



## THE HARRY PARTCH TRUST FUND

James M. Fletcher, *Trustee*

Gerd Stern, *Manager*

February 5, 1954

Last year a group of people interested in the music of Harry Partch formed a trust fund for the purpose of recording Partch's *Plectra and Percussion Dances*. This group effort proved the feasibility of supporting the work of this contemporary composer through an independent recording project. Over 500 copies of the *Dances* had been produced and distributed by the end of the year.

Encouraged by the success of this venture, the same group is now organizing a new Trust Fund to record Partch's new version of *Oedipus*. The first version of this work was produced at Mills College in March, 1952, but because of textual copyright restrictions, could not be issued on records. In the meantime, Partch has produced a text version of his own, and has extensively rewritten the score. Allan Louw will again have the leading role of *Oedipus*. (Plans are being made to make other works of this composer — such as *U.S. Highball* — available in the future.)

The Trust Fund intends to produce 500 LP albums of *Oedipus*, consisting of two 12-inch records each, playing time of about 75 minutes. Eight singers or intoners and 14 instrumentalists will constitute an enlarged Gate 5 Ensemble for this production.

As before, the general purpose of the Trust Fund will be the production of Harry Partch's work in a recording of highest quality, thereby bringing this composer's work to a larger audience, and furthering his future musical efforts.

The production of *Oedipus* will necessarily be on a larger scale than were the *Dances*. Therefore, a minimum of \$2900—raised through subscriptions of \$12.50 each — is required. For each subscription made prior to April 1, 1954, the Trust Fund hopes to be able to give, in June,

a numbered first edition of the recording, autographed by the composer.

There are undoubtedly many others who would be interested in this project. Your cooperation in giving their names so that they may be included on the mailing list will be very much appreciated.

Your contribution or further inquiry should be addressed to The Harry Partch Trust Fund, P.O. Box 387, Marin City, California.

James M. Fletcher

Beid Stern

Harry Partch

HARRY PARTCH turned toward his present musical direction over thirty years ago. His choice involves an almost complete about-face from the conventional scale, instruments, usages, and attitudes. As a composer, he has evolved a functional 43-tone-to-the-octave fabric based on the natural principles of human hearing: these are mathematically represented as small whole-number ratios.

This scale is untempered; that is, intervals have not been equalized as in our conventional 12-tone-to-the-octave scale. A new range of melodic resources, an expanded basis of tonality, a new series of both common and subtle tone relationships, and a new perspective on consonance and dissonance are all implicit in the system and instruments. In his book, *Genesis of a Music* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1949), Partch describes and analyzes his theories and their function. He has developed new instruments as they have become necessary for the expression of his new music. Among these are:

**KITHARA** — 72 strings in chords of six in a lyre-shaped body. Open chords and sliding tones.

**HARMONIC CANON** — 44 strings with movable bridges, an extensive elaboration of the Greek monochord. This instrument can be tuned for simple scales or highly intricate patterns.

**CLOUD-CHAMBER BOWLS** — Suspended tops and bottoms of Pyrex carbonyls. Bell-like tones.

**CHROMELODEON** — A reed organ with the 43-tone-to-the-octave scale ranging over  $3\frac{1}{2}$  keyboard octaves.

**DIAMOND MARIMBA** — 36 Brazilian rosewood and Pernambuco blocks with bamboo resonators, arranged in a diamond shape and giving major tonalities in one direction, minor tonalities in the other.

**BASS MARIMBA** — 11 spruce blocks over redwood resonators, descending to a low cello C.

chanting . . . this is a major contribution to our national music . . . one feels the liberated emotion of the music, stemming from the profound resonances of the heavy-planked marimbas, inflected instrumentally as if an abstract concourse of speaking, wailing, chanting voices, which carry forward the vocal melodies of the chorus after its own voices cease.

Clifford Gessler in *The Oakland Tribune*: The major result . . . was the demonstration that Harry Partch has contributed a new body of resources of vast possibilities to music, drama and dance.

Harold Rogers in *The Christian Science Monitor*: Twenty-eight years ago he began groping for answers to problems of intonation . . . he developed a 43-tone-to-the-octave scale. He then invented an orchestra of instruments that could play in this scale. Having done this, he proceeded to write music for this orchestra. Then he recorded it. A monumental achievement!

Alfred Frankenstein in *The San Francisco Chronicle*: His score — fragmentary, subdued, elusive — vastly enhanced the menace, torment, and bewildered, ominous tension of the tragedy. . . . Nobody had to be an expert to realize that this performance derived . . . its dramatic power from the magnificent interpretation of its principal part by Allan Louw.

Alexander Fried in *The San Francisco Examiner*: Harry Partch's strange instruments and music . . . may help lead toward epochal changes in musical expression. . . . I'd give especially good marks to Allan Louw (Oedipus).

**The following is an extract from *Statement of Intention* which Harry Partch wrote for his *Oedipus*:**

I have not consciously linked the ancient Greece of Sophocles and this conception of his drama — 2400 years later. The work is presented as a human value, necessarily pinned to a time and place, necessarily involving oracular gods and Greek proper and place names . . . The music is conceived as emotional saturation, or transcendence, which is the particular province of dramatic music. My idea here has been to present the drama expressed by language, not to obscure it, either by operatic aria or symphonic instrumentation. . . . Tone of spoken word and tone of instrument combine in a compact emotional or dramatic expression, each providing its singular ingredient.

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Copies of Harry Partch's *Plectra and Percussion Dances*, including *Castor and Pollux*, *Ring Around the Moon*, and *Even Wild Horses*, performed by The Gate 5 Ensemble, are still available. The record is LP 12-inch unbreakable vinylite. Price \$7.50. In the U.S.A. outside California, add 50 cents for packing and postage — TOTAL \$8.00. In California add 65 cents to cover packing, postage, and state sales tax — TOTAL \$8.15. Please address orders or inquiries to THE GATE 5 ENSEMBLE, 3030 Bridgeway, RFD 67, Sausalito, California.