



Kinetic Conversations

Keith Humble
Bert Turetzky

Keith Humble

Composer, pianist, conductor and educator, Keith Humble was born in Geelong, Victoria, Australia in 1927.

From an early age he won many awards in Australia. A Royal Schools Scholarship, together with funds collected by his local Northcote community, enabled him to travel to Britain in late 1949 to study at the Royal Academy of Music, London. A more substantive period of education followed in Paris from the early 1950s, studying both piano with Cortot and composition and conducting with the distinguished composer and conductor René Leibowitz, whose assistant he became on many recording and teaching projects.

Humble returned to Australia in 1956, but became so discouraged by the lack of interest in contemporary music that he remained in Australia for only one year before returning to Paris. He founded and directed the Centre de Musique from 1960, a collective of performers and composers which created a lively and alternative performance environment in Paris, at the American Center for Students and Artists. His work at the CDM developed and flourished until he returned to Australia in 1966.



After several years teaching at the University of Melbourne, where he re-invigorated the Grainger Museum as a site for electronic music and other contemporary activities, he was appointed Foundation Professor of Music at La

Trobe University in 1974. Here he was able to make contemporary music the central premise of study and activity, with technology and improvisation as focal points in the first year of the course, and electronic music placed on an equal footing with more traditional forms of composition, theory and historical repertoire.

Humble helped to found the Australian Contemporary Music Ensemble (ACME) in 1975, with the purpose of promoting contemporary music and encouraging and performing the work of young Australian composers.

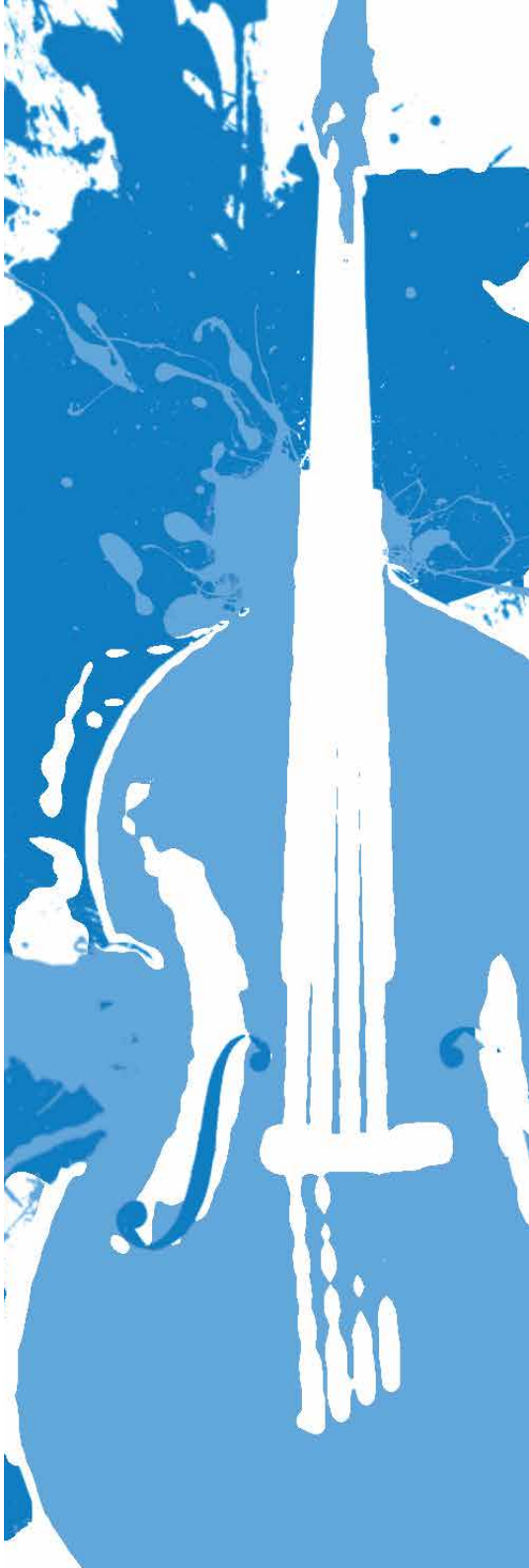
An outstanding pianist and conductor, he made regular tours of Europe and the USA, and was frequently a guest lecturer at American universities. He maintained a special relationship with the University of California, San Diego, where he became a regular visitor as Regents' Professor. The periods of time he spent at UCSD between 1982 and 1986 saw him engaged in computer-assisted experimental and

intuitive music research as part of the ensemble KIVA, in conjunction with Professors Jean-Charles Francois and John Silber. It was there that he began a long performance association with Bert Turetzky.

In establishing the Centre de Musique in Paris 1959. His interest in electronic music grew. One of his most important works from the 1960s was *Music for Monuments* for prepared tapes featuring a collage of sounds and a solo bassoon part incorporating elements of randomness. An interest in improvisation went back further still, as his historian John Whiteoak has written: "*Keith held a lifelong conviction that a continuum of practice exists between improvisation and composition, and this was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that he was a jazz musician in the 1940s.*"

In 1982 Humble was awarded the Order of Australia (AM) for his services to music, and in 1989 he retired from La Trobe University. He continued to compose and his last orchestral work, *A Symphony of Sorrows* (1993) demonstrates his increasingly expressive musical language.

Keith Humble died on 23 May 1995. His activities for ISCM, the ACME, his conducting of ABC and Conservatorium groups and contemporary ensembles, his membership of the Music Committees of the Australia Council for the Arts and his own personal championing of new music, as a composer, educator and brilliant pianist, have together had a marked effect on Australia's musical climate.



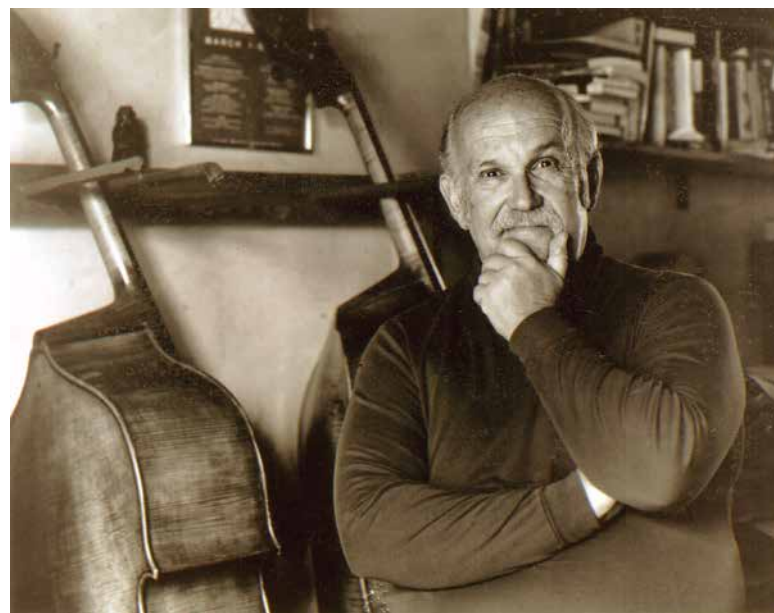
Bertram Turetzky

Since the end of World War II, the double bass (contrabass) has emerged from its traditional orchestral role to assume the position of an important solo instrument. This marked rise in interest in the contrabass can be traced to its importance in jazz and the development of new performance techniques. Bertram Turetzky has been a key figure in the renaissance of the contrabass and since 1955 more than 300 new works have been written for, performed by and recorded by him, making him the most frequently recorded contrabass soloist in America. In fact, Bertram Turetzky is one of the few performers, in all of music history to have single-handedly created a large and impressive repertoire of music for his instrument.

Turetzky was born on 14 February 1933 in Norwich, Connecticut, USA, and grew up there. He received a masters degree in music history from the University of Hartford. Turetzky's concert career includes a multitude of role performances at concerts and festivals in music centres of the world: New York, London, Paris, Warsaw, Los Angeles, Stockholm, and Berlin. Bernard Jacobson of the Chicago Daily News described Turetzky as "a virtuoso of caliber unsurpassed by any other practitioner of

his instrument today". Turetzky continues to play classic jazz, and appears regularly at jazz festivals.

In addition, he is the author of *The Contemporary Contrabass* (1974, 1989), a monograph that looks at a number of new and interesting techniques of playing the double bass including featuring it as a solo performance vehicle with no other instrumental accompaniment.



On the basis of this now classic book, Turetzky was named co-editor of the prestigious series *The New Instrumentation*, published by the University of California Press. Bertram Turetzky is professor of music at the University of California, San Diego, where he spends a major part of each year in residence.



"Performance lay at the deepest level of Keith Humble's musicality and was integrated with all other facets of his creativity. His charged piano playing pointed to compositional processes; his fluid conducting injected a contemporary score with the sense of being an event."

John McCaughey

"Despite his international profile he saw himself as a community musician and believed passionately in the musical empowerment of local communities and youth."

Dr John Whiteoak, 2006

"Keith's solidarity remained always with the small. For him the world was a global cultural village, with no privileged space, a place to be ploughed creatively on an everyday basis by the largest number of participants possible, doing their own thing. This I will qualify with a motto: The boldness of humbleness."

Jean-Charles Francois, Perspectives of New Music, 1995

"Humble's way of entering our sound universe was extraordinary. Instead of imposing personality, he was able to gently take the sound information he heard and to transform it through subtle reinforcement of some of its aspects."

Jean-Charles François

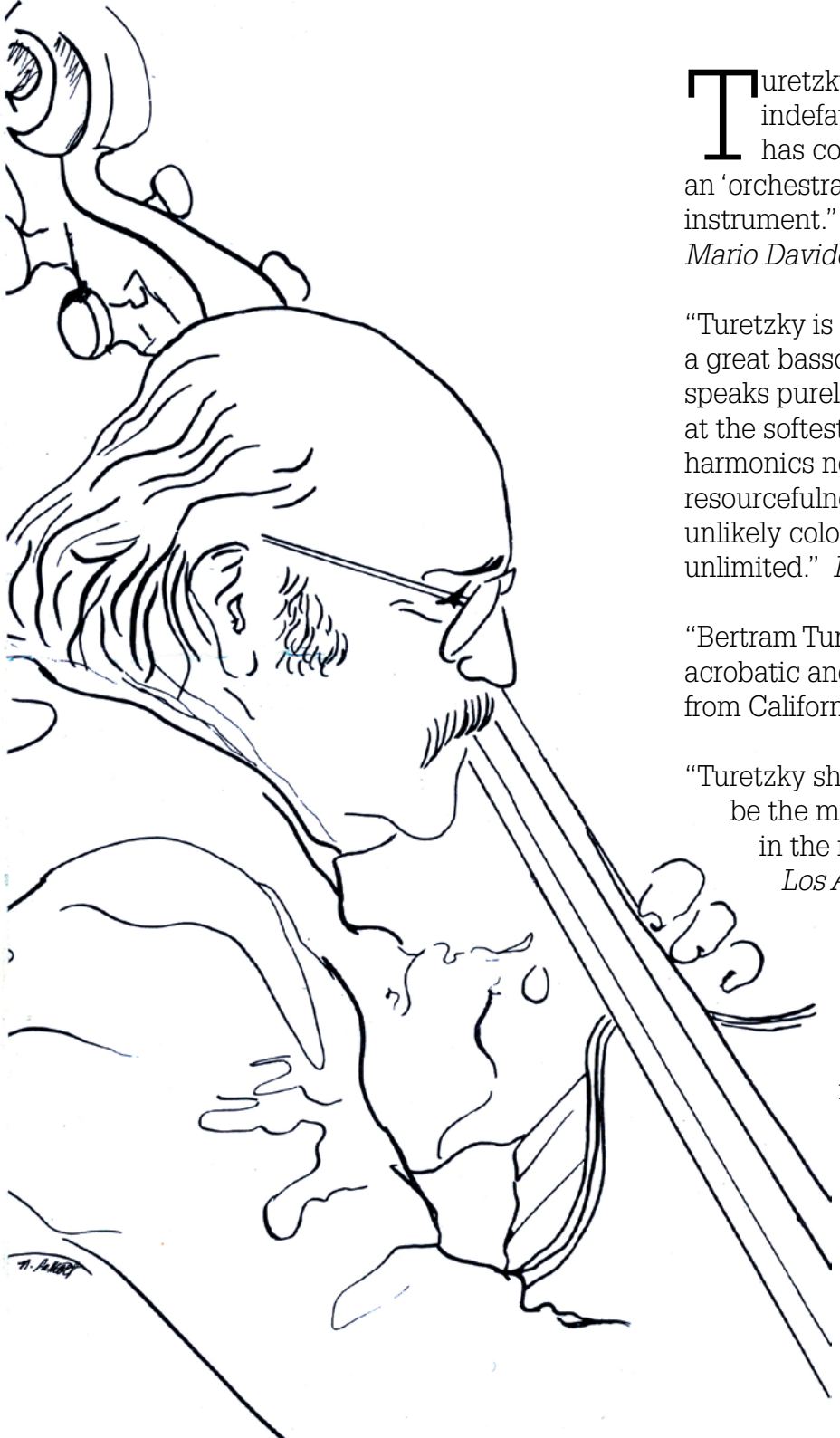
For Keith, life was music, as music was life. In a world where everything is possible, each day was a new adventure - a special treat - an exciting discovery. Each day was awaited with childlike anticipation and wonder. His joy of living was contagious and touched so many of us whose paths he crossed."

Jill Humble, July 1995

"That I owe everything to my predecessors should be evident - let me name: Leibowitz, the second Viennese school, Bartok, Liszt and Schubert."

Keith Humble, March 1995





Turetzky single-handedly, with his indefatigable energies and expertise, has converted the contrabasso from an 'orchestral' instrument into a major solo instrument."

Mario Davidovsky

"Turetzky is a stunning executant, like a great basso cantante, his double bass speaks purely and with the easy resonance at the softest dynamic levels. Even his harmonics never sound gritty. And the resourcefulness with which he strives for unlikely colors and textures seems virtually unlimited." *New York Times*

"Bertram Turetzky – the articulate, acrobatic and fanatically musical superman from California." *Berlin Morgenpost*

"Turetzky showed that the double bass can be the most compelling of instruments in the right hands." *Colin Gardner, Los Angeles Times*

"Over the years I have had the great pleasure of both listening to and performing with Bert Turetzky. The first thing that strikes one on hearing him 'live' is the remarkably big, rich and intensely musical sound he gets from his instrument. I thought, mistakenly, that he must have been amplified! Not

so. He simply understood the art of sound. Live and on recordings his depth of tone and colour is extraordinary. Every note is filled with purpose and his phrasing with compositional flow. A truly masterful musician for all ages."

Tony Gould

Finally, through the energy, time and deep care of Jill Humble, we can hear a collection of some of the most extraordinary musical improvisations ever recorded.

The reputations of Keith Humble and Bert Turetzky go way beyond their status as virtuosos. What we hear in this collection — taken from various recorded performances over the years — are two artists with uncommon empathy for one another, who invariably injected high energy and spirit into their music-making. Their spontaneity and sense of form and space makes this music timeless.

It is no wonder that among their many other activities in music over many years both gained international reputations as pioneers of new music.

- 1** We know Webern 3'58"
- 2** Extremes 4'24"
- 3** Where to? 2'37"
- 4** Wait 3'51"
- 5** Slide 4'48"
- 6** Quiet 3'02"
- 7** Space 3'33"
- 8** The meeting 6'00"
- 9** One note slap 4'21"
- 10** Dark 4'49"
- 11** A little groove 2'22"
- 12** Histoire dance 1'16"
- 13** The sound of bass 5'08"

Recorded in the Mandeville Auditorium, University of California, San Diego, on 19 March 1986

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Thanks to Tony Gould, Jill Humble and John McCaughey for their invaluable help in making this release a reality

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