



photo by Adam Tendler  
Live at Houston School for the Performing Arts (2007)

Dubbed a "piano goddess" by Arts Houston, North Carolina native **Eleonor Sandresky** is a graduate of both the Eastman (1984) and Yale (1995) Schools of Music in piano performance and composition respectively. She has been a force in the New York music scene since her graduation from Eastman, both as a pianist and member of Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians, from 1986-1992, and as a guest with ensembles such as Essential Music. In 1991 she joined The Philip Glass Ensemble with whom she still performs on keyboards, voice and conductor for film and ensemble shows such as *Koyanisqatsi*. Her work as a producer began accidentally when she co-founded the MATA Festival in 1996, advocating for fellow young composers through commissions and premiers of their works as co-curator producer and managing director from its inception through 2005. Since 2009 she has worked with The Leonard Bernstein Office as producer of the film and live orchestra projects, creating them from the ground up, including research and score reconstruction. Her most innovative work has come through her compositions which are distinctly personal, many of which transcend genre. Through the years she has moved from speaking in a decidedly contemporary but predominately traditional voice, to incorporating technology, improvisation and physical movement into her work in an intricately woven tapestry of music, sound and a physicality unparalleled in classical contemporary composition or performance.

Eleonor's promise as a composer was recognized early. She was invited to present her music in a concert at SECCA in North Carolina in 1992, and presented music at the North Carolina Composers Symposium several years in a row. Her Duo for Marimba and Piano was premiered there in 1988; a 1992 revised version has been performed internationally and remains in the repertoire of several concertizing percussionists.

After being lauded at Yale as The Most Promising Young Composer in 1995, she became a composer-in-residence with Friends and Enemies of New Music which resulted in a commission from Talujon Percussion Quartet, *Mathematically Inclined*. Since its premier, the piece has also been performed on the Totally Huge New Music Festival in Perth, Australia and at the Chautauqua Music Festival. In 1997, Sequitur commissioned *My Goddess* for soprano and chamber ensemble, inspired by *The Vagina Monologues*, for which she wrote both the text and music. The piece was premiered at Sequitur's inaugural cabaret concert and later recorded and released on Koch International. The Jerome Foundation commissioned *It's Come Undone* for trumpet, percussion and electronics in 1999, which premiered on the Mata Festival. The following year she became a MacDowell fellow and composed *before and after* for chamber orchestra, premiered by Nouvel Ensemble

Moderne in 2002. Mary Nessinger and Jeanne Golan commissioned Eleonor to compose *Voyelles* for their Debussy/Berg project in 2006, which was released on Albany Records in 2009.

Before attending Yale, Eleonor had already begun collaborating across disciplines, working with choreographers Nuria Olive Belles and Javier de Frutos to create and perform evening-length pieces and through-composed compositions. These works were commissioned by NYSCA and Meet the Composer. Most recently, she has been awarded a grant to collaborate with Leonardo Heiblum on a series of small pieces over three years by FONCA (fondo nacional para la cultura y las artes) which is The National Fund for the Culture and the Arts in Mexico.

Incorporating movement into her compositions was a logical extension of her love of dance since childhood, which grew by playing for dance classes as part of putting herself through college as well as studying various forms of dance throughout adulthood so far, including flamenco and butoh. Eleonor increasingly became fascinated by the way the movement seemed to almost generate the music, a kind of symbiotic relationship. These experiences led her to conceive the groundbreaking work combining dance and piano performance in her choreographed piano work, resulting in her self-titling: "the choreographic pianist." As early as 2000 she began performing this work at venues such as The Knitting Factory, The Cutting Room in NY, as well as The Philadelphia Fringe Festival and beyond. She premiered her seminal work in this genre, *A Sleeper's Notebook*, in 2003 as a part of the Kitchen Keyboard Summit in New York City, commissioned in part by Composers Collaborative, Inc with a grant from Meet the Composer. A recording of the piece was released on One Soul Records in late 2005. In the choreographic works, she explores her deep interest in how motion translates to emotion through sound, mining her experience as a performer for her compositions that now include work for the ensembles Parthenia (2012-5) and *The Knights* (2013) with a recent commission from Grand Band, in the works.

In the summer of 2003, Eleonor was a resident composer in Hvar, Croatia, where she worked with the Hungarian string quartet, Accord. There she composed a suite for string quartet, which she revised in 2006, with a grant from The American Music Center. Ethel gave the premier on the first season of *Music With A View* in New York City. Eleonor composed *On The Lip of Insanity* for bassist, Peter Askim in 2004 that he premiered in Wroclaw, Poland later that year.

Among her recent commissions is *Donne Songs Without Words*, commissioned by Parthenia with a grant from NYSCA, a six-movement acoustic work based on poems by John Donne and composed for choreographed viol quartet and baroque triple harp. This work was premiered in New York City on March 23, 2015. Eleonor has also embarked on a project for solo piano called *Strange Energies*, etudes that explore vibration and the behavior of sound in space, asking the audience to notice how sound behaves under certain circumstances. She has been composing and performing this work over several years as it continues to evolve. Currently there are seven pieces in this set.

While living and working in Budapest from 2004 - 2008, she began incorporating more electronics into her music resulting in a desire for her movements to initiate sound in some way. After a 2008 residency at STEIM in Amsterdam, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council awarded Eleonor a Swing Space residency in 2009, where she began working with Michael Clemow on the design of the *Wonder Suit*, a collection of wireless sensors that she straps onto her body and piano bench to allow her to initiate and control various electronic

parameters in her pieces with live electronics. The Wonder Suit was premiered in 2012 with her choreographed piano piece, *The Mary Oliver Songs: Book 1: The Return* at I-Beam in Brooklyn, NY, and has been performed consistently since at venues around the world. Recently, Eleonor has begun to create structured improvisational works for choreographic pianist and Wonder Suit that are inspired by poetry. The Musical Ecologies series in Brooklyn, NY presented some of these works in the Spring, 2014, released as a digital download on Bandcamp in 2016. She also toured the show in Mexico to sold-out crowds in 2015.

Eleonor has been an active collaborator, both as a composer and performer as well as a curator and producer. She has performed and recorded music with a wide range of composers including Peter Gordon, Lucia Dlugoszewski and Eve Beglarian (*Go Tell the Birds*), as well as premiered works by composers as diverse as Egberto Gismonti (1987) Philip Glass (throughout her tenure with the PGE) and Randy Hostetler (1998). She has recorded and toured internationally with Essential Music (Mode Records) and Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians and worked as a guest music director for Susan Marshall and Company (2002) and The Philip Glass Ensemble (Nonesuch and Orange Mountain Music), where she conducted the ensemble live to film in *Monsters of Grace* (2000) and *Koyaanisqatsi* (2002/2017).

In 2011 she co-curated and produced Music After, a fifteen-hour free marathon concert to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the events of 9/11 with Daniel Felsenfeld and in collaboration with The Joyce Soho. As victims of that day, they each felt a deep desire to create a healing event for the local community of fellow artists, the neighborhood and the community at large. Any composer of any genre that lived or was below 14th Street on that day was invited to participate, and they did.

Designated a Critic's pick by TimeOut NY, Eleonor created and curated a collaboration series, Rétes (RAY-tesh), where in each of 6 months she collaborated with a different composer/performer, premiering the results on that month's concert. Her collaborators covered a broad spectrum of musical styles and included Kamala Sankaram (Thumbprint Opera), Pat Irwin (Raybeats/B52s), Martha Mooke (No Ordinary Window), Randy Gibson (The Four Pillars) and Du Yun (Angel's Bone).

Eleonor has also been an engaged educator, presenting workshops and lecture demonstrations at a variety of institutions and venues. From 2004 to the present she has presented her work, including that for choreographic piano, with various prototypes of her Wonder Suit at USC Fullerton, Academia de Arte de Florencia in Mexico City, USC at Columbia, SC and City College Metro-tech in NYC, among others.

Her music has been licensed for the film, *Fault* (2003), that premiered at the Cannes Film Festival and shown at other international film festivals. Eleonor completed her first dedicated film score (2014), a 92 minute through-composed work for chamber ensemble, in collaboration with the filmmaker, Erika Suderburg, entitled, *Wunderkammern: The Secret Life of Objects* which premiered in LA in June 2015 at the Film Forum. A reimaged and re-orchestrated live version was premiered and synched to film in Spring 2017 on Tribeca New Music in NYC at the DiMenna Center.

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