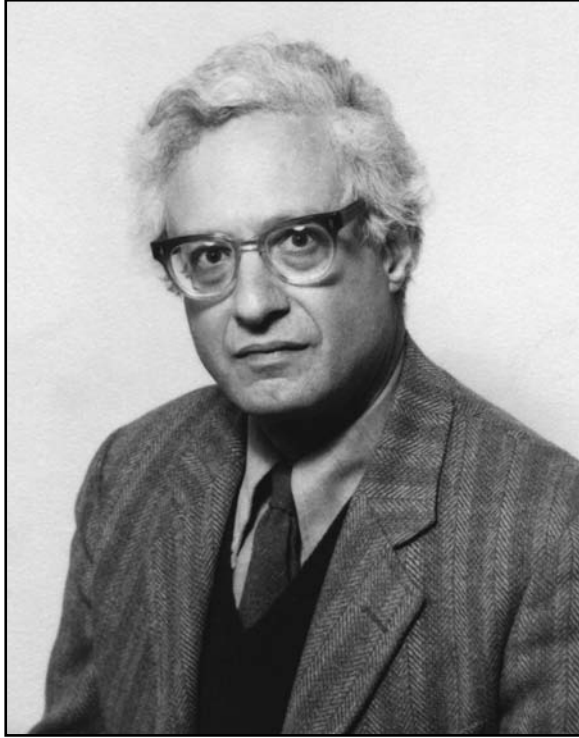


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EDWARD TONER CONE



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EDWARD T. CONE, composer, pianist, writer, and professor emeritus of the Department of Music at Princeton University, passed away on 23 October 2004 in Princeton, New Jersey, following complications from heart surgery.

An internationally renowned figure in musical studies, Cone was born to a prominent North Carolina family in the textile industry and grew up in an environment that valued high culture. His extraordinary childhood included a visit to see Matisse, arranged by his aunt Etta Cone, who, with her sister, Claribel Cone, assembled the famous Cone collection now housed in the Baltimore Museum of Art.

Cone arrived at Princeton as a member of the class of 1939 and then spent the rest of his career there. The Latin salutatorian of his graduating class, he was the first student at Princeton to write a musical composition for his senior thesis. In 1942, already teaching in the Department of Music, Cone became one of the first to receive the degree of master of fine arts in music at Princeton and in 1945 was one of the first recipients of a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship. After four years of military service in the Middle East as a pianist for the army, leading to an eventual post in the Office of Strategic Services, Cone rejoined the music department faculty in 1946 and reached the rank of full professor in 1960. He was an Old Dominion Fellow in 1964–65, and he served as a Continuing Senior Fellow of the Council of the Humanities from 1969 until his retirement. During his years at Princeton, Cone was awarded honorary degrees from the University of Rochester, the New England Conservatory, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, his hometown. Cone also served as Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University from 1979 to 1985, and as Ernest Bloch Professor of Music at the University of California at Berkeley. He retired from Princeton in 1985 and was awarded an honorary degree in 2004. Among Cone's other numerous awards were a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1947, two Deems Taylor Awards from ASCAP, and the Howard T. Behrman Award for Distinguished Achievement in the Humanities at Princeton.

Ed, as he was known to generations of friends, colleagues, and students, flourished in multiple roles: composer, writer, pianist, teacher, editor, advocate. His depth, breadth, and versatility made him hard to classify; he did everything brilliantly. When pushed on this point during an interview in 2003, he simply called himself a musician.

As editor and advocate of new music, Ed co-edited with Benjamin Boretz four important collections of essays on twentieth-century music and music theory. He also served as co-editor of the flagship journal of contemporary music, *Perspectives of New Music*, from 1966 to 1972. As writer, Ed published three major books: *Musical Form and Musical Performance* (1968), *The Composer's Voice* (1974), and *Music: A View*

from *Delft* (1989). Ed's writings are, in every way, seminal. His humane and elegant style sounded a welcome new note during an era that witnessed crosscurrents of intense and often partisan development in music composition and theory. Writing about the role of musical experience, about the ways we as listeners and performers come to understand music as we hear and play it, Ed put music into a larger context that reaches out to specialist and non-specialist alike.

Above all, Ed possessed the great gift of making accessible yet non-trivial observations, a sure sign of a surpassing critical intelligence and generous critical spirit. He consistently took on the biggest issues in music aesthetics and theory—meaning, agency, the nature of musical performance, and even the ontology of music—with plain-spoken eloquence. Many of his investigations commence with an artless question that, once asked, begins to percolate in the mind of the reader: “If music is a language then who is speaking?” “Where is the beginning of a piece of music?” “Why do we enjoy rehearsing music?”

Ed brought a new standard of clarity, ease, and grace to academic writing about music. Today there is very little music criticism or analysis that does not sit in one way or another on the broad shoulders of his brilliantly cogent books. *Musical Form and Performance* was hailed as “the most persuasive attempt ever made to reconcile the intellectual analysis of music with the practical problems of the intelligent performer.” *The Composer's Voice* was the first English-language treatment of the theoretical issue of voice; thirty years later, the concept of voice is more ubiquitous than ever in speculative critical studies about music. The education of any serious musician cannot be considered complete without Ed Cone's writings.

Ed's graduate seminars at Princeton were legendary, leaving deep impressions on generations of students. One such seminar was his stimulating course Modern Music, which began with Chopin. Ed recognized in that composer a fiercely progressive tonal language, an assessment borne out by much recent scholarship. In another fondly remembered seminar, on the last three Schubert piano sonatas, students were delightfully engaged by intense discussions about rhythm, form, and analysis. All of Ed's students were generally amazed at his ability to dance around the musical literature at the piano, from Wagner, to Schubert, to Chopin, to Schumann, all from memory, at a moment's notice, and starting from any point in a piece. His convincing performances led to an abiding specialty in the lecture recital. As an undergraduate teacher, Ed again raised the bar; in addition to providing in-depth courses that music majors would never forget, he taught many non-musicians how to follow music meaningfully. Nor did he confine his teacherly gifts to the music department, for he also taught the “great books” sequence in the Humanistic Studies Program at Princeton.

As composer, Ed completed more than eighty works for various

ensembles. He wrote music as fluently as he wrote words; each composition speaks coherently and deeply with honesty and conviction. His music is never given to artifice or gimmick. From early works to late one hears a clear and masterly voice at the height of its powers. Ed was also a fearless text setter who matched his music to the finest poems, however familiar. While his compositions owe an obvious debt to his teacher and mentor, Roger Sessions, there are also real connections to Schubert, Beethoven, and Mozart in the ways in which he pursues a clear argument with invention and liveliness, doesn't rest until the point is made, and never stays a moment longer. This is cogent, personal, deep music by a master musician, intellectual, and performer.

Behind the scenes, Ed engaged in numerous acts of anonymous philanthropy through the Edward T. Cone Foundation. Ed's foundation has offered crucial support to the Salzburg Seminar, a week-long international gathering of humanities scholars, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, and many other arts organizations. Princeton University in particular owes much to Ed's farsighted generosity, including various initiatives in the humanities, the music department's Ensemble-in-Residence program, a number of endowed fellowships, and continuing programmatic support for music and humanities that will enrich the work of scholars and artists for generations to come.

Ed remained a faithful mainstay of arts events at Princeton University to the end, giving occasional lectures and performances and attending numerous concerts with his companion of nearly fifty years, Princeton philosopher George Pitcher. Ed and George are also known around town for their unswerving devotion to several generations of consequential canines, especially the now legendary Lupa and Remus, whose lives are touchingly described in George Pitcher's 1996 book *The Dogs Who Came to Stay*.

While Ed's place in the greater musical world is fixed and firm, his presence in the town of Princeton is sorely missed. It seems as if there is an empty chair now at every concert or lecture. But fortunately, through his music, his writing, the example of his teaching, and his unstinting generosity, Edward T. Cone's spirit remains as present as ever.

Elected 1991

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