

biography

James Tenney was born in 1934 in Silver City, New Mexico, and grew up in Arizona and Colorado, where he received his early training as a pianist and composer. He attended the University of Denver, the Juilliard School of Music, Bennington College (Bachelor's degree 1958), and the University of Illinois (Master's degree 1961). His teachers and mentors have included Eduard Steuermann, Chou Wen-Chung, Lionel Nowak, Carl Ruggles, Lejaren Hiller, Kenneth Gaburo, Edgard Varèse, Harry Partch, and John Cage.

A performer as well as a composer and theorist, Tenney was co-founder and conductor of the Tone Roads Chamber Ensemble in New York City (1963-70). He was a pioneer in the field of electronic and computer music, working with Max Mathews and others at the Bell Telephone Laboratories in the early 1960s to develop programs for computer sound-generation and composition. He has written works for a variety of media, both instrumental and electronic, many of them using alternative tuning systems.

Tenney is the author of several articles on musical acoustics, computer music, and musical form and perception, as well as two books: *META + HODOS: A Phenomenology of 20th-Century Musical Materials and an Approach to the Study of Form* (1961; Frog Peak, 1988) and *A History of 'Consonance' and 'Dissonance'* (Excelsior, 1988). He has received grants and awards from the National Science Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, the Canada Council, the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, the Fromm Foundation, the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, and the Jean A. Chalmers Foundation.

Tenney returned to the California Institute of the Arts in the fall of 2000 to take the Roy E. Disney Family Chair in Musical Composition, having taught there at its beginnings in the early 1970s. He has also been on the faculties of at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn, the University of California at Santa Cruz and at York University in Toronto where he was named Distinguished Research Professor in 1994.

His music is published by Sonic Art Editions (Baltimore) and the Canadian Music Centre, and is also distributed by Frog Peak (Lebanon, New Hampshire). Recordings are available from Artifact, col legno, CRI, Hat[now]ART, Koch International, Mode, Musicworks, Nexus, oodiscs, SYR, Toshiba EMI, and New World, among others.

James Tenney — List of Works

(prepared 2007 by Marc Sabat, Cassia Streb, Robert Wannamaker, Gisela Gronemeyer, Lauren Pratt)

Interim	1952/1998	22'	piano
4 Inventions	1953-1954		piano
Two Christmas Songs	1954		
Poem	1955		flute
String Quartet In One Movement	1955		string quartet
Variations in A (on a theme by my father)	1955		piano
Improvisation	1956		cello
Seeds I-VI	1956/1961	7'	flute, clarinet, bassoon, french horn, violin, cello
Essay	1957		chamber orchestra
Trio	1957		flute, oboe, clarinet
SONATA for Ten Wind Instruments	1958/1983	5'	
Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird	1958/1971	6'	tenor voice, 2 flutes, violin, viola, cello; revised 1971 for bass voice, oboe, alto flute/flute, viola, cello, contrabass
Just a Bagatelle	1959/1999	3'	viola
Monody	1959	4'	clarinet
Collage #1 ("Blue Suede")	1961	3'26"	electronic music
Improvisations for "Medea"	1961		music recorded on magnetic tape
Analog #1: (Noise Study)	1961	4'28"	computer music recorded on magnetic tape
Entrance/Exit Music	1962	10'	computer music recorded on magnetic tape
Stochastic Studies	1962		computer music recorded on magnetic tape
Dialogue	1963	4'13"	computer music recorded on magnetic tape
Ergodos I	1963	2 x 10'	computer music recorded on magnetic tape
Phases	1963	12'24"	computer music recorded on magnetic tapes
Radio Piece	1963		computer music demonstration recorded on magnetic tape
Stochastic String Quartet	1963	3'	string quartet
Stochastic Quartet	1963	3'	computer music recorded on magnetic tape
CHAMBER MUSIC	1964	variable	verbal score (poem/score) for any number of performers anywhere
Choreogram	1964	variable	verbal score for any number of musicians performing with dancers
Ergodos II	1964	18'29"	computer music recorded on magnetic tape
Ergodos II with Instrumental Responses:	1964	variable	variable: voice, woodwind, brass, piano or percussion, string
RESPONSE (Brass Part)	1964	variable	brass instruments and prerecorded computer music
RESPONSE (Piano or Percussion Part)	1964	variable	piano / percussion and prerecorded computer music
String Complement	1964	variable	string instruments and prerecorded computer music or other ergodic sound source

RESPONSE (String Part)	1964	variable	string instruments and prerecorded computer music
RESPONSE (Voice Part)	1964	variable	voices and prerecorded computer music
RESPONSE (Woodwind Part)	1964	variable	woodwind instruments and prerecorded computer music
Music for Player Piano	1964	6'15"	player piano
Audience Piece #1, #2, #3	1965		verbal (poem/performance) score
For two (gently)	1965		theater piece for a man and a woman
Metabolic Music	1965		for performers, biofeedback, audio equipment
Postal Pieces (Scorecards)	1965/1971		variable
Scorecard No. 5: Maximusic	1965	variable	verbal score for percussionist
Thermocouple #1	1965		theater piece
2ND THERMOCOUPLE	1965		theater piece
Couplings	1966		music recorded on magnetic tape
Redbed	1966		various theatrical materials (red bed, red paint, doves, knives)
Collage #2 ("Viet-Flakes")	1966		music recorded on magnetic tape
Fabric for Ché	1967	9'55"	computer music recorded on magnetic tape
Scorecard No. 6: Swell Piece	1967	variable	verbal score for any number of instruments beyond three
For Ann (rising)	1969	11'47"	electronic music recorded on magnetic tape
Three Rags for Pianoforte: ("Raggedy Ann", "Milk and Honey" [Mielle's Rag], "Tangled Rag")	1969	13'	piano
Scorecard No. 2: A Rose Is A Rose Is A Round	1970	variable	voices
QUIET FAN for ERIK SATIE	1970/1971	17'	flute, alto flute, oboe, english horn, 2 Bb clarinets, bass clarinet, bassoon, trombone, violin, viola, cello, contrabass
For 12 Strings (rising)	1971	variable	strings
Hey When I Sing These 4 Songs Hey Look What Happens	1971	3'	SATB voices
Scorecard No. 1: Beast	1971	7'	string bass
Scorecard No. 3: (night). "For percussion perhaps, or "	1971	variable	variable or percussion
Scorecard No. 4: KOAN	1971	10'	violin
Scorecard No.7[a]: Swell Piece No. 2	1971	variable	verbal score for any five or more different sustaining instruments
Scorecard No.7[b]: Swell Piece No. 3	1971	variable	verbal score for any eight or more different sustaining instruments
Scorecard No. 8: August Harp	1971	20'	harp
Scorecard No. 9: Cellogram	1971		cello
Scorecard No. 10: Having Never Written a Note for Percussion	1971	variable	solo percussionist

Timbre Ring	1971		verbal score for any five or more instruments
CLANG	1972	12'	orchestra
Quintext I-V: Five Textures: Some Recent THOUGHTS for Morton Feldman, CLOUDS for Iannis Xenakis, A Choir of ANGELS for Carl Ruggles, PARABOLAS and HYPERBOLAS for Edgard Varèse, SPECTRA for Harry Partch	1972	30'	string quartet and contrabass
Canon	1973	6'	contrabass quartet
Chorale for Viola and Harp (or Piano)	1973	3'	viola and harp (or piano)
In the Aeolian Mode	1973	variable	for prepared piano with any three or more of the following instruments: flute, clarinet, English horn, bassoon, vibraphone, marimba, chimes, harp, muted violin, muted viola
Chorale for Violin and Piano arr. by Marc Sabat	1974/1998	3'	violin and piano
Chorales for Orchestra	1974	12'	
Orchestral Study: The Creation Field (after Fred Hoyle)	1974		
Spectral CANON for CONLON Nancarrow	1974	4'	player piano
Three Harmonic Studies	1974	10'	orchestra
THREE PIECES for Drum Quartet: WAKE for Charles Ives, 4 tenor drums; HOCKET for Henry Cowell, 4 bass drums; CRYSTAL CANON for Edgard Varèse, 4 snare drums	1974/1975	15'	drum quartet (4 tenor drums, 4 bass drums, 4 snare drums)
Three Pieces for Mechanical Drum: Wake, Tempest, The Popcorn Effect	1974	10'	mechanical drum
Blues for Annie	1975		viola
Harmonium #1	1975/1976	variable	variable
Symphony	1975		woodwind quintet and tape-delay system
Harmonium #2	1977	4'33"	guitar (2)
Harmonium #3	1978/1980	15'	harp (3)
Harmonium #4	1978	12'	10 instruments and tape-delay system
Harmonium #5	1978	6'	string trio
Saxony	1978	25'	1 or more saxophone players and tape-delay system

Three Indigenous Songs (I. No More Good Water (Jaybird Coleman); II. KOSMOS (Walt Whitman); III. Hey when I sing these 4 songs Hey look what happens)	1979	15'	2 piccolos, alto flute, tuba or bassoon, 2 percussion
Chromatic Canon	1980/83	10'	2 pianos
Harmonium #6	1981		flute, oboe, Bb clarinet, bass clarinet, Bb trumpet, trombone, 2 violins, viola, cello
Listen...!	1981/1984	5'	3 sopranos and piano
Blues Canon (from "Listen...!")	1981		viola, cello and bass
Septet	1981/2000	9'	6 electric guitars and electric bass
deus ex machina	1982	variable	tam-tam player, tape-delay system, technician, and unwary audience
Glissade (I. Shimmer; II. Array (a'rising); III. Bessel functions of the first kind; IV. Trias Harmonica; V. Stochastic-canonic variations)	1982	35'	viola, cello and bass with tape delay system
Two Koans and a Canon	1982		viola and tape delay system
Band	1983		vibraphone, 4 flutes, oboe, 4 Bb clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 Eb alto saxophones, 2 Bb tenor saxophones, 3 bassoons, 5 trumpets, 4 french horns, 4 trombones, 2 baritone horns, tuba, contrabass, percussion (tam-tam and suspended cymbal)
Nathan's Song	1983		voice and piano
Voice(s)	1983/1984	24'	for variable instrumental ensemble, voice(s) and multiple tape-delay system
Bridge	1984	45'	two pianos, eight hands in a microtonal tuning system
KOAN	1984	25'	string quartet
CHANGES: 64 Studies for 6 Harps	1985	35'	6 retuned harps (in a microtonal tuning system)
Water on the Mountain... Fire in Heaven	1985	25'	6 electric guitars
The Road to Ubud	1986	20'	gamelan and prepared piano
Sneezles	1986/1995	3'	soprano, flute or alto recorder, clarinet, vibraphone, violin, guitar, tenor-bass trombone, contrabass
Critical Band	1988/2000	18'	for any sixteen or more sustaining instruments
Rune	1988	20'	percussion quintet
Tableaux Vivants	1990	20'	violin, clarinet/bass clarinet, bassoon, soprano saxophone/baritone saxophone, piano, vibraphone

Pika-Don (“flash-boom”) 1. Alamogordo 2. Hiroshima	1991	21'	percussion quartet and pre-recorded 4-channel tape
Stream	1991		alto flute, English horn, clarinet, alto sax, flugelhorn, vibraphone, harp, viola
Spectral CANON for CONLON Nancarrow (Extended)	1991	5'25"	player piano
Three New Seeds	1991	3'	clarinet/bass clarinet, trumpet, contrabass, piano, 2 percussion
Ain't I a Woman?	1992	20'	2 violins, 2 violas, 3 cellos, celesta
Beatles Arrangements: Love Me Do; Do You Want to Know a Secret (Lennon/McCartney, arr. James Tenney)	1992	3' / 3'	piano
Cognate Canons	1993	24'	string quartet and percussion
FLOCKING	1993	13'	2 pianos tuned a quarter-tone apart
Form 1	1993	19'	variable ensemble (at least 16 players: woodwinds, brass, strings, and pitched percussion)
Form 2	1993	17'	variable ensemble (at least 16 players: woodwinds, brass, strings, and pitched percussion)
Form 3	1993	14'	variable ensemble (at least 16 players: woodwinds, brass, strings, and pitched percussion)
Form 4	1993	16'	variable ensemble (at least 16 players: woodwinds, brass, strings, and pitched percussion)
Form 5	1993	6'	electronic music
Ergodos III	1994	24'	2 pianos
In a large, open space	1994	variable	variable instrumentation, 12 or more instruments
Tempest II	1994	3'	mechanical drum
In a large, reverberant space	1995	variable	variable instrumentation
Spectrum 1	1995	15'	violin, trumpet, bass clarinet, 2 percussion, piano, contrabass
Spectrum 2	1995	15'	wind quintet
Spectrum 3	1995	18'	chamber orchestra (fl, bs fl, ob, eng hn, cl, bs cl, alto sax, bsn, fr hn, tpt, tbn, tba, perc. (vibes), harp, pf, vln 1, vln 2, vla, vlc, cb)
Spectrum 4	1995	16'	violin, alto recorder, vibraphone, guitar, piano, bass clarinet, tenor-bass trombone, contrabass
Spectrum 5	1995	16'	flute, oboe, bass clarinet, bassoon, percussion, harp, piano, viola
Three Pages in the Shape of a Pear	1995	3'	piano

Diapason	1996	19'	2 flute/bass flute, 2 oboe/English horn, 2 clarinet/bass clarinet, 2 bassoon/contrabassoon, 2 trumpet, 2 French horn, trombone, 16 violin, 6 viola, 4 cello, 2 contrabass
'Scend for Scelsi	1996	16'30"	flute, oboe, clarinet, alto saxophone, trumpet, 2 French horn, 2 trombone, 2 viola, 2 cello, contrabass
Diaphonic Study	1997	18'	string quartet and piano (in a microtonal tuning)
Diaphonic Toccata	1997	3'	violin and piano
Diaphonic Trio	1997	15'	violin and piano (in a microtonal tuning)
Seegersong #1	1999	12'	clarinet or bass clarinet
Seegersong #2	1999	12'	flute or alto flute
Song'n'Dance for Harry Partch (1. Song: "My technique"; 2. Dance: "Mallets in the air")	1999	15'	Diamond Marimba, Adapted Viola, strings, and percussion
Five Studies for Player Piano by Conlon Nancarrow arranged for small orchestra	2000	15'	orchestra
Harmonium #7	2000	12'	any twelve or more sustaining instruments
Last Spring in Toronto	2000	16'	gamelan and orchestra
(Fontana) MIX for SIX (Strings)	2001	14'	2 violins, 3 violas, cello, and optional delay system
Prelude and Toccata	2001	10'	piano
Spectrum 6	2001	15'	flute, bass clarinet, percussion, piano, violin and cello
Spectrum 7	2001	15'	flute, cello, piano, and delay system
Spectrum 8	2001	15'	viola obbligato and flute, clarinet, percussion, piano, violin, and cello
To Weave (a meditation)	2003	15'	piano
Essay (After a Sonata)	2004	8'	piano
Just Another Bagatelle	2004	30"	violin, cello
For Piano and...	2005	8'	piano and ensemble
Panacousticon	2005		orchestra
Arbor Vitae	2006	13'	string quartet