

Tanglewood Online Exhibits

Women Composition Students of the Tanglewood Music Center

**A special exhibit
researched and written by
Liv Oster (Harvard
College, Class of 2025)**

Since 1940, the
Tanglewood Music Center
(formerly known as the
Berkshire Music Center)



Aaron Copland sits with a group of students on the lawn outside the Tanglewood Theatre-Concert Hall. Copland was head of the Composition Department from 1940-1961 (with a sabbatical in 1955) and 1963-1965 (with Gunther Schuller as Acting Head in 1964) and a guest faculty member in 1975.
Photographer unknown.

has welcomed talented students for a summer of rigorous musical training. Many alumni of the Tanglewood Music Center (TMC) continue to have strong ties to the Boston Symphony and go on to be prominent contributors to their respective fields. Tanglewood has always held a deep commitment to contemporary music, largely fostering it through the TMC Composition Department. In this exhibit, follow the journeys of just a few of the many women composers who attended the TMC.

Julia Perry

Please do not write in this space. ✓

1948

Berkshire Music Center
SERGE Koussevitzky, Director
at TANGLEWOOD
Between Lenox and Stockbridge, Mass.

APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION

SCHOOL TERM: July 5 to August 15, 1948. Applications must be returned before May 1, 1948. Date:

NAME: Perry, Julia Amanda SEX: Male , Female

PRESENT OR SCHOOL ADDRESS: Westminster Choir College
Princeton, New Jersey

PERMANENT ADDRESS: 326 Berg Street
Akron, Ohio

AGE: 23 DATE OF BIRTH: 3/25/24 PLACE OF BIRTH: Lexington, Ky.

EDUCATION: Schools attended. Location Date of attendance Degrees or Diploma

High School: Akron Central High

College: University of Akron (1 year)

Graduate or professional school:


Music School: Westminster Choir College

Principal Music courses and Instructors in any of the above schools:

REJECTED - MAY 20 1948

ACCEPTED - MAY 20 1948 A-V - Ch. Cand. at T. I. Chorus

WITHHELD - MAY 20 1948 6/30/48



Julia Perry's headshot and the first page of her application for admission to the Tanglewood Music Center's 1948 session.

Although she applied to the Composition Department and found space was unavailable, Perry was accepted to the TMC to hone her skills as a violinist and singer. Despite the letdown, she continued to convey optimism; orchestral playing, after all, would augment her composition in its own ways. Unfortunately, however, unforeseen financial constraints prevented her from attending.

1949

I applied for the composition and this year and last year. Because the deadline for submitting scores was May 1st, I was unable to send any. At that time I was recopying my orchestral scores in ink. I should greatly appreciate it, for my heart is set on it. I know Tanglewood is the musician's utopia and the inspiration and ^{musical} development derived would be wonderful for one aspiring to be a "musician".
This year has been my first teaching experience, having graduated last year from Westminster Choir College, Princeton, N.J. I also awarded a scholar-

Letter from Julia Perry to TMC as part of her application to the 1949 session.

Still persistent, Perry applied to the TMC again the following year. In her letter of interest, she wrote a fine testimony to the promise of Tanglewood as a "musician's utopia." Her application was ultimately accepted, but there was a catch. Instead of composition, she would study voice. Happily, she accepted. A well-trained singer who would continue her studies at the famed Curtis Institute of Music, many of Perry's compositions featured either vocal soloists or a chorus.

1951

Wenksire
Tanglewood - Lenox, Mass

Dear Sirs:
Please find enclosed -
1. Trio sonata - Flute, Clar. Bassoon
2. STABAT MATER - contralto + string
3. Toccata - organ
4. Song cycle - Part, Present + Future
- three Wainings

5. Dramatic cantata
6. Secular cantata - Chicago

From 1949 to May '51 I have
... to these a

A letter accompanying scores submitted as part of Julia Perry's application to the 1951 session of the TMC.

With her third and final application, Perry was finally accepted to study composition with the Italian serialist Luigi Dallapiccola. Their pedagogical relationship would continue even after the summer of 1951 with Perry's time in Florence, Italy. There, her prolific compositional output was already apparent. Especially notable was her *Stabat Mater*, which would be performed that summer at Tanglewood's Chamber Music Hall, featuring the composer as soloist. The piece endures as one of her most well-known works.

After attending the TMC, Perry continued to compose prolifically in numerous forms, earned two Guggenheim Fellowships, and taught throughout the United States. Despite poor health and partial paralysis from stroke, she continued to compose. Sadly, she died prematurely at age 55, leaving much of her work unarchived and thus lost to the public.

Thea
Musgrave

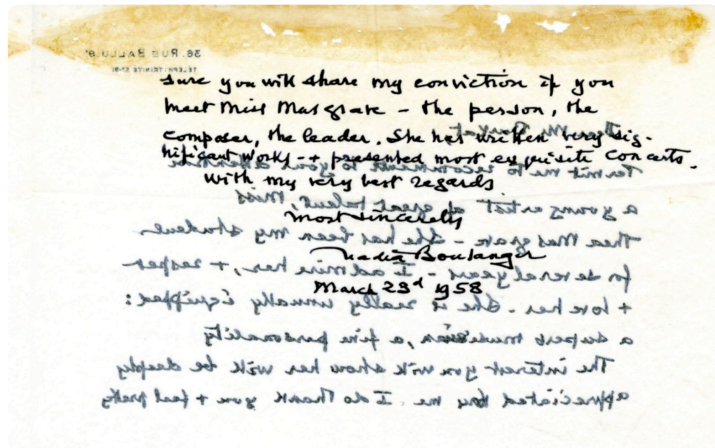
February 1958

Feb 19 1958 FEB 24 1958
Dear Mr. Burkart
I am very much hoping to be able to arrange a visit to the USA this summer & to have the opportunity of taking music courses in composition & conducting & seeing something of the musical life of the U.S.A.
I have heard of Tanglewood from several people and I would be very interested to see a brochure & to know if there were still any vacancies.
Unfortunately I couldn't possibly afford to pay both of fare & the fees and I wonder if there are any scholarships available.
I have written on the back of this, the most

Letter from Thea Musgrave to the Tanglewood Music Center as part of her application for the 1958 session.

Hailing from London, Thea Musgrave was eager to explore the musical life of America. Early in the application process, she requested further information about the TMC, which she had already heard much about. In addition to a past summer's brochure and an overview of the TMC's generous scholarship policy, the response recommended that Musgrave indicate a preference for the Composition Department.


March 1958



Nadia Boulanger's recommendation letter for Thea Musgrave, submitted as part of Musgrave's application for the 1958 session.

Studying privately with Nadia Boulanger (who also taught Julia Perry), Musgrave's education in composition was illustrious even before the TMC. The French native Nadia Boulanger easily ranks among the most influential teachers in music, training artists from TMC faculty Aaron Copland to Jean Françaix, Elliott Carter, and Virgil Thomson, to name a few.

April 1958



Sixteenth Session - 1958
June 30 to August 10
Berkshire Music Center
CHARLES MUNCH, Director
AARON COPLAND, Chairman of the Faculty
AT TANGLEWOOD
Between Lenox and Stockbridge, Massachusetts
APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION
Date: March 16, 1958

DEPT. III Composition
Div. Mr. Copland
Auditioned
Accepted
Registered
TRSE 206497 SPECIAL
\$18.00

(Please do not write in spaces above)

Form No. 1 NAME: MUSGRAVE, Thea
Last First Middle
PRESENT OR SCHOOL ADDRESS:
Until: _____
Month Date City State
PERMANENT ADDRESS: 80 Ladbroke Road, London W.11, England
AGE: 29 DATE OF BIRTH: 27 May, 1928 SEX: Male Female

The schedule of each Department (and in some cases of a division within a Department) is planned as a full-time activity. Students ordinarily may not have active status in more than one division.
Applicants for some Departments may be asked to attend auditions during the Spring of 1958
PLEASE CHECK THE DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR WHICH YOU WISH TO APPLY, GIVE INSTRUMENT AND VOICE:


<input type="checkbox"/> Instrumental Music (Auditions)	<input type="checkbox"/> Choral Music Choral Conducting:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Composition	<input type="checkbox"/> Opera Opera dramatics:	<input type="checkbox"/> Tanglewood Study Group Active, <input type="checkbox"/> Auditor
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First page and headshot of Thea Musgrave's application to the Tanglewood Music Center's 1958 session.

Musgrave was accepted into the studio of Aaron Copland. While at the TMC, her Sonata No. 2 for piano was performed.

Musgrave continued to write, establishing herself as one of the world's most well-respected contemporary composers. Her talent also extended to conducting; she has led numerous performances of her own works. The Boston Symphony has performed her compositions on several occasions, most recently playing *Space Play* at Tanglewood in 2019.

Shulamit Ran

• May 5, 
1963

Shulamit Ran's letter to Richard Burgin, BSO Concertmaster, asking for assistance applying to the TMC's 1963 session and obtaining a copy of the piano part to Hindemith's *Kammermusik No. 2*.

During her studies at the Mannes College of Music in Manhattan, the Israeli composer Shulamit Ran was encouraged by Richard Burgin, former Concertmaster and Assistant Conductor of the Boston Symphony and Head of Instrumental Music at the TMC, to apply to the festival. She planned to study both chamber music and composition.

• May 
21,
1963

The first page, including headshot, of Shulamit Ran's application to the TMC's 1963 session.

Ran was accepted to the chamber music department of the TMC as a pianist. She was also allowed to attend composition seminars, with an apparent culmination of her work being a performance of her own Sonata for Piano: Adagio moderato at Tanglewood's Chamber Music Hall.

In the years following her time at the TMC, Ran gravitated towards composition, winning some of the field's most prestigious awards including a Pulitzer Prize, two Guggenheim Fellowships, and a grant from the Koussevitzky Foundation at the Library of Congress, to list only a few. She is currently a professor emerita at the University of Chicago and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Her most recent performance with the Boston Symphony was of her work *Lyre of Orpheus* in 2021 at Jordan Hall featuring the Boston Symphony Chamber Players.

Judith Weir

• March
1975

Aaron Copland recommended Judith Weir to be accepted to the 1975 session of the Tanglewood Music Center.

As the duly respected composer and former Head of Composition at the TMC, Aaron Copland's personal recommendation for Judith Weir immediately brought her to the top of the composition department's attention. Evidently, she had already found great success in her native United Kingdom.

• May
1975


First page of Judith Weir's application to the 1975 session of the Tanglewood Music Center.

Weir was accepted to the composition department to study with Gunther Schuller, the Artistic Director of the TMC from 1969-1984. Her work for two violins, two violas, cello, and contrabass, entitled *Italian Doubles*, was performed at Tanglewood's Theatre-Concert Hall. Notably, the contrabass player for this concert was Edwin Barker, current principal bass of the Boston Symphony, and the first violist was Patricia McCarthy, former associate principal viola of the BSO.

Weir went on to be a renowned composer, receiving commissions from the world's most prominent orchestras, including the Boston Symphony, for her works *Music Untangled* and *Natural History*. Her honors have included a Critics' Circle Award, an Ivor Novello and Elise L. Stoeger award, and The Queen's Medal of Music, among others. She

also serves in the royal post of the Master of the Queen's Music. Her work has been performed at the BSO numerous times, the most recent being *Ardnamurchan Point*, for Piano Duo in the 2021 Tanglewood season.

Marti
Epstein

• February 
11, 1986

Betsy Jolas recommends Marti Epstein to the Tanglewood Music Center for their 1986 session.

Betsy Jolas, the acclaimed French-American composer and former TMC Composition faculty member, wrote a compelling letter of recommendation for Marti Epstein while alluding to the enriching experience of a summer at Tanglewood. The “economy” she mentioned is a feature one can still discern in Epstein’s most recent works.

- April 23, 1986

Letter accepting Marti Epstein to the 1986 session of the Tanglewood Music Center.

Epstein was accepted to the TMC Composition program to study with TMC alumnus Oliver Knussen, who also had a longstanding relationship with the Boston Symphony. As promised, she could have one piece performed during her Fellowship and chose *Snow* for violin, viola, cello, double bass, vibraphone, and tenor, conducted by Knussen.

- January 1988

List of works by Marti Epstein, submitted as part

of her application to the 1988 session of the Tanglewood Music Center.

Continuing to work diligently in the year after her first summer at Tanglewood, Epstein applied to the TMC once again. 1987 saw many performances of her work at her alma mater, Boston University.

Epstein was accepted for her second summer at the TMC, now to work with both Oliver Knussen and Hans Werner Henze, a prolific German composer and former composition professor at the Royal Conservatory of Music. Her work *Kinderfarben* was performed in the Theatre-Concert Hall.

Following her fellowships at the TMC, Epstein continued to play an integral role in the Boston music scene and beyond. Her work has been played by ensembles around the globe, including the San Francisco Symphony, Radio Symphony Orchestra of Frankfurt, and the Wind Ensemble at the Boston Conservatory, where she is also a professor. In 2020 she won a Guggenheim Fellowship. Her relationship with the Boston Symphony included a performance of her work *Komorebi*, which was

recorded for BSO NOW and later
performed in Jordan Hall by the
Boston Symphony Chamber Players
(in the same concert as Shulamit Ran's
Lyre of Orpheus!).

Augusta
Read
Thomas

• August 
1989

Program for August 13, 1989 performance of
Augusta Read Thomas' *echos*.

Studying with Oliver Knussen, Augusta
Read Thomas was invited to the TMC
Composition Fellowship, where she
premiered her work *echos* for soprano,
mezzo-soprano, and chamber
ensemble in the Theatre-Concert Hall.

A list of faculty from the 2003 session of the Tanglewood Music Center, with Augusta Read Thomas included among the composition faculty.

Thomas returned to the TMC, but this time as a faculty member. In the time between her Fellowship and appointment, she worked with conductors Pierre Boulez and Daniel Barenboim as the Chicago Symphony's Mead Composer-in-Residence and would serve in that capacity until 2006, while also winning numerous prizes and grants from the Koussevitzky Foundation Commission, National Endowment for the Arts, and a Grammy Award (for her work featured on an album by Chanticleer). She would return to the TMC to teach for several more seasons.

A letter to the audience of the 2009 Festival of Contemporary Music by Festival Director Augusta Read Thomas.

In addition to her position on the composition faculty, Thomas served as the Director of Tanglewood's 2009 Festival of Contemporary Music. The notes above articulate her process, goals, and philosophy while curating the season's program.


Thomas has continued to play an active role at the Boston Symphony and in the larger musical community. In January of 2022, her work *Dance Foldings* received its American premiere in Symphony Hall. The BSO has also performed many of her other compositions both in Boston and at Tanglewood on several occasions. She is a professor of composition at the University of Chicago, where she also founded and leads the Chicago Center for Contemporary Composition. Her accolades are numerous and include being a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in

Music in 2007 and being elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Her works have been performed with some of the most well-regarded symphonies in the world, including the Berlin Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, London Symphony, and New York Philharmonic.

On August 6, 2022, TMC Fellows will premiere a new work by Thomas in Ozawa Hall as part of the Festival of Contemporary Music.


[Get Tickets to the Performance](#)

Shih-Hui
Chen

- **January** 
1996

Shih-Hui Chen's bio, submitted as part of her application to the 1996 session of the Tanglewood Music Center.

As part of her application to the TMC, Shih-Hui Chen demonstrated her illustrious, nascent career. As she noted, she spent her formative years in Taiwan and later moved to the United States to pursue further studies in western classical music. She highlighted her participation in the Underground Composers collective, a group founded and led by Marti Epstein.

- **April 8,** 
1996

First page of Shih-Hui Chen's application to the 1996 session of the TMC.

Chen was invited to participate as a TMC Fellow in the Composition Department. That summer, two of her works would be performed at Seiji Ozawa Hall: *66 Times; the Voice of Pines and Cedars*, and the first movement of her Sonata for Violin.

Since her summer at Tanglewood, Chen has achieved great success, receiving fellowships from the Guggenheim Institute, American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Harvard/Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies, as well as an award from the American Academy in Rome. Having researched music from her native Taiwan, Chen's compositions combine both Asian and Western influences. Her work has been performed widely by several major orchestras. Expanding performance opportunities for new music, she founded the festival 21C: Classical, Contemporary, and Cross-Cultural Asian Music at Rice University, where she is also a professor, in order to promote exchange between Asia and the United States.

Helen Grime

• 2008 ○

TMC alumna Helen Grime takes a bow after the BSO performs her work *Limina* in Symphony Hall on February 27, 2020. *Photograph by Hilary Scott.*

In 2008, Scottish composer Helen Grime was accepted to the TMC. Her teachers that summer included John Harbison, Michael Gandolfi, Augusta Read Thomas, and Shulamit Ran, the last three of whom are TMC alumni themselves. Grime's following works were performed that summer: *In the Mist, Into the Faded Air, Spin, Half Inch of Blue Sky, A (8 Miniatures)*,

Moto, and *Night City*. Several of these were written as part of the TMC faculty's duo writing assignment (see Grime's panel discussion below for an explanation in her own words).

Although Grime is the youngest composer featured in this exhibit, her talent has been widely recognized. She has received commissions from the TMC, London Symphony Orchestra, and BBC Scottish Symphony, among several others. In addition to being a professor at the Royal Academy of Music, she was named the Composer in Residence at Wigmore Hall in 2016.

The BSO will premiere her trumpet concerto *night-sky-blue* with Håkan Hardenberger this summer at Tanglewood on July 10 at the Koussevitzky Music Shed.

[Get Tickets to the Performance](#)

TMC Alumnae Take the Stage

In the 2015 Tanglewood season, both Shulamit Ran and Helen Grime were commissioned, their works premiered in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the TMC.

In a panel with the other commissioned and premiered composers at the TMC that summer, Helen Grime discussed how her work *Embrace* was influenced by her time as a Fellow.

■ Listen: Helen
Grimes on Her
Work *Embrace*

0:00 / 0:00

Listen: Excerpt
of World
Premiere of
Helen Grimes'
Embrace

0:00 / 0:00

In the same panel, Shulamit Ran contextualized her piece *Birkat Haderekh (Blessing for the Road)*, connecting it to the journey she has sensed at Tanglewood.

Listen: Excerpt
from World
Premiere of
Shulamit Ran's
Birkat Haderekh

0:00 / 0:00

Festival of Contemporary
Music, TMC 75th Anniversary
and Commissions

The 2015 Festival of Contemporary Music celebrated 75 years of the Tanglewood Music Center with several commissioned works, including ones by alumnae Helen Grime and Shulamit Ran.

World premiere of *Embrace* for clarinet and trumpet by Helen Grime, performed on July 24, 2015, as part of the Festival of Contemporary Music and commissioned to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Tanglewood Music Center. *Photograph by Hilary Scott.*

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