

Dennis Johnson, 80, Creator of a Rediscovered Minimalist Score, Dies

By **Allan Kozinn**

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Dennis Johnson, a composer who in 1959 wrote a trailblazing Minimalist work, a six-hour piano meditation of repeated notes and long pauses that went unheard for 50 years before being rediscovered, died on Dec. 20 in Morgan Hill, Calif. He was 80.

His half brother, Don Wilson, said the cause was complications of dementia.

Until 10 years ago, long after Mr. Johnson had dropped composing for a career as a mathematician, his music was known only by reputation. References to it were found in the writings of the composer La Monte Young, who described Mr. Johnson as one of his closest musical allies when they were students at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Mr. Young is a founder of Minimalism, a genre of composition marked by repetition, gradual development and sometimes spare harmonies. Some of the most important contemporary composers, including John Adams, Steve Reich and Philip Glass, are at times associated with the movement or at least have incorporated such elements in their work.

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