



## IN MEMORIAM

Joseph Kerman  
Professor of Music, Emeritus  
UC Berkeley  
1924-2014

Joseph Kerman was one of the giants in the discipline of musicology and an influential music critic. He constantly challenged conventional musicological assumptions across his more than half-century career in an attempt to stimulate more profound academic discussion about music in the discipline. Even though he retired in 1994 after 43 years on the UC Berkeley faculty, he remained active in musicological circles for many years thereafter.

Born in London to an American journalist, Joseph Wilfred Zukerman changed his name to Kerman because, as he was wont to say, he was tired of being at the end of the alphabet. After studying at University College School in London he came to America and graduated from [New York University](#) in 1943 with a BA in physics. Kerman served in the U.S. Navy after his graduation and upon his discharge from the service married Vivian Shaviro on September 14, 1945. Deciding that he was more interested in music than in physics, he attended [Princeton University](#), where he studied under [Oliver Strunk](#), [Randall Thompson](#), and [Carl Weinrich](#). He was greatly influenced by Strunk and by Donald “Francis” Tovey. He became Princeton’s first PhD in music in 1950 with a doctoral thesis on the Elizabethan [madrigal](#).

From 1949 to 1951 he taught at Westminster Choir College in Princeton. In 1951 Kerman was hired by Manfred Bukofzer to join the faculty of the [University of California, Berkeley](#). Bukofzer, professor on the Berkeley music faculty from 1941 until his premature death in 1955, was another important influence on him. Kerman became a full professor in 1960 and was chairman of the music department from 1960 to 1963. In 1971, he was appointed Heather Professor of Music at [Oxford University](#), a post he held until 1974, when he decided to return to Berkeley. He again became chairman of the Music Department from 1991 until 1993. As his daughter Lucy remarked, “He felt very connected to Cal.”

Kerman’s first book, *Opera as Drama* (University of California Press, 1952), was based on a series of essays he had written for [The Hudson Review](#) beginning in 1948. Published in several languages and multiple editions, it articulates his idea that “music is the most important of the various means that join in opera, and that no thoughtful analysis of operatic dramaturgy can exist without recognizing this priority and analyzing its operation.” He published his doctoral thesis as *The Elizabethan Madrigals* (American Musicological Society) in 1962 and contextualized them in the preceding Italian madrigal tradition. Ever after he retained an abiding love for the English composer of madrigals, motets, Masses, and more, [William Byrd](#), and wrote several influential essays and monographs on his compositions including *The Masses and Motets of William Byrd* (Faber and Faber, 1980). Starting in the 1960s, with *The Beethoven Quartets* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1966), he also devoted himself to [Beethoven](#) and his works. In 1985 he published *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology* (Harvard University Press) in which he criticized musical theorists and musicologists for their intellectual isolation, their excessively

positivistic approach, and their inability or unwillingness to develop a serious musical criticism. The book was described by his late Berkeley colleague, musicologist Philip Brett, as "a defining moment in the field," one that helped shape a "[new musicology](#)," willing to engage with [feminist theory](#), [hermeneutics](#), [queer studies](#), and [post-structuralism](#). In 2005 Kerman published another major work, *The Art of Fugue: Bach Fugues for Keyboard, 1715-1750* (University of California Press), that includes a CD on which both Davitt Moroney and Karen Rosenak performed at his Memorial in October 2014.

Kerman published numerous other books and articles. In addition to his own extensive writings on European classical music, he had an intellectual partner in his wife, Vivian, with whom he wrote the widely adopted textbook, *Listen* (Worth Publishers), first published in 1972 and now in its 7th edition, co-authored by Gary Tomlinson. From 1977, almost until his death, Kerman had been a regular contributor to [The New York Review of Books](#) and in 1977 he became a founding editor of the journal [19th-Century Music](#). His critical essays written between the late 1950s to the early 1990s were published in 1994 in *Write All These Down* (University of California Press), the title a phrase in one of William Byrd's songs.

Joseph Kerman held many honors among his most cherished being tapped to give the Faculty Research Lecture at UC Berkeley, the highest peer accolade for a Berkeley scholar. He was elected Honorary Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in 1972, a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1973, and a Fellow of the American Philosophical Society in 2001. He was the recipient of ASCAP's Deems Taylor Award in 1981 and 1995 for excellence in writing on music, and the American Musicological Society's Otto Kinkeldey Award in 1970 and 1981 for outstanding musicological works. In 2009, in conjunction with the OPUS campaign, the Board of Directors of the American Musicological Society established the Joseph Kerman Fund "to honor one of the most brilliant essayists of the Society's first seventy-five years."

Joseph Kerman's influence was felt not only in his scholarly and critical writings but also as a teacher and mentor to generations of students at the University of California, Berkeley. Many of them grace the faculty of music departments in the United States and abroad.

Joe had myriad other interests, as well, which he shared with Vivian, his wife of nearly 62 years, a woman her children referred to as a "triple threat"-- wife, mother, and public intellectual-- and who Joe once described as his constant, supportive, stubborn, incisive critic. Joe and Vivian designed and built an extraordinary and gracious garden, which they loved, and kept a home that welcomed and pampered all. Together they hosted opera singalongs, elegant dinners, and dance parties at which Joe played jazz piano, enjoyed gardening, dog shows, and shared political intrigue. Lifelong Democrats, election eves were always a major food and libation event at the Kermans' house.

Joseph Kerman was preceded in death by his son Jonathan (d. 1993) and his wife Vivian (d. 2007). He is survived by his brother, the noted bassoonist George Zukerman, his son Peter Kerman, his daughter Lucy Kerman, and five grandchildren: Anthony Kerman, Anna Sophia Kerman Greenberg, David Tomlinson, Laura Tomlinson, and Julia Kerman Tomlinson.

Bonnie Wade