

Composers of Great Band Works

Brian Harris, McLennan Community College, Waco, Texas
Timothy P. Hoffman, Sylvania (Ohio) Southview High School

John Barnes Chance (1932 - 1972)

Lifeline

Born in Beaumont, Texas (November 20, 1932), the youngest of three children

Age 9 - began piano lessons

Age 14 - became a percussionist at Beaumont High School

Age 18 - awarded a music scholarship to attend the University of Texas at Austin

Age 22 - awarded the B.M. in Theory-Composition; remained at UT as a graduate student.

Age 23 - won a Carl Owens Award for his composition "*Adagio for Clarinet and Strings*"

Age 23 - awarded the M.M. degree in Theory-Composition

Age 24 - began three years of duty in Army service bands as a percussionist and arranger

Age 24 - won a second Carl Owens Award for his graduate thesis, *Symphony in Three Movements for Orchestra*

Age 22 - married Patricia Weaver, a former high school classmate; divorced seven years later

Age 27 - received a Ford Foundation Young Composers Project grant; assigned to the Greensboro, NC public schools

Age 33 - received Ostwald Award from the American Bandmasters Association for *Variations on a Korean Folk Song*

Age 30 - married Linda Vey Riley and became a loving father to her young children, Jeffrey and Kimberly

Age 34 - accepted a music faculty position at the University of Kentucky

Age 37 - promoted to associate professor and appointed head of the UK theory-composition program

Age 39 - while airing a tent in his backyard, a metal support touched the electric fence used to confine his dogs. He died at 12:40 p.m. at Central Baptist Hospital from cardiac arrest (August 16).



Anecdotes and Trivia

- grew up in Beaumont with an older brother and sister
- as a high school senior, his one-movement "Symphony for Orchestra" was premiered by the school orchestra
- somewhat of an introvert in college, he did not have many personal friends
- he did not excel in class work and often did only what was asked of him, if at all
- he frequently would write all night, sleep a few hours, then continue writing again; as a result he often missed classes
- professors were reluctant to give him low grades because his finished assignments showed much talent
- at UT-Austin he studied composition with Clifton Williams, Kent Kennan, and Janet McCaughey; made life-long friends of composers Francis McBeth and Lawrence Weiner.
- served as an arranger for the 4th and 8th United States Army Bands
- while stationed in Seoul, South Korea, he first heard "*Arrirang*," the well-known Korean folk song he later used as the theme for *Variations on a Korean Folk Song*
- was interested in electronics and developed considerable skill at building stereo components from kits
- before and after his residency in Greensboro he worked at a stereo component store in Austin, Texas
- during his time in Greensboro, he wrote numerous works for the high school ensembles including his first piece for band, *Incantation and Dance*
- while working at UK, he collaborated with Martin Mailman and Francis McBeth on a government project designed to bring cultural activity to the mountain children of western Arkansas
- wrote music for a variety of media, including band, orchestra, chorus, and chamber and solo instruments
- after his tragic death, a scholarship fund was established at UK for students majoring in music composition

Works for band: WGOOM; Overture to a Musical Comedy; Incantation and Dance; Burletta; Introduction and Capriccio for Piano and Twenty-Four Winds; Variations on a Korean Folk Song; Blue Lake Overture; Elegy; Concerto for Trumpet and Band; Symphony No. 2 for Winds and Percussion.

Sources

The life and works of John Barnes Chance (graduate thesis by Timothy P. Hoffman, 1981); Program Notes for Band (Norman E. Smith, 2002); obituary (School Musician Director and Teacher, November 1972); correspondence with Joseph Baber (University of Kentucky, 2004)