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Plays Corner

CELEBRATING 90 YEARS IN THE LIFEWORk OF PHILIP CORNER

CONCERT TWO OF FIVE • JANUARY 28, 2023

Leaven Community, PDX

## Lecture from Sunday Performance

Matt Hannafin (voice) + ensemble

## Heraclitus 2

Lee Elderton (soprano sax), Reed Wallsmith (alto sax),  
Brandon Conway (classical guitar), Robert Blatt (classical guitar),  
Collin Oldham (cello), Shao Way Wu (bass)

## Lesson from the East: Perfection Is Not Exactness

Collin Oldham (cello), Reed Wallsmith (alto sax),  
Lee Elderton (soprano sax)

## Just Another 12-Tone Piece

Catherine Lee (oboe d'amore), Lee Elderton (soprano sax),  
Caspar Sonnet (melodica), Shao Way Wu (bass), Collin Oldham (cello),  
Branic Howard (piano), Matt Hannafin (vibraphone)

## Sang-Teh

Matt Carlson (piano), Catherine Lee (oboe, oboe d'amore, English horn),  
Brandon Conway (classical guitar), Robert Blatt (classical guitar),  
Shao Way Wu (bass), Reed Wallsmith (alto sax)

Extradition offers a standing ovation to Philip Corner & Phoebe Neville for their decades of creativity, their absolute dedication to a life of art, and their unflagging help and encouragement as we prepared for these concerts.

## THE MUSIC

**Lecture from Sunday Performance** (1962). It really *is* a lecture, and “We did it on a Sunday morning—one of those early 60s concerts,” Corner wrote in response to Extradition’s query. “There was a huge restaurant near NYU which I could hire. Was good. I can still hear Carolee Schneemann saying ‘Vivaldi! Sunday morning!’” The piece is straightforward and not: One performer reads Corner’s philosophy in a straightforward, clear style, while around him other players create a sympathetic resonance, picking out words or phrases from each page and playing with them: stretching, repeating, permutating, translating them into pure sound.

**Heraclitus 2** (2007). This is one of six pieces based on text fragments from the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (535–475 BCE), in this case, “That which is in opposition is in concert.” Each musician begins by deciding on a signature gesture to be his or her core identity throughout the piece. From there, the piece is an evolving series of groupings—first duos, then trios, and so on—in which players improvise together from their signature gestures, eventually incorporating elements of their partners’ gestures or even exchanging gestures over time. In rehearsal, we envisioned the piece as a party where each individual engages someone in conversation, finds common ground, and then move on, eventually falling into larger and longer conversations.

**Lesson from the East: Perfection Is Not Exactness** (1960). In 1959–61, Corner served in the U.S. Army in Korea, primarily playing trombone in a military band. During this experience, he studied Korean calligraphy, developed a deep respect for the country’s art and culture, and first heard what he’s called “the most beautiful piece of music in the history of the world,” a 1,300-year-old Korean court music composition called “Sujecheon.” The piece had an enormous impact on Corner’s subsequent compositions. In an in-depth 2004 article on Corner by Marcus Boon titled “A Long Life, Endless as the Sky” (the English translation of “Sujecheon”), Corner notes that “One of the things I learnt in Korea was to go into the quality of sound. I wanted to bring this notion into the range of possibilities—not in order to sound oriental, but to enter into this thing that the Orient had explored that the West hadn’t. And I pushed that as far as it

could go.” Corner wrote “Lesson from the East” during this period, but the piece became lost in his personal archive until 2011, when it was published with newly recreated directions. Originally written for solo trumpet, it may also be performed by ensemble following a traditional Korean approach to heterophony that musician/researcher Hyelim Kim describes as follows: “The fundamental goal of performance is for the instrumentalists to reach a depth of feeling that satisfied his/her emotions through artistic rendering. Therefore, traditional notation allows flexibility in rhythm and melody for performers to interpret, subject to their spontaneous emotions.”

**Just Another 12-Tone Piece** (1975). “This is my favorite piece,” Corner wrote in correspondence with Extradition. “My ‘theme-song’ . . . my ‘masterpiece’ as some would say, where I unchain total chromaticism from the row.” Rooted in the 12-tone serialist style prevalent in Corner’s student days, the piece uses the core element of serialist procedures—using all 12 tones of the Western chromatic scale equally, without emphasizing any one over another—but eschews their rigorously ordered arrangements. Instead, Corner’s piece simply asks performers to play all 12 equal-tempered notes, once each, in any order and register, with each given a distinct duration and its own unique effect (e.g., dynamics, accentuation, ornamentation, etc.). The result is essentially an improvised 12-tone piece in which the harmonic effects of each grouping emerge one at a time, surprising both ensemble and audience.

**Sang-Teh** (1962). Another piece dating from Corner’s service in Korea, *Sang-Teh* (“Situations”) had its first performance in Seoul on March 3, 1961, using western instruments. Shortly after, it was also performed on Korean instruments at the Korean National Music Institute. The piece comprises 15 possible movements, all written on a chromatic 12-tone structure, with pitches written by letter name rather than notation “to permit all the ranges to be held by the most simple definition. (Register is a color.)” Ensembles of any pitched instruments choose among these movements and explore ensemble textures heterophonically to achieve mostly simultaneous but individually unique readings from shared musical material. “Let this be the approach,” the score says: “Starting with the characteristics of sound well known, start to add some new sides to them. Be influenced in this by other musics you can hear . . . pick up a few yet unmastered skills; and bend your instrument toward some other imaginations. . . . [F]ind a way to include the whole extent of your competence: the techniques, the expressivities; the spiritualities. (Be more subtle and energetic and patient and surprising.)”

## NEXT CONCERTS

EXTRADITION PLAYS CORNER continues each Saturday through Feb. 18.

### FEB 4 @ PORTLAND OPEN SPACE SEQUENCE

A sound walk based on Corner’s *I Can Walk Through the World as Music*. Participants meet at the *Trio* sculpture on SW Lincoln St. just east of SW 4th Ave, across from the MAX Orange Line 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave station.

### FEB 11 @ PERFORMANCE WORKS NW • 4625 SE 67th Ave, PDX

A concert of music and dance: Presence (1995), La Bella Infinita (2001), Sounds, Austere, for Elegant Rooms (1960s), 3 for Phyllis for Some Things (1967), A Day in the Life (or a Moment) (or More) (2008)

### FEB 18 @ LEAVEN COMMUNITY • 5431 NE 20th Ave, PDX

When They Pull the Plug (2002), Electro-Acoustics (2009), Homage to Revere (1962), Attempting Whitenesses (1964), The Art of No-Art (2019–22), Through the Mysterious Barricade (2003)



**LEARN MORE:** Our EXTRADITION PLAYS CORNER page includes quotes, biographical information, articles exploring Corner’s main themes and compositional approach, and links to additional resources. Scan here or go to: [www.extraditionpdx.com/extradition-plays-corner](http://www.extraditionpdx.com/extradition-plays-corner)

See [www.extraditionpdx.com](http://www.extraditionpdx.com) for performance calendar, ensemble info, sound archive, and more.

Extradition is directed by **Matt Hannafin**

Live sound by **Tim Westcott**

Recording services by **Branic Howard / [openfieldrecording.com](http://openfieldrecording.com)**

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