

Barney Childs (1926–2000) is perhaps best known for his innovative scores that weave indeterminacy and improvisation with traditional musical structures and notations. Eclectic in nature, Childs's compositions freely explored diverse avenues of musical thought and drew inspiration from many sources, including traditional Western concert music (especially that of such composers as Hindemith, Ives, Ruggles, and Copland), the open form works of John Cage, and jazz of all periods and styles.

Born in Spokane, Washington, Childs lived his early years there and in Palo Alto, California. His college studies began at Deep Springs College (1943–45) in eastern California, and he completed a B.A. degree in English at the University of Nevada, Reno (1949). Then, as a Rhodes Scholar, he studied at Oxford, where he received a B.A. (1951) and M.A. (1955). Returning to the U.S., he completed a Ph.D. in English with a minor in music at Stanford University (1957), where he studied music composition with Leonard Ratner.

Childs's earliest interests in composing music stemmed from discovering issues of Henry Cowell's periodical *New Music* in his local public library when he was seventeen. Aside from two years of harmony classes in college, nearly all of Childs's musical studies were informal, and he was largely self-taught as a composer, until he attended Tanglewood, where he studied composition with Carlos Chávez (1953) and Aaron Copland (1954) and won the 1954 Koussevitzky Award, followed by studies in New York with Elliott Carter (1954–55), after which he returned to the West.

While a professor of English at the University of Arizona (1956–65), Childs composed and led the Tucson New Art Wind Ensemble, a group of talented young musicians who played exclusively new musical works. In 1962 he founded Advance Recordings, a record label dedicated to presenting the music of little-known American composers. He returned to Deep Springs College as Dean (1965–1969), and subsequently accepted a composer-in-residence position at Wisconsin College Conservatory in Milwaukee (1969–1971), before becoming a Fellow of Johnston College, a newly created experimental college at the University of Redlands (1971), where he taught English and poetry. In 1972 he was appointed professor of composition at the University of Redlands, where he also directed the New Music Ensemble until his retirement (1993).

Childs's early works follow trends common in the neoclassical style of American composition in the 1950s. But while his music from the fifties employs conventional musical structures (sonatas, variations, etc.), it frequently exhibits a unique interplay between sound and silence characteristic of nearly all of his works—both early and later. His interest in indeterminacy, a compositional and performance element that he uniquely shaped for himself and that defined some of his better-known works, began in the early 1960s, finding its early blossoming in a series of compositions entitled *Interbalances* (1962–64) and probably his best-known work of this period, *Take Five* (1962). His works from the 1970s and later are generally conventionally notated music that employs triadic sonorities in a non-traditional manner combined with lyrical melodies whose inflections and patterns evoke the rhythm of speech. Many of the melodies in a Childs composition resemble a spoken conversation between people or a poetic recitation.

Childs's outsider or lone-wolf musical aesthetic is central to his music. Personally, intellectually, and musically he was intensely individualistic—a spirit that may be partially derived from his attachment to the desert southwest United States, where he lived most of his life. Deep Springs College, a formative influence on him, is a private two-year liberal arts program on a working

ranch, where there's a twenty-hours-per-week labor component in addition to course work. The college, which accommodates only about two dozen students at a time, all on full scholarships, is extremely isolated in the remote California high desert, between the eastern edge of Death Valley and the Nevada border. For the rest of Childs's life, with the exception of two years in Milwaukee, he resided in the Southwestern desert cities of Tucson, Arizona, and Redlands, California, well outside of American musical centers and influences. He speaks of this experience as being

Isolated, therefore, by geography and by a curiously limited training, from trends and schools, and equally isolated from the musical action of my time by many years' supporting myself by teaching English literature, I have had often to re-think myself and my views. . . . I have put in some time hiking and back-packing in the Sierra and the high desert mountains. . . . This is the country I feel most at ease with: open space, light and its gradual alterations, a landscape peeled down to its elements of immensity and immediacy. There is a light breeze that blows before sunrise in towns in that part of the country, moving only a few leaves at a time on the aspens and cottonwoods as the whole sky slowly lightens, for example, which is part of this: I have perhaps too immediate a memory for sensory impression.¹

This is not to say that he wrote music "about" the desert Southwest, but rather: "When I write a piece I am not being programmatic in dealing with the mountain West; I am simply led to like to make the sounds I write because I am myself, and part of this self is the relationship with the land and the past. . . ."² This is reflected particularly in the use of silences and sparse textures in his indeterminate and later works, which derive from his "having lived much of my life close to open quiet places, [where] I have become more concerned with stillnesses in living and in my music; I am interested in dealing with stillnesses interpenetrant with sound. . . ."³

His early introduction and devotion to American new music, especially that strain which stems from the experimentalist line of composers from Ives through Cage and later, was an interest and value he staunchly maintained, and he vehemently dismissed the cultural establishment's continued fixation on European composers and musical institutions.

And despite a generation of Europe-idolatry, from a binful of imitation Stravinskys and Weberns in the late fifties to the enthusiastic American exploitation of every post-Darmstadt process novelty and the wholesale appearance of the modern European *Kleine meisters* in highly paid sinecure positions in our universities, we have begun to realize our own to replace what we have been borrowing from it. Further, we have begun to question not only the immediacies of the whole Western intellectual tradition, but the concepts behind it: the whole masterpiece business, for example. . . . For some of us the contemporary European music scene is a kind of Graustark or Ruritania.⁴

¹ Barney Childs, "Some Anniversaries," in American Society of University Composers, *Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Conference, February 1974*, v. 9 and 10 (New York: ASUC, 1976), 22–23.

² *Ibid.*, 24.

³ *Ibid.*, 26–27.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

Because of his isolation and non-traditional training, his music is not conveniently categorized into a particular “school” or “-ism.”

Childs’s compositions usually have wonderfully idiosyncratic aspects to them, rather than following the dictates of either a system or an established style. He claims that “to make music I make choices, as we all do, but I’m unable to presume that music must prove a doctrine, and I cannot accept music merely as process made audible. I choose what will happen simply because it seems to be the right thing to have happen, and in no other way.”⁵ Thus, the pieces cannot be easily analyzed, and in fact, he dismisses the idea that the value of a work can be or should be determined by whether or not the resulting work is capable of a brilliant analysis. He asks: “Are we yet at the point where we can free ourselves from the spectre of analysis-based validation and categorizing, simply listening and enjoying a composer’s doing what he wishes to do, without making judgement appealing to some standard of musical deficiency or derivativeness?”⁶ In this way the pieces possess a stark sensuality.

His pieces consciously play with the listener’s expectations, constantly balancing the familiar with the unexpected, so that the listener is “anticipating what is about to happen: The future is defined and qualified, as far as we can define it, by expectation and anticipation, and this is continually being fulfilled or surprised.”⁷ This is exactly what makes a Childs piece work: the interplay between what is expected and what is not. “Of course music which instantly fills every expectation becomes tedium (turn on your AM radio and try this!) just as music which is endless surprise, in which nothing can be guessable, becomes tedium (as certain music of the 1950s Darmstadt school).”⁸

This compositional process applies to his open-form indeterminate pieces as well as his traditionally notated works. Childs’s indeterminate works employ a variety of types of compositional choice: in the compositional process, in a piece’s performance, or in both. In these pieces “Silence exists relatively and interactively with sound; each shapes the other. Space exists relatively and interactively with what is in it or what is being done in it; each shapes the other.”⁹ Even more than in his traditionally notated works, silence is the background—the primed canvas—upon which a piece and the events occurring within a piece emerge and create a structure that is unique to each performance. In these kinds of works, space and time are “so delimited, with the zero-state preceding and following the presentation expanded to include the totality of ‘everyday’ actions immediately present. The ‘something’ that happens is expected to be different from the zero-state; in some cases, however, if the attention of the audience is lost, what is being heard or seen subsides into part of an expanded zero-state against which the listener projects whatever is concerning him, if anything.”¹⁰

The **Sonata for Solo Clarinet** (1951) is typical of Childs’s early neoclassical works. It is in three movements: Cheerful, Calm, and Toccata. The cheerful movement is in three sections with

⁵ Ibid., 27.

⁶ Ibid., p. 21.

⁷ Barney Childs, “Time and Music: A Composer’s View.” *Perspectives of New Music* 15, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 1977): 206.

⁸ Ibid., 208.

⁹ Barney Childs, “Indeterminacy and Theory: Some Notes,” *Composer* 1, no. 1 (June 1969): 22.

¹⁰ Ibid., 22.

the second and third sections being variations on the first. These variations mainly consist of changes in rhythm and meter. The calm movement begins with a chromatic ascending theme that is mirrored at the end by a descending chromatic line. Here sudden and surprising changes of dynamics and tempo occur against a quiet, calm background and the piece's irregular rhythms have a speech-like quality. The toccata, the most virtuosic movement, is possibly a nod to Hindemith.

The *Stances for Flute and Silence* (1963), for Nancy Turetzky, is written in a more mature compositional style than the solo clarinet sonata. The flute line has three different tempos (half-note 72, quarter-note 132, and quarter-note 84), which alternate throughout the piece, much like a conversation among three people—the “stances.” The solo melody line has a speech-like, declamatory quality that emerges from the pervasive silence (which itself may function as a “stance”). Although it is a traditionally notated piece, *Stances* sounds as if it could be an indeterminate work, particularly because of the way silence frames its melodic motives and fragments.

The three indeterminate works here all use silence as an important structural element, and all involve performer choices based on composed musical events presented in traditional musical notation, verbal instructions to the performer, or both. In these works, each performer determines which score elements to play and when to play them by listening and responding to his/her fellow performers and the directives and suggestions of the notation. The moment-to-moment structures and ordering of events in these works are different in every performance. In *Music for Contrabass and Friend* (1964), commissioned by Bertram Turetzky, the duration of the performance is of any length and the bass may be accompanied by any orchestral instrument, which is to be silent throughout at least half of the piece. The bass part consists of boxes of musical events from which the performer chooses, allowing for innumerable orderings of events. The “friend” part is more freely improvised from rhythmic figures, ostinatos, and instrumental sound effects. *Music for Bass Drum* (1964), written for composer Warren Benson, is composed for three players and employs both verbal instructions and traditional musical notation. The performers, who play the drum with their hands only, are given instructions specifying how and with which parts of their hands (fingers, heels, nails, etc.) to make sounds on the drum head or body. Each player has a different set of rhythmic ostinatos from which to choose and is free to determine the order of events, dynamics, tempos, and the density of texture. Together, the players determine the length of the performance in advance. *Any Five* (1965) was written for Phillip Rehfeldt and composer David Ahlstrom. Its five players first choose one part each from among the piece's eight provided parts, which include parts for two wind instruments (high- and low-pitch), two string instruments (high- and low-pitch), a brass instrument, percussion, keyboard, and voice. In performance, the players choose from and move among their parts' boxes of more or less traditionally notated musical events, verbal instructions, and spoken “cues” (which may cue a variety of actions from the other players). The aspect of performer interaction in the creating of any given performance's structure and moment-to-moment development builds an enticing sense of communication among the players, a dimension of the piece that can be readily sensed by the audience, while also creating in the music a heightened sense of excitement and surprise. The cue “consider,” which signals the end of the piece, may be spoken by any player at any time.

37 Songs (1971) is a contemplative piece for prepared piano written for Chris Kirsch, who was sixteen years old at the time. Its preparations consist of a Pink Pearl eraser pushed between the lowest A and B-flat strings, a dime woven among the three strings of C above middle C, and a chalkboard eraser, felt-side down, placed over the span of G to B-flat just below middle C. The work begins with a minor third motive characteristic of many of Childs's works, and its subsequent use of repetitions, limited pitch ranges, and irregular rhythmic patterns in single-line melodies suggest spoken language, which sometimes seems to take the form of a dialogue between the instrument's upper and lower registers. At one point, the score expands to three staves to accommodate a silently depressed chord that is held down to allow for note-specific sympathetic resonances. This, along with the unusual timbres caused by the preparations and a moment of knuckle rapping on the keyboard cover, give the work a broad coloristic palette while employing fairly limited resources. The piece ends with repeated notes hauntingly dampened by the chalkboard eraser followed by a spoken text read by the pianist.

The two works from the early 1980s exhibit most of the familiar traits of Childs's music: short musical events interspersed with silence, declamatory melodies with repeated pitches, surprising shifts in dynamics and/or pitch register, and the contrasting use of quiet and loud (gentle versus edgy) dissonances. The clarinet duet **Real Music** (1981) shares some similarities with the earlier Childs clarinet duet *A music; that it might be...* (1973), both in the use of lyrical melodic lines contrasted with isolated short and sustained notes and the use of special or extended performance techniques. *Real Music* was written for Scott Vance and Virginia Anderson, clarinetists from the University of Redlands, as a response to one of Childs's poetry students, who asked him why he didn't compose "real music." The piece is in six asymmetrical movements. The first movement serves as an introduction, and its very loud climax occurs on the highest note possible to play with the teeth on the reed. Movement two is an interlude to the shortest movement in the set, which is played very loudly and in the highest register of both instruments, resulting in the production of difference tones that add a third voice to its counterpoint. The use of quarter-tones in the last five measures produces particularly strong dissonances. In the fourth movement, both instruments alternate playing a soft quasi-ostinato figure on the opening pitches of (F-B-C#-E-F#) punctuated by short eighth-notes on A and E and a loud sustained C above middle C. These are the only pitches used, without any change in register, until the surprise introduction of a few new pitches in the last six measures. The fifth movement is the longest of the set and contains three surprising effects: a very loud flutter-tongued note, a loud raucous multiphonic, and a series of staccato notes. The final movement, which focuses on a repeated A-flat below middle C, is in essence a soft and meditative coda to the piece.

The title work for this recording, **Heaven to clear when day did close** (1980), was written at the request of pianist Dianna Thomas, a student at the time at the University of Redlands. It is also dedicated to one of Childs's longtime friends, composer and pianist John McCabe. This work is a rhapsodic type of unmeasured fantasia that begins with a flowing melodic line in irregular rhythms. As it unfolds, the piece moves among solo melodic phrases punctuated by block chords, occasional moments of counterpoint, and two surprisingly jazz-inflected phrases. The title comes from a line in Ben Jonson's "Hymn to Diana," written on the death of Queen Elizabeth I, who in literature was compared to the moon goddess Diana because of her chastity. This piece also inspired composer David Maslanka, close friend and colleague of Childs, to write a fantasy on its themes for saxophone and string quartet.

—Jerry L. McBride

Jerry McBride is currently Head Librarian of the Music Library and Archive of Recorded Sound at Stanford University and was President of the Music Library Association 2011–13. His writings include a book on composer Douglas Moore, plus articles on Arnold Schoenberg and a variety of topics in the field of music librarianship.

Ron George (1937–2006), a percussionist, composer, instrument builder, and educator, studied composition with Robert Erickson and Pauline Oliveros, theory with Kenneth Gaburo, and percussion with George Gaber, earning degrees from Indiana University and the University of California, San Diego. George designed, built, and performed on many unique percussion instruments, including the Loops Console, the Super Vibe, and the modular Tambellan. Many works were written specifically for him and his instruments by such composers as Robert Erickson, Dary John Mizelle, Netty Simons, Ben Johnston, and John Bergamo, and he toured nationally and internationally. George taught at CalArts, the Idyllwild School of Music and Arts, and the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts. He also taught his interactive Creative Music Program through Los Angeles’s Inner-City Arts organization and worked in an interdisciplinary arts program at the Poseidon School for at-risk students. He was also an ordained Zen Buddhist priest.

Phillip Rehfeldt is Emeritus Professor of Woodwind Instruments (clarinet) and Musicology at the University of Redlands. He has given many solo performances at a variety of venues, including Los Angeles’s Monday Evening Concerts and Schoenberg Institute; the International Clarinet Clinic/Symposia and ClariNetwork conferences; ASUC, International Computer-Music, and ISCM conferences; Arcosanti; and with Barney Childs, concerts of specially commissioned works under the title *New Music for Clarinet and Friend*. He has also appeared with a number of orchestras and chamber ensembles. His publications include *New Directions for Clarinet* and *Guide to Playing Woodwind Instruments*. He has recorded over seventy-five works on the New World, Advance, Brewster, CRI, Desto, Grenadilla, Roncorp, Edi-Pan, Society of Composers, Leonarda, and Zanja labels. Rehfeldt holds degrees from the University of Arizona, Mount St. Mary’s College, and the University of Michigan (DMA). His teachers include Samuel Fain, Kalman Bloch, William Stubbins, and Manuel Compinsky.

Bertram Turetzky, a distinguished professor emeritus at University of California, San Diego, has been a noted performer, clinician, and pedagogue for over three decades. He has been a featured contrabass soloist throughout the world. His concerts, recordings, lectures, and writings and his unique sonic vocabulary have taken the contrabass from its traditional role to the position of a major solo instrument. More than 300 compositions have been written for, performed by, and recorded by Turetzky. He has recorded for Nonesuch, Finnadar, Son Nova, New World, Desto, Music and Arts, Incus, Nine Winds, Advance, Vanguard, Folkways, CRI, and other labels as soloist, improviser, chamber player, jazz player, orchestra player, and klezmer artist. He is the author of the now-classic book *The Contemporary Contrabass*. A published composer, editor, transcriber, and arranger of music for his instrument, Turetzky was coeditor (with Barney Childs) of the University of California Press’s *New Instrumentation Series*.

Nancy Turetzky is a graduate and former faculty member of the Hartt School of Music at the University of Hartford. She studied with John Wummer of the New York Philharmonic, James Pappoutsakis of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and renowned oboist Josef Marx. She

performed Renaissance music for many years with lutenist Joseph Iadone. Her career highlights include working with the Hartford Symphony, the Connecticut Opera, the Connecticut Symphony, and the Marx Baroque Ensemble. She most notably has performed for decades in a duo with Bertram Turetzky, which has included tours and recording sessions throughout the USA, Latin America, and Europe.

Scott Vance is instructor of music technology at California State University, San Bernardino, and Norco College, and a former adjunct professor of music technology at the University of Redlands. He studied clarinet with Phillip Rehfeldt and composition with Barney Childs. He is the developer of several electroacoustic instruments, including the Optrix and, with trombonist David Tohir, the Backbone. Vance is a founding member of the Anything Goes Orchestra and was a longtime member of the Redlands New Music Ensemble (with which he performed as soloist for the Opus One recording of Philip Krumm's Concerto for Bass Clarinet). He is a freelance recording engineer with credits on New World, CRI, Advance, Rastascan Records, and barebonesrecords.

Blake Van Vliet received a B.M. and M.M. in music composition from the University of Redlands. He studied composition with Alexandra Pierce, guitar with Terry Graves and Kenton Youngstrom, and percussion with Bill Schlitt.

David Ward-Steinman (1936–2015), a composer, pianist, and teacher, held degrees from Florida State University and the University of Illinois, and was a postdoctoral Fellow at Princeton and a composer at Pierre Boulez's IRCAM Summer Academy. His teachers included composers Darius Milhaud, Milton Babbitt, Aaron Copland, Nadia Boulanger, and Burrill Phillips. He was distinguished professor emeritus and composer-in-residence at San Diego State University. Since 2003, he was an adjunct professor at Indiana University. As a pianist, he specialized in new music and improvisation. Ward-Steinman received many awards and he gave concerts and lectures throughout the world. His major commissions included those from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Joffrey Ballet, and the San Diego Symphony. His orchestral works have been performed by the Japan Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, City of London Sinfonia, and many other ensembles. He was the author of *Toward a Comparative Structural Theory of the Arts* and numerous articles in various journals.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

A Box of Views. Sierra Wind Quintet; Brenda Ishikawa, piano. Cambria 1044.

A music; that it might be. Contains: *A music; that it might be ...*; *Changes*; *The Golden Bubble*; *Grand fantasia de concert for Clarinet "Masters of the Game"*; *Instant Winners*; *London Rice Wine*; *Pastoral for Bass Clarinet and Electronic Music*; *Quartet for 4 Bassoons*; *Take 5*; *Variation on Night River Music*. New World Records 80595.

Clay Music. Included in *The Complete 10-inch Series From Cold Blue*. Cold Blue CB 0014. (3 CDs)

Duo for Flute and Bassoon. Peter Middleton, flute; Lester Weil, bassoon. New World/CRI NWCRL 253.

The Edge of the World. Ian Mitchell, bass clarinet; Christopher Hobbs, organ. Black Box BBM1052.

The Location of Music. Nancy Turetzky, flute; Bertram Turetzky, contrabass. Nine Winds Records NWCN 0261.

London Rice Wine. Marty Walker, bass clarinet. Included on *For BC—The Redlands Sessions*. New World/CRI NWCR 866.

Music for Two Flute Players. Harvey and Sophie Sollberger. New World/CRI NWCRL 253.

A Question of Summer. Ivan Hammond, tuba; Ruth K. Inglefield, harp. CRI SD 556. (LP)

Sonata for Bass Alone. Robert Black. Included in *Modern American Bass*. New World Records 80722. (2 CDs)

Sonata for Trombone Solo. Steve Witser. Albany Records 373.

Trio for Clarinet, Cello, and Piano. Montagnana Trio. ABC Records AB 67013. (LP)

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Music for Bass Drum and *Real Music* published by the composer (BMI).

Sonata for Solo Clarinet published by Tritone Press.

Stances for Flute and Silence published by Seesaw Music Corp.

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BARNEY CHILDS (1926–2000)
HEAVEN TO CLEAR WHEN DAY DID CLOSE

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1. *Heaven to clear when day did close* (1980) 7:37
David Ward-Steinman, piano

Sonata for Solo Clarinet (1951) 9:05
2. Movement I 3:27
3. Movement II 3:03
4. Movement III 2:25
Phillip Rehfeldt, clarinet

5. *Stances for Flute and Silence* (1963) 6:47
Nancy Turetzky, flute

6. *Real music* (1981) 8:19
Scott Vance and Phillip Rehfeldt, clarinets

7. *37 Songs* (1971) 4:48
David Ward-Steinman, piano

8. *Music for Contrabass and Friend* (1964) 6:29
Bertram Turetzky, contrabass; Phillip Rehfeldt, 1930s silver clarinet

9. *Music for Bass Drum* (3 players) (1964) 3:41
Ron George, Chris Corman, Blake Van Vliet, bass drum

10. *Any Five* (1965) 7:58
("unspecified combinations of five wind, string, percussion and/or voice")
Nancy Turetzky, flute/piccolo; Phillip Rehfeldt, bass clarinet/bassoon; Bertram Turetzky,
contrabass; Ron George, percussion; David Ward-Steinman, piano

TT: 55:18