

# Karen Ann Phillips: Composer, Violist, Pianist and Music Educator

## A Chronology

Compiled by Chris Villars

29 October 1942 Born in Dallas, Texas.

1958 – 1960 Attends Highland Park High School, Dallas. Active on school council and as school orchestra member and organiser. Plays viola and piano.



1961 Attends Eastman School of Music, Rochester, New York.

December 1961 – February 1962 Tours as violist with the Eastman Philharmonia orchestra. The 3 month tour involves 50 concerts in Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Belgium, Sweden, West Germany, West Berlin, Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. During the tour, Karen suffers an appendicitis attack and is hospitalised in Istanbul, but rejoins the orchestra in Warsaw ten days later.

1964 Attends Curtis Institute of Music, Philadelphia.

1964 – 1979 Performs in many public concerts, in the US and abroad, both as solo violist and in ensembles, sometimes also as a pianist.

1966 Attends Juilliard School of Music, New York. Studies viola there with violist, Walter Hans Trampler.

1967 BMus from the Juilliard School.

- 1968 Marries her former teacher, Walter Trampler. The couple later divorce.
- 1970 Meets Morton Feldman in Honolulu at the annual *Festival of the Arts of This Century*, University of Hawaii. He is a guest composer and she is a guest artist as a member of the Juilliard Ensemble.
- 1970 – 1972 Feldman writes five pieces with Karen in mind as solo violist: *The Viola in My Life 1-4* and *Rothko Chapel*. She plays in the premiere of each of these pieces, in London, Rome, New York, Venice and Houston, respectively.
- 1971 “Karen Phillips, Walter Trampler – Viola/Viola d’Amore Duos” LP record released (The Musical Heritage Society, OR 398). Works by Biber, Morley, Bach and Gastoldi.



- 1972 Sponsored by the Sears-Roebuck Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, Karen spends a total of 56 days in Worcester, Massachusetts, as an affiliate artist of the Worcester County Music Association, giving concerts and lecture-demonstrations, and visiting public and private schools.
- 1972 LP recording released of Feldman’s *The Viola in My Life*, pieces 1-3, with Karen as soloist (Composers Recordings Inc, SD 276).



- 1974 Arranges John Cage's *Dream* (for solo piano, 1948) for solo viola or viola ensemble. Arrangement published by Edition Peters (EP6707A)
- 1974 "Karen Phillips – Viola Today" solo LP record released (Finnadar Records, SR 9007). Works by Cage, Berio, Maderna and Bedford.
- 1974 Elizabeth Lutyens composes *Kareniana op.99* for viola and 10 instruments, for Karen Phillips.
- 1975 – 1979 Hosts "Overture to Women": a weekly show on Sunday afternoons on radio WNYC, New York, featuring interviews and performances by women composers, performers and conductors.
- 1976 Composes *String trio* and *Trio: for voice, horn and piano*.
- 1976 LP recording released of Feldman's *Rothko Chapel*, with Karen as soloist (Columbia Odyssey, Y 34138).
- 8 November 1976 Premieres Lutyens' *Kareniana* at McMillan Theater, Columbia University, New York.
- December 1976 Gives a week of master classes, concerts and lecture-demonstrations in Burlington, Vermont, sponsored by the Burlington Friends of Music.



- 1978 Composes *Lake Cayuga: little caprice for violin and piano* and *Sea Bright Beach trio: for piano, cello and viola*.

1979 onwards      Karen's public career ended at the end of the 1970s. Today, she lives in seclusion near Dallas. In an interview in 1976, she said, "If I were to die tomorrow, they would know me as a violist. That's all I've done." As the present chronology shows, her influence and achievements are much more extensive than this modest comment suggests.