

MORTON FELDMAN

(B. 01.12.1926 - D. 09.03.1987)

"FOR CHRISTIAN WOLFF"  
(1986)

DISC A  
(60:08)

DISC B  
(54:59)

DISC C  
(61:42)

CALIFORNIA E.A.R. UNIT  
DOROTHY STONE, FLUTE  
VICKI RAY, PIANO, CELESTA

**Morton Feldman: For Christian Wolff by Alan Rich**

No campus defined the New York School, no faculty and no curriculum. Its members were, simply, the sharers of a certain rebellious outlook toward creativity, active in New York in the years right after World War II. If any single tab might serve to define that outlook, "abstract expressionism" might suffice, but only with some generous stretching here and there. Morton Feldman served the New York School as member in good standing, and as self-proclaimed portraitist. Although he never defined his role as such, several of his huge, complex and fascinating scores, composed when the so-called "New York School" no longer cast its shadow over the cultural scene, bore the names of Feldman's eminent "schoolmates": the poet Frank O'Hara, the painter Philip Guston, the honorary kindred spirit Samuel Beckett, the composers Bunita Marcus, John Cage and Christian Wolff. The last-named of these, *For Christian Wolff* for flute with piano and celesta, was first performed at the Darmstadt New-Music Festival on July 23, 1986; there ensued a burst of feverish, prolific energy by Feldman that was to produce five more major works in his thirteen months remaining.

"The same year I met John Cage [1950]," Feldman remembers in his imperishable memoir *Give My Regards to Eighth Street*, "Christian Wolff appeared. He was sixteen - Orpheus in tennis sneakers. The son of Kurt Wolff, an extremely important European publisher.... he came out of a background of intense intellectual cultivation. Like Pasternak, Virginia Woolf and many other artists born into this kind of atmosphere, he was at home in a terrain other men have found uncomfortably abstract. Christian Wolff's early music, his developments, the suggestions in all his music have continually haunted my thinking."

In the early 1950s four composers – Cage, Earle Brown, Wolff and Feldman, joined by the pianist David Tudor – worked together almost constantly: reinventing music, reinventing ways of notating their new theories, learning – as Cage put it -- “to get rid of the glue” that had formerly been the binding force of classical musical forms. Christian Wolff experimented with notating musical vertically on the page, but then suggesting that it be played horizontally. Feldman experimented with dividing pitches into areas – high, middle and low – and writing them down on graph paper, this blurring the “determinacy” of actual notes on actual musical staves.

Two decades later, in an interview published in London in 1969 Christian Wolff looked back on those days of happy anarchy. “Feldman was the first of us who really went in for indeterminacy in performance, with those pieces on graph paper and the performer able to pick any note from the specified register. I think this had to do with his interest in painting. He used to put sheets of graph paper on the wall, and work on them like paintings. Slowly his notation would accumulate, and from time to time he'd stand back to look at the over-all design. ... All that we had in common was the desire to do something different.”

It might take a few more decades, however, for Christian Wolff to recognize the true proportion of that commonality. Meanwhile, the two had actually engaged in a small “collaboration,” a Feldman vignette for unaccompanied chorus called *Christian Wolff at Cambridge*, three minutes of harmonic stasis inspired, says Wolff, by the fact that Feldman had visited Wolff twice, six years apart, in his dormitory room at Harvard, and had found him sitting in the same place both times.

“What has been the effect of his work on mine?” wrote Wolff in 1990 for a concert program note. “It is, like nothing else, there, like

a tree. Like John Cage’s work, David Tudor’s, Alvin Lucier’s (and a few others’) it keeps alive, in part also by changing somewhat. It has an identity so intense that you don’t need to worry about any identity at all, which is liberating. For a long time, to consider a practical point, I thought of Feldman’s choice of intervals and chords as implying that any combination of pitches was ‘all right’ so long as their placing and their sonority worked. In the meantime I have noticed that in fact his chords draw on a fairly restricted distribution of intervals, favoring the minor ones – clearly at a distance from the diatonic directions of the seventies. I find it hard to write about his work simply, though what there is really to say I think is in fact so simple that it takes your breath away. I still find mysterious his way of putting the music together, or rather of erasing any traces of its having been put together. It’s just there.”

*For Christian Wolff* belongs among the garrulous masterworks of Feldman’s final decade at Buffalo, alongside the four-hours-plus *For Philip Guston*, the 70-minute *For John Cage* and the six-hour String Quartet II. Size or no, Feldman seems to have kept the piece under wraps, at least from its dedicatee. “He never told me that he’d done it,” Christian Wolff e-mailed me a few weeks ago. “Our paths didn’t cross that often in those years, for geographical reasons and my need to be teaching in the rather remote Hanover, N.H., an impossible place to get to from Buffalo. But if I had asked about it, he said, I’d have found out soon enough.

“I gather it was first done at Darmstadt - where Morty had gotten friendly with the very successful and prolific Wolfgang Rihm -- on Rihm’s saying he would come to hear the piece. Morty told him that was okay so long as he (Rihm) didn’t write any music while he was listening. (Rihm

apparently has a habit of doing that in concerts). Morty apparently also surprised the audience by telling them that I, more or less neglected in Germany and at that time in Darmstadt, actually came from Darmstadt (a typically wonderful fantasy based more or less on the fact that my father's first wife, not my mother, came from Darmstadt - she was a Merck).

"I've also heard that the use in the piece of the very few repeating intervals a semi- and whole-tone apart was a gesture referring to my use of very small numbers of pitches (the first time adjacent D, E-flat and E-natural in a duo for violins) back in the early 50s, when we first met through John Cage. (Though the use of those close intervals seems common throughout Morty's work.) Well, that's anecdotal. I've heard the piece twice live (I get specially invited!) and found the experience of listening to it beautiful and interesting - it moves away partly from our (Morty's, John Cage's and mine) original preoccupation with just sound and sonority into areas of self-awareness about listening, being a listener, as such, because there's so much time to be thinking of this and that as well as just listening. Also the experience - not unknown with most any other music as well - of just tuning out, then coming back in. A kind of paradox, given the relentless homogeneity of the music: the music invites its own interruption, but as an internal, wholly subjective, private event. This possibility, even necessity, of internal interruption becomes an antidote to the also relentless 'beauty' of the music."

-Alan Rich with help from Christian Wolff

Alan Rich has been writing music criticism on both coasts - NY Times, Herald-Tribune, Los Angeles Herald-Examiner, LA Weekly -- since 1944. His writings are sampled in the collection entitled "So I've Heard," which is also the name of his blog.



### **Dorothy Stone, *A Remembrance* by Rand Steiger**

Dorothy Stone was born in Kingston, Pennsylvania, on June 7, 1958. She attended the Manhattan School of Music from 1976 through 1980 where she studied flute with Harvey Sollberger and electronic music with Elias Tanenbaum. She then migrated to California (along with a stray cat who had wandered through a window into her apartment on 116th and Broadway, only to be whisked off to the desert) to attend graduate school at the California Institute of the Arts. There she immediately became a central member of the burgeoning CalArts Twentieth-Century Players. Among her many inspired performances that year were those as soloist in Morton Subotnick's piccolo concerto *Parallel Lines*.

Longing to return to New York, and frustrated with some of the conditions at CalArts, she returned to the East Coast in the summer of 1981, not intending to return to complete her degree. But she had second thoughts, and we were all delighted when she unexpectedly showed up again in the fall of 1981.

Since her early days at the Manhattan School of Music, it had always been her dream to form her own chamber ensemble with which she could pursue a career performing the music she loved. For several of us, an idea was already in the air to do just that and, shortly after she landed, we met in the infamous CalArts cafeteria to develop our plan. That day Erika Duke, Dan Kennedy, Amy Knoles, Michael McCandless, Gaylord Mowrey, Jim Rohrig, Dorothy Stone, and I became the California E.A.R. Unit, although it would be several months, and numerous, hilarious debates before we invented the name.

In the summer of 1982, after we all graduated, we traveled with the Twentieth-Century Players to the Holland Festival. The dean of CalArts at the time, Nicholas England, so admired the way Dorothy dressed for performances that he made it the dress code for our tour. We were all directed to wear black t-shirts under partially open bright pink shirts. Not everyone was pleased, but we complied. We arrived in Holland for a week of intense rehearsals at an estate in the quaint town of Breuklen. Later that week, angry at the poor transcriptions with error-filled parts that we were asked to play by the festival curators, Dorothy and the clarinetist, Teresa Tunnicliffe (now in the San Diego Symphony), staged a revolt to demand better working conditions. We then performed numerous concerts led by Stephen "Lucky" Mosko and Daniel Shulman, and also made a side trip to perform as the E.A.R. Unit at the American Center in Paris. Our trip to Paris (the first for all of us) was highlighted by many adventures, including a misunderstanding at the dilapidated Hotel L'Aqueduc that had an elderly woman threatening, in menacing-sounding French, to call the police.

From then on, for 26 years, Dorothy was a driving force behind the E.A.R. Unit, along the way inspiring dozens of composers to write adventurously for flute, performing in over a hundred concerts at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and many more around the U.S. and Europe. Alone, and with the E.A.R. Unit, Dorothy participated in a huge number of premiere performances, particularly by young composers, and also had works written for her by many leading composers including Andriessen, Babbitt, Carter, Powell, Riley, Rzewski, and Subotnick. Among her many recordings were Carter's Enchanted Preludes, Feldman's For Philip Guston, and Babbitt's None but the Lonely Flute, which she also chose as the name for her remarkable, critically acclaimed solo CD.

Throughout this time she had a vigorous, yet secretive creative life.

Starting with her early experiments in the analog electronic music studio at the Manhattan School of Music, and continuing through composition lessons at CalArts, particularly with Mosko, Dorothy pursued her own musical ideas, although she rarely shared them with others. On the rare occasions when she did disseminate these pieces, they demonstrated the same musicality and creativity that we came to know from her performances, colored by her quirky sense of humor and feisty spirit. Her most ambitious piece was the fantastic Wizard Ball, a piccolo solo she played very loudly, with amplification and electronic processing using analog circuitry she built herself. It brilliantly brought together her diverse musical interests and fulfilled her dream of making her piccolo sound like Jimi Hendrix's guitar. Shortly after, Wizard Ball was recognized with the inaugural Freeman Composition Award and a prize from the International League of Women Composers.

Harvey Sollberger recently wrote that Dorothy was "somebody on a mission that she would configure and give meaning to in her own way...(not) looking for anything quick or easy, with the result that what she accomplished was fully hers and fully authentic." E.A.R. Unit cellist Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick writes, "Dorothy is in my DNA—her timing, her coloring, her breath, the way she intuitively thought about phrase and pitch and concept. Every piece I ever played with her has her permanent imprint on it." All of us who collaborated with her knew her to be an intelligent, uncompromising, and immensely talented musician.

In her first year at CalArts, Dorothy was often frustrated with Mosko for what she thought was an autocratic approach to programming, with too great an emphasis on the music of faculty composers (although she dove into these pieces and performed them brilliantly). Their relationship crackled with tension relieved only by bursts of ecstatic energy in their

uncompromising performances. Their mutual respect won out over these tensions, and in her second year in California, Dorothy became a devoted composition and conducting student.

After completing her degree at CalArts, she continued to study with him, and the lessons grew longer and more intense until—to no one's surprise—they fell madly in love. Soon after they married, and ever since, they lived in Green Valley, California, in a rustic house surrounded by fruit and nut trees, always with at least two cats and one dog (but often more). Many people who came to Los Angeles to work with the E.A.R. Unit over these years made the unforgettable pilgrimage up to their place, where great hospitality, humor, and conversation were nourished by the fruits and herbs of their gardens, and Lucky's fantastic cooking.

Mosko wrote a series of compositions for her, for which she perfected an amazing ability to produce smooth glissandos over the entire range of the flute. In life and music their bond was intense and unshakable—their love, ever growing. Dorothy never fully recovered from Lucky's unexpected and premature death in November of 2005. Those of us who were fortunate to have known them both, to have shared work and friendship with them, will carry them in our hearts forever. But we will never be the same without them.

*Composer Rand Steiger's music is widely performed and recorded. Steiger is currently Chair of the Music Department at the University of California, San Diego.*



Pianist **Vicki Ray** performs internationally as a soloist and collaborative artist. She is a member of the award winning California E.A.R. Unit and Xtet. As a founding member of PianoSpheres, an acclaimed solo piano series dedicated to exploring the less familiar realms of the piano repertoire, her playing has been hailed by the Los Angeles Times for "displaying that kind of musical thoroughness and technical panache that puts a composer's thoughts directly before the listener." A long-time champion of

new music Ms. Ray has had worked with Gyorgy Ligeti, John Adams, Pierre Boulez, Elliot Carter, Steve Reich, George Crumb, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Thomas Ades, Oliver Knussen and many others. Ms. Ray has been featured on the Los Angeles Philharmonic Green Umbrella Series, with Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the German ensemble Compania and the Blue Rider Ensemble of Toronto with whom she made the first Canadian recording of Pierrot Lunaire.

As a pianist who excels in a wide range of styles Ms. Ray's numerous recordings cover everything from the premiere release of Steve Reich's riveting *You Are Variations* to the semi-improvised structures of Wadada Leo Smith. From the elegant serialism of Mel Powell to the austere beauty of Morton Feldman's *Crippled Symmetries*.

During the summer Vicki serves as the pianist for the Bang On a Can Summer Festival at Mass MOCA. She also appears with the Partch ensemble playing harmonic canon and kithara - a mind and ear altering experience she enjoys immensely.

Ms. Ray has been a member of the piano faculty at the California Institute of the Arts since 1991.





The California E.A.R. Unit is a chamber ensemble dedicated to the creation, performance, and promotion of the music of our time. The Ensemble is comprised of performers and composers that began with the goal of developing the first true repertory ensemble for new music in Los Angeles. The California E.A.R. Unit strives to achieve a flexibility and rapport within contemporary music, and earn an international reputation as one of America's finest contemporary chamber ensembles.

The California E.A.R. Unit was founded in 1981. In its twenty-seven year history, the ensemble has presented concerts of electro acoustic and live interactive computer music, Music Theater, Dance, and local and world premieres of over 500 chamber works. The E.A.R. Unit seeks to serve its home base of Los Angeles, reflecting the region's unique cultural diversity, and to represent Los Angeles and Southern California as its new music ambassadors to the world.

The ensemble has consistently earned critical acclaim and has received awards for its contributions to the field of contemporary American music including the prestigious Letter of Distinction from the American Music Center in 1999.

The Unit has performed at major venues such as the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C, and Queen Elizabeth Hall in London. They have toured throughout the world: Brussels, Aspen, Kiev, Paris, Cologne, Tanglewood, New York, Boston, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Santa Fe, Amsterdam, Reykjavik, as well as to other domestic and international hot spots for new music. The ensemble has been featured in documentaries for the BBC and Japanese television, American and National Public Radio, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Danish National Radio, and WGBH's "Art of the States".

From 1987 to 2004 the E.A.R. Unit was Ensemble-in-Residence at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Since then, they have been in residence at the Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater (REDCAT) housed in the Walt Disney Hall Complex. The Unit has worked closely with many composers such as Elliott Carter, Steve Reich, Morton Feldman, John Luther Adams, Fred Frith, Tod Machover, Julia Wolfe, Louis Andriessen, John Cage, Mauricio Kagel, Michael Gordon, Charles Wuorinen, Morton Subotnick, and Alison Knowles, among many others.

The E.A.R. Unit has recorded for Nonesuch, New Albion, New World, Tzadik, O.O. Discs, Bridge, Crystal and Cambria labels. Recent CDs include: *GO* on the Echograph label, a recording of some of today's greatest living composers, John Adams, James Sellars, Frederic Rzewski, Julia Wolfe, and John Bergamo; *SETTINGS*, chamber works of Pulitzer Prize winning Los Angeles composer Mel Powell, and *Indigenous Music*, chamber works of Stephen "Lucky" Mosko.

Producer: Stephen "Lucky" Mosko

Engineer: Scott Fraser

Mastering Engineer: Scott Fraser

Recorded at Architecture

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Executive Producers: Becky and David Starobin

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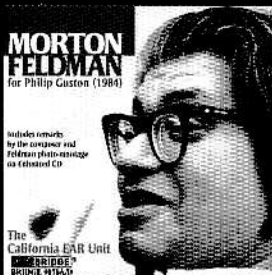
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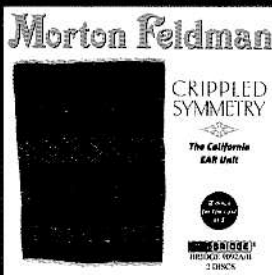
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