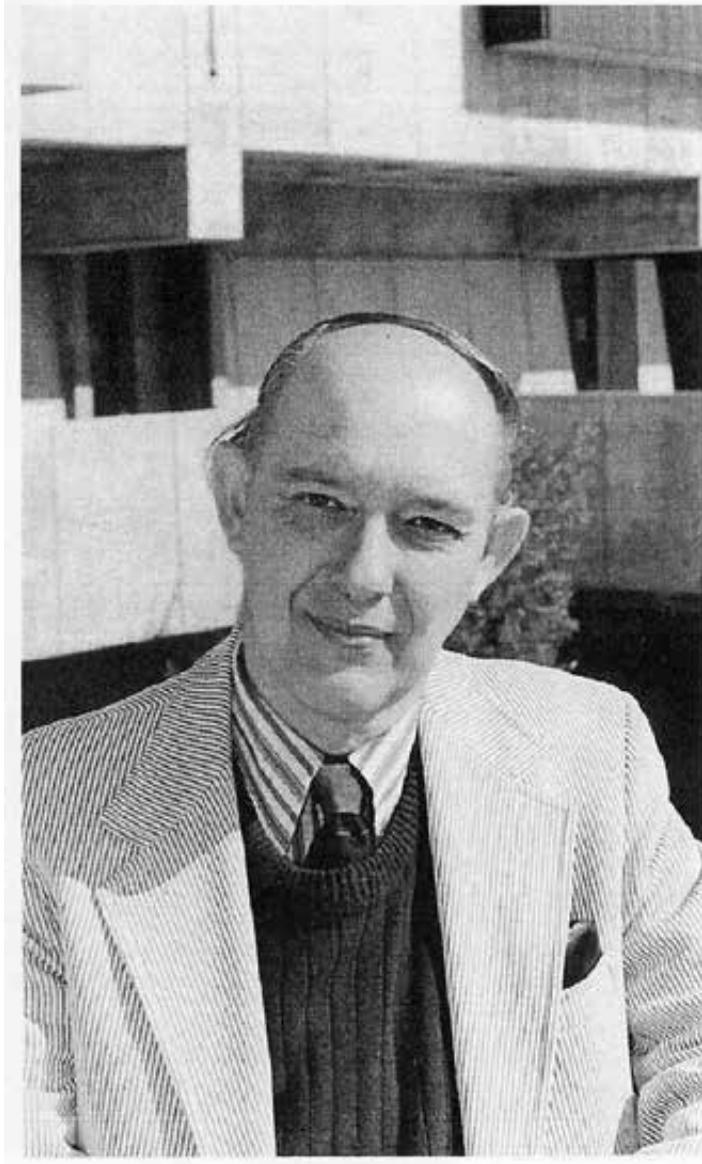
A close-up, warm-toned portrait of an elderly man with thinning hair, smiling slightly and looking to the right. He is wearing a brown corduroy jacket over a white shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

WILL OGDON

MEMORIAL CONCERT

UC San Diego | Division of Arts & Humanities | Department of Music
Conrad Prebys Music Center, Concert Hall
Saturday, April 26, 2014 - 4:00 p.m.



Will Ogdon - 1975

WILL OGDON

1921 – 2013

Founding Chair, UC San Diego Department of Music

Will Ogdon was born on April 19, 1921 in Redlands, California. He earned a doctorate in music theory at Indiana University and studied composition with Austrian composer Ernst Krenek. He considered his work with French composer and conductor Rene Leibowitz during a Fulbright fellowship in Paris from 1952 to 1953 as formative.

Ogdon was hired in 1965 by Muir College Provost John Stewart, along with composer Robert Erickson, to create the music department at UC San Diego. In turn, Ogdon hired conductor Tom Nee, and classes began in 1967.

Under Ogdon's direction, UC San Diego's department of music provided an atmosphere where students were encouraged to explore their own original ideas, without a rigid emphasis on classical and earlier 20th century music. As the department grew, newer faculty such as Ed Harkins, János Négyesy, Pauline Oliveros, Bernard Rands and Roger Reynolds sustained Ogdon's vision, and the department earned an international reputation as a university center for experimental music.

Négyesy, a violinist, joined the faculty in 1979. He premiered and recorded many of Ogdon's compositions and said that Ogdon's music stood out for being gentler and more directly appealing than the sharp, jarring sounds of Schoenberg and other modernist composers. Ogdon himself appreciated the music of modernist composers of the Second Viennese School.

Ogdon also held faculty positions at the University of Texas at Austin, the St. Catherine University in Minnesota and Illinois Wesleyan University.

At UC San Diego, he taught composition, music theory and music literature. Although he was a prolific composer, his music was not widely known due to Ogdon's modesty and reluctance to promote himself. The only CDs devoted to his music ("The Music of Will Ogdon," 1997; and "Will Ogdon: Compositions 1995-1999") were recorded at UC San Diego. His music was performed by the department's SONOR experimental music ensemble as well as by ensembles in Los Angeles and New York.

His essays on composing and teaching music were published in various journals. His students continue to distinguish themselves in educational and compositional careers.

Following his retirement in 1991, Ogdon continued to compose. He wrote his last piece in 2008, and it was premiered at UC San Diego by Négyesy and violinist Päivikki Nykter.

Ogdon is survived by his wife, Beverly; daughters Bethany and Erica; and son, Benjamin.

WILL OGDON

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program

Oratory for Marimba (1999)

Daniel Pate – marimba

Variation Suite for violin and viola (1995-96)

Somewhat freely (“dreamily”) – *Quasi giocoso* – *Scherzo* – *Tranquillo (cantabile)* – *Scherzando* – *Andante*
Quasi Marcia, meno mosso, piu vivo – *Quasi giocoso* – *Somewhat freely*
Batya MacAdam-Somer – violin, Päivikki Nykter – viola

Two Kechwa Songs (1955)

That She May Not Find Dew – *How Sadly She Dreams*
Shiba Nemat-Nasser – mezzo-soprano, John Mark Harris – piano

Introduction and Nine Short Variants (1997-98)

Introduction – *Poco Adagio* – *Andante* – ♩ = 30 – *Scherzando*
Adagio – *Allegretto* – *Andante* – *Adagio* – *Allegro Moderato*
Batya MacAdam-Somer – violin, Päivikki Nykter – violin and viola, Siu Hei Lee – piano

Three Machado Songs (1998)

Moon Song – *Spring Song* – *Sea Song*
Victoria Mature – soprano, Siu Hei Lee – piano

Three Trifles for cello and piano (1958)

March – *Romance* – *Scherzo*
Jennifer Bewerse – cello, Siu Hei Lee – piano

Serenade No.1 for Wind Quintet (1986)

I Adagio
II Arioso – *Adagio* – *Vivace* – *Allegretto* – *Arioso 2* – ♩ = 120
III Allegro
Rachel Beetz – flute, Sidney Green – oboe, Robert Zelikman – clarinet,
David Savage – bassoon, Warren Gref – French horn

Intermission

WILL OGDON

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Memories from portions of seven decades

presented by Edwin Harkins

A Sylvan Suite for Xylophone (2002)

Adagio – Allegretto – Lento – Andante – Allegretto

Daniel Pate – xylophone

A Little Suite and an Encore Tango (2008)

Night Song – A Quiet Midnight – Morning Bells – Tango

Batya MacAdam-Somer and Päivikki Nykter – violins

By the Isar (1969)

River Roses (D.H. Lawrence)

Kirsten Wiest – soprano, Rachel Beetz – alto flute, Matthew Kline – double bass

Four Tonal Songs (1988-90)

You are The Earth (C. Pavese)

The Customs House (Eugenie Montale)

Why Linger Here (Eugenie Montale)

Now in November (D.H. Lawrence)

Philip Larson – baritone, Aleck Karis – piano

String Quartet No.3 (version 1998-99)

I Cavatina – Scherzo – Cavatina 2 – Scherzo 2 – Nocturne – Scherzando – Trio – Scherzando 2

II Largo

III Recitativo (Adagio)

Batya MacAdam-Somer and Päivikki Nykter – violins, David Medine – viola,

Jennifer Bewerse – cello

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*Following the performance, please join us for a reception in the lobby.*

*Please sign the GUEST BOOK, located in the lobby.*

## *program notes*

**Will Ogdon** sits atop conquered territory. His view from that perch, though isolated and pensive, is a gorgeous sight, lovely and nostalgic. His is music the Viennese serialists might have written had they been more comfortable and relaxed about the system they developed. For them, the warriors long past, the twelve-tone technique was a revolutionary crowbar that leveraged composers into a new relationship with the world; and though they longed for comfort, they rarely attained it. For Ogdon it is a place for unhurried reflection. There is nothing to be proved – just a need to be honest and true to one’s character and inner values. Here is a music that communicates life’s uncertainties and unfulfilled longings with resolve and a quiet dignity that comes from seasoned introspection. - *Igor Korneitchouk & Ray Cole*

### **ORATORY**

What is revealed in Ogdon’s music’s dodecaphonic context is surprisingly tonal. It is wistfully expressive and simply beautiful in its subdued romanticism - listen to the brief but pregnant piece for solo marimba, *Oratory*, which swells suspended over long fermatas, followed by falling minor thirds. - *Igor Korneitchouk & Ray Cole*

### **VARIATION SUITE**

The *Variation Suite* was written for János Négysesy and Päivikki Nykter. The suite includes ten brief pieces beginning and ending with a contrapuntal open-structured prelude and postlude. The theme and its return enclose six variations of contrasting tempi and character. - *W.O.*

### **TWO KETCHWA SONGS**

The *Two Ketchwa Songs* were composed in St. Paul for a remarkable dramatic soprano, June Peterson, who sang them in a concert series at the Minneapolis Unitarian Church. The series was directed by Thomas Nee who joined the UCSD faculty a dozen years later, taking over the directorship of the La Jolla Civic University Orchestra (now known as La Jolla Symphony & Chorus). The poet is an unknown but most-gifted Andean mountain Indian. - *W.O.*

### **INTRODUCTION AND NINE SHORT VARIANTS**

*Introduction and Nine Short Variants* was composed in the first three months of 1998. The *Introduction* is somewhat rhapsodic piece but essentially an ABA. The nine trios that follow are grouped in threes, the first and last groups muted. Viola is called for in the third set. - *W.O.*

### **THREE MACHADO SONGS**

*Three Machado Songs* sets three short translated poems by Spanish poet, Antonio Machado. - *W.O.*

### **THREE TRIFLES**

*Three Trifles* was composed as a teaching piece for an Illinois Wesleyan colleague, Ruth Krieger, who introduced them with the composer on a school recital. In 1985, cellist Chris Finkel and pianist Robert Pollock played the pieces in a New Jersey composers’ concert and also on television. Curiously, the pieces were formed from music Ogdon was composing for an opera that he never completed, *Leonce and Lena*. - *W.O.*

## **SERENADE No. 1**

Perhaps the *Serenade No.1* for Wind Quintet has been performed more often than any other of Ogdon's music. The La Jolla Wind Quintet and its successor, the Eolus Quintet, have played the piece a number of times in the 1980' and 1990's in various California cities. The *Serenade* is in three movements, the first with two contrasting themes. The second movement acts loosely like a theme and variations, the theme followed by an adagio, and then a scherzo and trio with the scherzo returning. A second theme then follows, marked *arioso* like the third movement, inspired by this finale, is an *allegro* with repeating and returning-note motives that hurry along completed by a two-phase *codetta*. - *W.O.*

## **A SYLVAN SUITE**

*A Sylvan Suite* for Xylophone is named after Sylvia Smith who requested the work and, in turn, gave Ogdon useful advice during its composing. The Suite is in five short movements. Although motival features recur in the movements, the suite is not organized as a set of variations, but as independent pieces. - *W.O.*

## **A LITTLE SUITE AND AN ENCORE TANGO**

*A Little Suite and an Encore Tango* was written to my good friends, János and Päivikki. All pieces in the suite are variations of the same tonal and thematic materials, evoking three images of passage through night (Night Song, A Quiet Midnight, Morning Bells) and closing with an Encore Tango. - *W.O.*

## **BY THE ISAR**

Although completed in 1969, my chamber song, *By the Isar*, was actually begun a dozen years earlier. At that time I had determined to set D.H. Lawrence's poem *River Roses*, for a *leggiero* soprano, Beverly Porter Ogdon, who I admired and later married. Clarinet and harp were to accompany this agile, high voice but for some unremembered reason the project was aborted. In 1969, now at the University of California at San Diego, my colleague Bertram Turetzky asked me to write something for him and his flutist wife, Nancy. That request brought to mind my previous intent to see *River Roses* as a chamber song. The prospect of relating Beverly's voice timbre to alto flute and the higher ranges of the double bass was fascinating. Stimulated by the interest of such fine musicians, I quickly composed *By the Isar*. - *W.O.*

## **FOUR TONAL SONGS**

*My Four Tonal Songs* were written one a year from 1988 to 1990 for my classes in chromatic harmony and, in one year, for my undergraduate composition seminar. They were to act as models, demonstrating modulatory techniques à la Schönberg and the setting of text. I had my own model in mind as I wrote them, that excellent musician and singer, Philip Larson.- *W.O.*

## **STRING QUARTET No. 3**

Ogdon's style minimizes external conflicts so that it is never overtly dramatic or melodramatic. Yet it emphasizes the private details of something ordinary turned over and over, lovingly, in his hands. Consider how in the first movement of his *String Quartet No.3* the interweaving *cavatinas* (a "cavatina" is a simple song), scherzos, a trio and a nocturne act essentially as variations on a theme, as if the observer were reflecting the same object from different angles. - *Igor Korneitchouk & Ray Cole*

## Will Ogdon: A Personal Tribute

When invited to interview for a job at UCSD in January 1981, I happily left behind the frost-bitten mid-West for five days in sunny California. Will Ogdon, the chair of the search committee, himself having studied at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota, and having taught at Illinois Wesleyan University, understood both the allure and the deceptive nature of the weather here. I dressed for spring, but when the sun lowered and the afternoon temperature dropped what seemed like 20 degrees, Will had already made provisions for this and offered me his wife's sweater that he'd brought along, just in case. Of course, the Music Department offered much of what I was seeking—brilliant, provocative, and highly engaged musicians, most of them open to one another as well as to what I might bring. But Will's thoughtful gesture of warmth, kindness, and vision spoke just as persuasively of the community I hoped to find at UCSD.

Will Ogdon's music embodies this warmth, along with his honesty, depth of character, and integrity. It includes a chamber opera, *Sappho*, two theater works based on Cocteau, orchestral music, quartets, and woodwind quintets. Yet, in many ways Will was most comfortable with smaller genres—songs, piano pieces, string duos and trios—and works that last a minute or two. No space here for bravura, only tightly conceived and emotionally intense directness, expressed with a minimum of means. In an interview with me in the mid 1980s, he explained, "I'm generally a small form composer. I like to think that's true because I make an equation with learned poets.... I don't believe in large forms. I'm not attracted to the idea of building big machines for something like that." Sonically, in his approach to atonality, one can hear the influence of his teachers, René Leibowitz, a Schoenberg protégé with whom he studied in Paris after the war, and Ernest Krenek, a Viennese professor at Hamline who became Will's life-long friend. Always lyrical, in part from his long collaboration with his wife, Beverly, a soprano who shares these human qualities as well as a taste for D. H. Lawrence, Will's music expresses a very personal and almost conversational approach to musical gestures. Each part, clearly audible, sings just as long as it needs to, before another one enters in response. They diverge, they gently balance and support one another, they come together, but never resulting in the domination of one or the other.

Vision and generosity of spirit have permeated Will's professional life. The first Chair of the Music Department in 1966, he envisioned a community like few others in American universities, mostly characterized at the time by one composer per institution, if that. He and Robert Erickson, its first two professors along with Tom Nee, wanted to build a department that embraced and promoted aesthetic diversity, which meant hiring several composers representing different traditions. He felt that, to encourage individuality in young students, they needed to encounter a wide range of music and to come to grips with these differences with the help of their peers. Will, unlike many music professors, was also very interested in teaching non-majors and wished to get beyond the

typical music appreciation courses, which he called a kind of “spectator-sport” in which “superficiality must be tolerated by both parties.” In an article on the new course he and Erickson co-taught their first year at UCSD, “A New Music Education for Everyman?” *Experiment and Innovation* 1,2 (January 1968): 33-43, Will explained the educational principles underlying Music 1A, “The Nature of Music.” In this course, they challenged “the idea that good education begins with what is known” and believed that “the unfamiliar world of new music would put the student in direct touch with the essential characteristics and processes common to all music.” Quite radical at the time, they saw it as “the a priori necessity that the general student with little or no active experience should participate in the making of music.” Although neither he nor Erickson were performers or improvisers, they considered “improvisation and tape music composition ... as two experiences in participation ... that would not insult intelligence ... and could bypass the ability to read notation and the ability to apply a developed performance technique, that are thought to separate musicians from non-musicians.” They also considered “essential” the “critical experience, formed from a desire to change listening to music from a passive state to an active accomplishment.” By the end of the course that put these ideas into action, with the help of Barney Childs, the students practiced “group improvisation, graduated from controlled to free.” Although its definitions of diversity have expanded beyond merely the aesthetic since I founded the graduate program here in 1991, CSEP (Critical Studies and Experimental Practices in Music) evolved out the educational interests and concerns of Will Ogdon, Bob Erickson, and later John Silber.

At UCSD, Will also put into practice his belief in the importance of nurturing community. In some ways, he identified with Bach, whose identity was linked to the places where he worked. In my mid-1980s interview, Will spoke of putting one’s energy into one’s home base, rather than becoming “traveling salesmen,” devoted to commissions and performances elsewhere. With this orientation together with his spirit of openness and curiosity about the many ways different sounds and musical gestures can interact, Will has written many works for his UCSD colleagues, such as violin and viola duets for Janos Négyesy and his wife Paivikki Nykter and a trio for Jean-Charles François (percussion), Edwin Harkins (trumpet), and Keith Humble (piano). As a teacher of both theory and composition, he also composed music for his students, such as his “Tonal Songs,” not typical for their tonality, but utterly recognizable for their distinctive expressiveness and among his most beautiful music.

Since retiring in 1991, Will Ogdon continued to write music every day. His music composed between 1995-1999 filled an entire CD, produced in 2001. We remain ever grateful for all that Will has given us and inspired in us.

Jann Pasler, 2014



**UC San Diego**  
Division of Arts & Humanities

PRODUCTION CREDITS:

**Päivikki Nykter and Philip Larson, producers**

Antonio C. Estrada, Public Events Manager  
Chelsea Largoza, Audience Services Manager

*Stage crew:*

Thuy Dinh, Iliana Gallaga, Chenyu Wang, and Daniel Barbarita

*Box Office, Front of House Crew:*

Sarah Schwartz, Kimberly Vazquez, and Nhuxuan Ho

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Josef Kucera, Chief Recording Engineer
Brendan Campbell-Craven, Recording Assistant

~~~~~

Trevor Henthorn, Manager of Audio Computing

*Camera operators:*

Alex Perkins, Jason Hawkins and Isaac Valenzuela

**CONTACT US:**

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<http://mail.ucsd.edu/concerts>

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As a matter of courtesy and copyright law, no unauthorized recording or photography is allowed in the hall.  
UC San Diego is a nonsmoking campus.



Will and Beverly Ogdon at his 80th  
Birthday celebration in the East Room of the  
Mandeville Center, UC San Diego



*CD Cover art "Will Ogdon Compositions 1995-1999"  
Computer painting "Opus 131" by: János Négyesy*

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