



## **CLARA THOMAS ARCHIVES**

**Inventory of the  
James Tenney fonds**

**Inventory #F0428**

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## F0428 - James Tenney fonds

**Fonds/Collection Number:** F0428

**Title:** James Tenney fonds

**Dates:** 1946-2000, predominant 1953-2000

**Extent:** 4.64 m of textual records  
1 audio cassette  
208 audio reels  
7 photographs

**Biographical Sketch/  
Administrative History:** James Tenney (1934-2006), composer and educator, was born in Silver City, New Mexico and grew up in Arizona and Colorado where he received his early training as a composer and pianist. He educated at the University of Denver, the Juilliard School of Music and Bennington College where he received his BA in 1958. He received an MMus from the University of Illinois in 1961. His teachers included Chou Wen-chung, Kenneth Gaburo, Lejaren Hiller, Lionel Nowak, Carl Ruggles, Edward Steuermann and Edgard Varese. As a performer, he was the co-founder and conductor of the Tone Roads Chamber Ensemble in New York City from 1963-1970 and has performed with the ensembles of John Cage, Philip Glass, Harry Partch and Steve Reich, among others. He has long been interested in the field of computer and electronic music and, as such, worked with Max Matthew and others at the Bell Telephone Laboratories in the early 1960s to develop programs for computer sound-generation and composition. He is the author of numerous articles on musical acoustics, computer music, musical form and musical perception and is the author of "META-HODOS : a phenomenology of 20th century musical materials and an approach to the study of form," (1964, 1988), and "A history of consonance and dissonance," (1988). He taught in the Music Department at York University in Toronto, ON from 1976 until 2000 after teaching New School for Social Research, the California Institute for the Arts and other American schools. Tenney is a modern composer of orchestral, chamber, vocal, piano and electroacoustic music with over fifty works completed including "Quintext : five textures for string quartet and bass," "Sonata for ten wind instruments," and "Clang for orchestra." He has collaborated with Carolee Schneemann and Stan Brakhage on film projects and is an expert on the music of Conlon Nanarrow. He has also been commissioned by several organizations for compositions, has released several recordings of his compositions and arrangements and published numerous scores. Up to the time of his death on 24 August 2006, he was the Roy E. Disney Family Chair in Music in the School of Music at the California Institute of the Arts.

**Scope and Content:** Fonds consists of material that documents Tenney's career as an composer, musician and academic and contains personal and professional correspondence with friends and colleagues including copies of letters received from such people as Carolee Schneeman, Steve Reich, Stan Brakhage and Lionel Nowak, among others, as well as correspondence with Bell Telephone Laboratories that documents his efforts in developing programs for computer sound-generation. It also contains records in the form of musical scores, computer outputs, programmes, clippings and sound recordings that document his musical output and material that documents Tenney's ongoing academic and professional interest in the fields of composition, music theory and electronic music, among others. There is also correspondence, photographs and other material that documents his relationship with his famil and, in particular, his father. The fonds has been arranged into the following series:

S00329	Correspondence files
S00330	Musical scores
S00331	Musical performance files
S00332	Research and writing files

**Restrictions on  
Access and Use:** No restrictions on access.

**Finding Aid:** File lists available.

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**URL of Finding Aid:** <http://archivesfa.library.yorku.ca/fonds/ON00370-f0000428.htm>

**Accruals:** The fonds comprises the following accessions: 1978-018, 1998-038, 2000-045, 2006-047, 2010-050. Further accruals may be expected.

**Related Records:** Related material may be found in The Music Gallery fonds (F0119).

**Immediate source of acquisition:** Donated by James Tenney in 1978, 1998 and 2000 and by Roma Carlisle in 2006, and by the Tenney Estate in 2010.

**Provenance Access Points:** Tenney, James, 1934-

Date of creation: 2002/04/08

Date of last revision: 2013/06/25