

**Emil Richards Collection of Harry Partch materials, ca.  
1963-1998**



**Percussive Arts Society**  
110 West Washington Street, Suite A  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

## **Summary**

Title: Emil Richards Collection of Harry Partch materials

Dates: ca. 1963-1998

Extent: 1 manuscript box, 1 flat bound volume box

Language: The materials in this collection are in English.

Repository: Percussive Arts Society, 110 West Washington Street, Suite A, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

## **Administrative Information**

Accession(s): 1993.06

Donor(s) and date(s) of acquisition: Emil Richards (1994)

Processed by: Alysha Zemanek, June 2020

Access and Restrictions: This collection is open to the public without restriction.

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Preferred Citation: Emil Richards Collection of Harry Partch Materials, ca. 1963-1998. Percussive Arts Society Archive, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Notes/other:

## **Biographical/Historical Sketch:**

Harry Partch was an American composer, music theorist, creator of instruments, and performer. He was best known for his work with just temperament and developing a 43 tonal scale for which he built instruments to play and wrote pieces to showcase.

Partch was born on June 24, 1901 to Virgil Franklin Partch and Jennie Childers. His parents worked as Presbyterian missionaries in China but fled after the Boxer Rebellion. The family relocated to Oakland, California where Harry was born. In 1904, the U.S. Immigration Service stationed Virgil Partch in Tucson, Arizona. Jennie Partch's health may also have spurred their move. Partch's mother had tuberculosis and a desert climate with a thin atmosphere relieved pressure on her lungs. The family relocated several more times during Partch's childhood. These relocations exposed Partch to different cultures and music in the small, remote towns in Arizona, California, and New Mexico where his family lived. Partch's work was also influenced by his parents' knowledge of Chinese culture and hearing them speak Mandarin, as well as the Christian hymns and Chinese songs his mother sang to him.

Percussive Arts Society: Emil Richards Collection of Harry Partch materials Finding Aid, rev. 2020.

Partch came to reject Western music and equal temperament and instead developed his own style. He created a 43 tone scale tuned in just intonation, which was meant to fit the speaking voice to music. He also invented and adapted the following instruments in order to write music using his scale: the Xymozyl, Chromelodeons I and II, Quadrangularis Reversum, Surrogate Kithara, Castor and Pollux, Blue Rainbow, Bass Marimba, Marimba Eroica, Boo I and II, Eucal Blossom, Cloud-Chamber Bowls, Spoils of War, and the Mazda Marimba.

Partch also believed musicians should be integrated with stage action. His pieces combined both sight and sound, making the instruments part of the set and costuming the musicians. In the late 1950s, Partch started his own record label, Gate 5 Records, to release recordings of his works and provide revenue. Partch died on September 3, 1974 in San Diego, California.

#### Bibliography:

Gilmore, Bob. *Harry Partch: A Biography*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1998.  
<http://archive.org/details/harrypartchbiogr0000gilm>.

Harry Partch Collection Guide (MS 479). Special Collections, University of Arizona Libraries.  
<http://www.azarchivesonline.org/xtf/view?docId=ead/uoa/UAMS479.xml>

Paul, Eugene. "Harry Partch." *Percussive Notes* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1974): 22, 40.

Percussive Arts Society. "Hall of Fame: Harry Partch." Accessed April 9, 2020.  
<https://www.pas.org/about/hall-of-fame/harry-partch>

Pluth, Linda Schell. "Harry Partch: An American Musical Pioneer." *Percussive Notes* 13, no. 3 (Spring 1975): 19-21.

University of Illinois Archives. "Harry Partch Estate Archive, 1918-1991." Accessed April 9, 2020.  
<https://archon.library.illinois.edu/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=10747&q=partch>

#### Scope and Content:

The Emil Richards Collection of Harry Partch materials consists of correspondence, a newsletter, a performance program, photographs, two CDs, and a bound score related to Harry Partch. The correspondence includes a letter from Bob Gilmore to Emil Richards about his biography of Partch, a handful of letters and cards from Michael Craden to Emil Richards, and letters from Partch to Emil Richards discussing his life and immediate plans, the difficulties he faced, and his dependence on Richards and others for financial support. The spiral bound score, titled "Delusion of the Fury: A Ritual of Dream and Delusion" is stored in a separate, flat box. The volume includes a synopsis on the piece, set and stage directions, instrument tuning, costuming, and the musical score.

**Container Listing:**

BOX	FOLDER
1	Bob Gilmore letter to Emil Richards, 27 December 1991
1	The British Harry Partch Society newsletter, October 1998
1	Correspondence photocopies, Partch to Emil Richards, June 1963-July 1974
1	“Delusion of the Fury” CDs, 1999; undated
1	“Delusion of the Fury” program, January 1969
1	Michael Craden correspondence to Emil Richards, 1974-1981
1	Partch correspondence to Emil Richards, June 1963-July 1974
1	Partch photograph, undated
1	Photograph of Emil Richards playing <i>Quadrangularis Reversum</i> , undated
1	“Photographs of Instruments Built by Harry Partch and Heard in His Recorded Music,” undated
1	Photographs of Partch and instruments, November 1972
2	“Delusion of the Fury: A Ritual of Dream and Delusion” bound score, 1966