

# Wendy Reid

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Wendy Reid (b.1952) received degrees from Mills College(M.A.), The University of Southern California School of Performing Arts(B.A.), and attended Stanford University's Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics(CCRMA). Between 1975-77, she was a private pupil of Nadia Boulanger in Paris and at Les Ecoles D'Art Americaines at Fontainebleau. Composers she had studied with include Terry Riley, Robert Ashley, Halsey Stevens, James Hopkins and film composer David Raskin. She is the recipient of numerous awards and grants including Meet the Composer grants, the Paul Merritt Henry Prize, etc. Her music has been performed and broadcast throughout the world by Abel-Steinberg-Winant-Trio, the Kronos Quartet, the San Francisco Contemporary Players, the San Francisco String Quartet, the Tree Ensemble, among others. Reid is on the faculty of Mills College and Holy Names College and is the producer of the new music series NEW MUSIC WITH BIRDS, FROGS AND OTHER CREATURES sponsored by the Natural Sciences Department of the Oakland Museum and the San Francisco Art Institute.

Wendy Reid's TREE PIECES are an ongoing set of musical processes which attempt to reflect nature's manner of operation. Because the order of nature functions as a single process without division, contrary to the state of control in which there exists a duality (one element commanding and the other obeying), control in the compositional process is removed by varying degrees from piece to piece. The processes are contextual in nature thus allowing the performers to act according to the unpredictable conditions and variables which arise from within the musical continuity. In this way, the compositions attempt to reflect the inter-connection of all things in nature. In performance, an attempt is made at a spontaneous, unforced and unblocked growing of sound and silence in which emphasis is placed on formation rather than pre-established form, as in the building and shaping of cell-like units in living processes. The visual scores illuminate the unique structures of each Tree Piece. Many of them are a visual as well as oral representation of the Fibonacci series, and most aptly so considering the nature of the work.

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Excerpts from an Interview with Rachel Unterseher

**Q.** Why did you want to become a composer?

**A.** My desire to compose music and explore sound grew out of my love and fascination for music and sound. Composing became important to me and continues to be important as a means of communication.

**Q.** What do you think a composer's role in society is and how would you like to see music function in society?

**A.** At it's best, music functions as a powerful means of communication in society. It has the power to change the way people think and feel, and can affect the way people relate to each other and the world around them. This is the way I would like it to function.

**Q.** What kinds of music have influenced you?

**A.** The music of many composers have influenced me: Feldman, Cage, Berio, Webern,

Stockhausen, Christian Wolf to name a few. Probably even more than the music, the ideas of artists, writers and composers have influenced me: the writings of Cage, Duchamp, Beckett, and especially those of the artist Paul Klee. Klee's writings on Nature (diaries, and books: The Thinking Eye and On the Nature of Nature) led me to my on-going musical processes, Tree Pieces.

**Q.**Are there certain types of instrumentation you are drawn to? Why?

**A.** My last compositions were written for "2 or more instruments," though I had particular musicians in mind for the premieres. I usually write for musicians who I know will understand my work, although I write scores which should make the music accessible to all musicians. Because of my desire for a more intimate communication, I favor small chamber ensembles.

**Q.**What boundaries have you crossed with your music?

**A.** I'm not sure if there are any boundaries left to cross except personal ones. I have created a structure of composition which resembles that of a living organism: cell-like units of sound which "grow"; and my own notation which enhances the communication (understanding) of the music: the scores are read from bottom to top and look like tree or human skeletons, ranging in height from 2ft. to 8ft. tall.

**Q.**What discoveries have you made that excite you?

**A.** In every performance which involves musicians who are immersed in the structure and timbral possibilities of the score, and who listen to and inter-act with each other, discoveries are made. The realization of the score is unique each time, making the performance itself a discovery for the audience as well as the performers.

**Q.**How often are there performances of your work?

**A.** At times, there are numerous performances of a Tree Piece when a performer or group make it part of their 'tour program.' I don't promote my works much simply because my life is too busy right now.

**Q.**How are the performances arranged?

**A.** Occasionally, I will arrange a performance through my own connections -Oakland Museum, Mills, Holy Names College or an independent performance space(or series). Most of the performances though have been arranged by other performing artists or groups.

**Q.**How do you make your living?

**A.** I make my living by teaching music: Ensemble classes and violin at Holy Names College and music composition at Mills.

**Q.**How did you get your music published?

**A.** Larry Polemsky, director of Frog Peak Music (a composer's collective) asked me if I would be interested in having my music published by them. I said yes.

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because there are so many.

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Women in Creative Music Homepage

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*Created by the Women in Creative Music Class Fall 1997*  
*Web site designed & authored by Shannon Crossman*  
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*Last revised on 11/17/97*