

The great American composer Charles Wuorinen passed away in February, 2020. I was privileged to be his colleague and friend, and he visited my festivals in Buffalo often from 1985 through 2018, when he last appeared to receive an honorary Doctor of Letters awarded by the entirety of the SUNY system, and to be honored by a concert of his music.

As well, he visited Buffalo as guest Professor for several semesters in the early to mid-1990's. When Feldman was in the process of passing away in the later 1980's, I asked him who he thought I should hire to replace him – he gave me two names, Wuorinen, and Ferneyhough. We invited Charles to teach here for extended periods. During those semesters, Charles and I had martini-filled dinners most weeks and inspired conversation allowed me to get to know him well.

It would be impossible to characterize Charles in a few short words. He was, in fact, the only true genius I've been around for extended periods of time. With that came an incredible intellectual brilliance, a savage and hilarious wit, and great generosity and, warmth.

His passing is representative of the closing of an epoch. Charles articulated and insisted upon the highest standards within the profession of composition, and for the performance of new work.

I felt it personally important to mark the passing of this great artist and to offer my short composition as a cenotaph of sorts. The work is simply a short series of cloud-like sound formations; evanescent, non-solid, floating sonorities that appear and disappear, one after another, as images, or breaths in a dream, or meditation. The highest register, that of spirit here, eventually reveals a short melodic fragment repeated once, as an object, like a name, for memory's sake...