

Gina Leishman – Full Biography

Composer and multi-instrumentalist Gina Leishman was born in England, studied music at the Vienna Conservatory and Edinburgh University (B.Mus.Hons.), and made her home in the U.S., first on the west coast and since the early '90s in New York City. She has written for theater, opera, dance, film, TV and the concert stage.

Ms. Leishman was composer-in-residence at the Akrai Residency Program in Sicily, 2014, and at Montalvo Arts Center, Saratoga CA, in 2009 and 2010; also Artist in Residence at Colgate University in 2012. She has been the recipient of grants from the NEA, Meet The Composer, Lila Wallace/Readers Digest Fund, Rockefeller Foundation, Arts International, Chamber Music America, Doris Duke Foundation, American Music Center, Duffy Institute for new Opera and the California Arts Council, amongst others.

She is co-founder of the septet Kamikaze Ground Crew. Together for over 30 years, they celebrated their 20th anniversary with a commission from Chamber Music America's New Works: Creation and Presentation Program. *Portraits* was premiered at the 2007 San Francisco Jazz Festival. Other performances include Earshot Jazz Festival (Seattle), Frankfurt Jazz Festival and Donaueschingen New Music Festival (Germany) (who also commissioned new work), Vossa Jazz Festival (Norway), Merkin Hall and Joe's Pub (New York), as well as regular gigs in and around downtown New York and Brooklyn.

She also co-leads the Mr. Wau-Wa band, a quintet dedicated to the songs of Bertolt Brecht, for which she is the chief arranger and lead singer.

Her work as a singer/songwriter includes *Geography* (2018), *Baseless Rumors* (2011), *In My Skin* (2007) and *Bed Time* (2004), all explorations of the Leishman Songbook. She performs and records with infrequent regularity as a solo artist, and in various and sundry downtown projects, including as guest vocalist with Steven Bernstein's Millennial Territory Orchestra and guest instrumentalist with Peter Apfelbaum's Hieroglyphics Ensemble. Her instruments include piano, alto and baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, accordion, harmonium, baritone ukulele, mandola and the glass tiers. Her regular collaborators include Doug Wieselman, Steven Bernstein, Peter Apfelbaum, Art Baron, Marcus Rojas, Kenny Wollesen, Rinde Eckert, Charlie Burnham, Matt Munisteri, Dana Lyn, Marika Hughes, and Greg Cohen. Other musicians with who she has had the pleasure of playing with include Marc Ribot, Jenny Scheinman, Joy Askew, Rob Burger, Miguel Frasoni, Beth Custer, Frank London, Ben Perowsky, Briggan Krauss, Trevor Dunn, Roberto Rodriguez and many others.

Her first opera, *Burning Dreams*, commissioned through the Meet The Composer/Rockefeller/ AT&T Jazz Program, was premiered in San Diego. Her second, *Actaeon*,

Part One of Paul Zimet's Black Milk Quartet, premiered in New York at La Mama E.T.C. The third, *Vagabond*, is currently in development with the Duffy Institute for New Opera and the Virginia Arts Festival.

As a theater composer, her work includes music for *texts&beheadings/ElizabethR*, based on the life and writings of Queen Elizabeth I, with Compagnia de' Colombari (BAM Next Wave Festival); *Septimus & Clarissa*, an adaptation of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, written by Ellen McLaughlin, and directed by Rachel Dickstein, with Ripe Time (CSC and Baruch Performing Arts Center, NYC) (Drama Desk nomination for Outstanding Score); *Orfeo In Orvieto*, an adaptation of Monteverdi's *Orfeo* for Compagnia de' Colombari, directed by Karin Coonrod and premiered in Palazzo Simoncelli, Orvieto; *Uncivil Wars: Moving with Brecht and Eisler*, an adaptation of Brecht's *Roundheads and Peakheads*, written and directed by David Gordon, in which she plays both Hanns Eisler's music and character (The Kitchen, NYC; The Walker, Minneapolis; Peak Performances, Montclair); *The World Is Round Is Round Is Round*, an adaptation of Gertrude Stein's book for Compagnia de' Colombari, directed by Karin Coonrod and premiered at Arts & Letters, The Mill, Averill Park, NY; a new score for Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* (La Jolla Playhouse and Berkeley Rep) (both Critic Circle Awards) and also for Ellen McLaughlin's adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus The King* (Guthrie Theater Minneapolis); scores for NYSF/Public Theater, Vineyard Theater and CSC in New York; ODC/SF dance company, the Flying Karamazov Brothers, Joseph Chaikin, and numerous regional theaters across the country. She was also for many years an Associate Artist at the California Shakespeare Theater, for whom she has created numerous scores including *12th Night*, *Love's Labours Lost* (Critics Circle Award), *Cymbeline*, *Winter's Tale*, *Much Ado* and *As You Like It*.

Collaborations with other artists include directors Karin Coonrod, Robert Woodruff and Lisa Peterson, writers Ellen McLaughlin, Tony Kushner and Paul Zimet, choreographers David Gordon, Bebe Miller and Deborah Slater, composer Doug Wieselmann (with whom she co-leads Kamikaze Ground Crew and Mr. Wau-Wa), and performance artists John Kelly, Rinde Eckert and Theo Bleckmann.

Her theater credits also include critical acclaim as an actor at Lincoln Center, BAM's Next Wave Festival, the Los Angeles Olympic Arts Festival, Goodman Theater of Chicago and many other regional theaters. She is an award-winning reader for Recorded Books in New York City, and Mind's Eye in San Francisco.

She has taught at the University of Iowa, NYU, Fordham/Lincoln Center and LIU/Brooklyn, and was a Teaching Artist with the 92nd St Y. She lives in New York City.