proofs drafted according to what sounds pleasant to one's ear, an expression of subjective artifice. At some level it is not wrong to say that both serial and tonal music suffer from the same problems of theoretical, not corporeal, alignment. Each justify their own existence through a series of proofs that discuss everything external to the sounds themselves. It is not about whether or not the sounds are properly understood as they are, but that they are modified to serve a purpose imposed upon them. If a music is corporeal, it is not necessarily serving any purpose whatsoever, and there is no truly exterior reasoning for the sound, only the truth that, if it sounds, so it is. Intuition and experience have no connection to theoretical conjecture, they may indeed prepare the way to it, for the first step to even developing the aesthetic appreciation that determines such theory is through them, but they certainly are not implicated with it.

Thus, if it is possible to express, as some might, that Partch is regressive, or looking so far back that he is reactionary (a term he would probably apply to himself, as one who vehemently reacted to his contemporary American musical attitudes), then the person who places this judgement is both correct and incorrect; rather, Partch views the world through an ancient lens, but not a regressive mindset, for his gaze is not fixed upon how the ancient world should make sounds, and of what kind, as Partch is clearly uninterested in reviving ancient Greek music and theory literally; instead, he is tightly focused on how the ancient world engages with musical experience as a sort of extension of natural phenomenon, and what the relationship of the body, individually and societally, with natural phenomenon, not abstract arguments created from points of speculation and supposition.

Indeed, neither the preface of *Genesis of a Music*, nor the contents that follow it, is interested in a musicological understanding of the era before Equal Temperament, but in a philosophical and methodological understanding; that is, the quality that made an ancient music truly "ancient," was the manner in which the act of making was approached. A world with a musical vitality is one that is investigative, one that makes a continual attempt to come to know

what is. A world that is no longer interested in investigation, in coming to know, but is satisfied with what they think they know, suppositions and options concerning truth as opposed to the perpetual questioning required to find that truth, then they become trapped in a flaccid, bland, decaying world.

And, if I am to be allowed to express myself at this point, everything being said and done, that the attitude that Partch conveyed that so affected my own life was that of endless investigation, that we should understand everything as it is, not as what we are told it is; moreover, it questions the ego, the very notion that originality becomes apparent only through the direct, conscious assertion of oneself, by putting forth the notion that one does not need to exert oneself, to triumph over others in displays of useless vanity, but to express oneself wholly, and without question, as one is, not only intellectually, but also physically, according to the full experience of oneself; herefore, a life, especially a musical life, is not to be taken for granted, but to be explored, and expressed to its fullest extent.

Thus, if the reader is so willing to accept my own observations, might I reiterate my argument a final time: that Partch, in his interpretations of observations, created a music that captures the experience of the world in such a way that when one intones the ratios as they are written, they manifest the corporeality of that world, even though it no longer seems to possess physical form. The quality that makes Partch's music so vital is that it is not simply music that expresses intellect or emotions, but the body, the physicality, the nature, the experience of life, all within the compact notation of a ratio; moreover, that those ratios, being his interpretations of his voice and those of others, are more tangible than all memories or photographic evidence, even the facsimiles of one's hand, for those are merely an image of something, a second hand experience; yet, the music left being, as experienced and interpreted, is a direct line, unfiltered and true, to Partch and his experience of life.

*"Originality cannot be a goal. It is simply inevitable." (Ibid. xi)*

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