

Tui St. George Tucker (1924-2004)



Composer and recorderist Tui St. George Tucker died on April 21, 2004. She was living alone in the Blue Ridge Mountain area of North Carolina. These two photos by Moritz von Bredow, provided by Robert Jurgrau, were taken in October 2002.

favor major works like J.S. Bach's *Magnificat*, and Handel's *Messiah*—even singing at New York City's Town Hall and in other concerts. A number of her Camp Catawba boys became professional musicians.

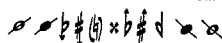
Another letter from Tui to Erich, written from Camp Catawba, describes part of the camp's schedule. She writes that Erich's son Michael "is singing in the choir one hour a day, performing once a week, and has also mastered the bugle with which he is to play Taps at night and the orchestra call at noon."

Camp Catawba closed in 1970. In 1985, Tui returned to live on Camp property in the Blue Ridge Mountains. She continued to compose, and also conducted the Springhouse Farm Choir in the quaint, rural town of Valle Crucis, NC. She was featured in the Appalachian State University concert series entitled "An Evening of Women Composers" and also on the North Carolina Composers series.

Tui's *Requiem* received its world premiere at Appalachian State University last April 30, almost exactly one year after her death. Composed for her mother, it is a large work for chorus and orchestra that took over 40 years to complete; she finished it only shortly before her death.

At the performance, the creation was also announced of the **Tui St. George Tucker Scholarship Fund**, to support the performance and study of her music, and to provide scholarships to deserving Appalachian State University composition students. For details, please contact Robert Jurgrau, weekdays 212-522-6161; <Robert_Jurgrau@timeinc.com>, or send donations, with the fund name noted, directly to ASU at: Appalachian State University, Hayes School of Music, ASU Box 32096, Boone, NC 28607.

An obituary piece by Jay Brown in the *Mountain Times* of northwestern North Carolina gives insight into what made Tui St. George Tucker special: "Her deeply spiritual nature and unique poetic way of speaking will be warmly remembered by all who burned the midnight candle with her, shared music with her, caught hell from her, and learned from her."



All of us who knew her mourn the passing of Tui St. George Tucker. She was a truly remarkable woman—talented, creative, clever, funny, generous to a fault, and marvelously kind.

She was a composer, a conductor, a recorder player, and very much a modernist. The furnishings of her apartment included two pianos, keyboards at right angles to each other, tuned a quartertone apart. Tui composed eccentric, fascinating music for her friends and for the world.

She was a bit crazy, too. When I asked her to conduct a student performance of the Machaut *Mass* at Hudson Guild Farm she said quite positively, "Of course I wrote it," and I think she more than half-meant it. The performance was rather wild, too.

Mostly I remember her kindness. She was a wonderful party-giver, and so warm and loving in her manner that she made everyone feel good who came near her.

What a dear, dear friend! I miss her very much.

Martha Bixler, New York City, NY

American composer **Tui St. George Tucker** died April 21, 2004.

Born in Los Angeles, CA, on November 25, 1924, Tui's name (perhaps a nickname) refers to a bird species from New Zealand, where her mother was born. In an undated letter in the mid-1950s from Tui to ARS honorary president Erich Katz, she spelled out her entire given name: Lorraine Percival Granville St. George Tucker.

In 1946, she moved to New York City, NY, where her talents as a teacher, conductor, composer and recorder performer were wholeheartedly embraced. Composer Johnny Reinhard recalls that they hosted many musical parties together.

Tui's compositions often used microtonal techniques—that is, they employed quartertones, the tones in between the notes of a piano keyboard. She composed works in a number of media, including organ, piano and recorder, and published a chart entitled "Alto Recorder Fingering Chart Showing Quartertones," giving a chromatic range from f' to c'''. It appeared in the *International Microtonalist* publication along with her innovative article, "Composing with Quartertones."

1946 was also the year in which Tui first visited the Blue Ridge Mountains. Her friend, poet Vera Lachmann, had founded Camp Catawba for Boys there two years earlier. Beginning in 1947, Tui spent her summers as the camp's music director. She had high expectations of the students: under her guidance, the choir tackled with

THE CATAWBA CHOIR BOYS

Conducted by

TUI ST. GEORGE TUCKER

Assisted by

LOIS WANN, Oboe

With

NINA COURANT, Viola Da Gamba

ALEXIA JOHNSON, Virginals

TUI ST. GEORGE TUCKER, Recorder

ROBERT VON GUTFELD, Cello

The Circle in the Square — 1 Sheridan Square

February 24, 1952 — 4:30 P. M. — Tickets \$1.50

I can't claim a close friendship with Tui Tucker, though she once put on me the obligation of close friendship. Stunned as I was by the request, her personality was so vivid that I obliged and acted as a go-between to effect a reconciliation between Tui and another person. 'Til then I had no idea the two even knew each other, and given the fiery temperaments of the two, I never inquired what their falling-out had been about. I was too afraid of what might result, but the reconciliation went smoothly, and, in retrospect, I am happy that I was able to help.

In the 1970s, I performed some of Tui's music for recorder. Much of it was microtonal and presented quite a challenge. I'm sorry that I haven't heard or seen any of it since those long ago days. Indeed, I saw Tui only once since her move south, but I will always think of her as she was in the '70s: a handsome woman with a full head of wild red hair.

She was sort of a "tough broad" type, but you had to be tough in those days if you were a woman who composed. Woman composers are quite common today; they receive performances, and respect, even win composition prizes.

Not so when Tui began her work. She was among the few women who dared to compose, and she deserves our respect for her pioneering work. It would be a real memorial if someone, or some organization (the ARS perhaps?) would collect and publish her music for recorder.

Anita Randolfi, New York City, NY

Six Paragraphs in Homage by Johnny Reinhard: Tui St. George Tucker

I. Tui was a champion of the virtuoso, of the extroverted, of the introverted, and of the intuitive. She spoke her mind, clearly and unequivocally, risking all for a tractor beam-like contact of personal communication.

II. When she blew the alto recorder she would command a melody as if she were riding the bulls in Spain, each hand holding on to a horn. The recorder was as big as a conch shell in its ringing tone.

III. Her body was her temple, nutrition through fresh-squeezed juice, imaginative organics, vitamins, herbs, and best intentions were a life-long credo for Tui to honor, and subsequently recommend. Her elixir of health in the form of a fruit shake was a welcome treat, if initially rebuffed.

IV. All the harmonics of Just Intonation were heard "flat" in Tui's sound universe, notated with a downward pointing arrow, signifying an alteration to allow for the existence of the quartertone flat notes. Quartertones were always to be considered part of a greater family of relationships.

V. Tui abhorred those who would profit from the great work of the pioneers while denying them their place, as well as any attempts to separate women composers from composers at large, as with all-women composer concerts.

VI. By arranging engaging parties in Manhattan and Brooklyn, Tui brought microtonalists together throughout New York City. We would soon be a community, developing the foundation for the American Festival of Microtonal Music.

EARLY MUSIC

SANCTUS <i>For Feasts of the Blessed Virgin</i>	Gregorian Chant Fifth Century
SAINTE MARIE <i>(Anglo-Saxon text)</i>	St. Godric d. 1170, English Song
DOMINATOR-ECCE-DOMINO <i>(Three simultaneous texts)</i>	Two Motets School of Notre Dame ca. 1225
DOMINO FIDELIUM <i>Solo voice with viola da gamba</i>	
ALLE, PSALLITE CUM LUYA <i>With viola da gamba</i>	Montpellier Ms. ca. 1250
QUANT THESEUS <i>(Two simultaneous texts) with oboe and viola da gamba</i>	Guillaume de Machaut 1300?-77, Ballade
ECCE QUOMODO	Jacob Handl (Gallus) 1550-91, "Familiar style"
2	
FANTASIA Number 1 <i>Recorder, oboe, and viola da gamba</i>	Henry Purcell 1658-95
SONATA FOR OBOE IN G MINOR <i>With viola da gamba and virginals</i>	Georgo Frederick Handel 1685-1759
TRIO SONATA IN C MINOR <i>Recorder, oboe, virginals, and viola da gamba</i>	Georg Philipp Telemann 1681-1767

INTERMISSION

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN

SONATINA FOR TWO WOODWINDS* <i>Recorder and oboe</i>	Erich Katz
TRIO FOR RECORDER, OBOE, AND CELLO <i>(Commissioned for this program)</i>	Harold Holden
2	
MUMBALIN' WORD <i>With cello</i>	Spiritual
HEAR, O ISRAEL	Jackson Mac Low
MISSA BREVIS <i>Kyrie-Christe-Kyrie-Sanctus-Agnus Dei</i>	Tui St. George Tucker

The Catawba Choir Boys**

RONALD BLAU	PETER REITER
PAUL JORDAN	ILAN ROTHMULLER
FRANK MAINZER	STEPHEN SENTURIA
YAIR STRAUSS	

* Gallery Records

** These boys are trained at Camp Catawba, Blowing Rock, North Carolina

At left are the cover and inside page of a concert program from 1952, which includes works by Erich Katz and Tui St. George Tucker, the latter performed by her Catawba Choir Boys. This program is in the Erich Katz Collection of the Recorder Music Center at Regis University, Denver, CO. Many thanks to the RMC and Mark Davenport for help in finding this original source material. Our search of the Katz Collection did not locate any photos of Tui from her earlier years in New York City. The contributors to this article made suggestions of individuals to contact regarding photos, but American Recorder was not able to find any. Members who may have photos of the younger Tui St. George Tucker are invited to submit them.

