

Lembit Beecher Long Bio

Praised by *The San Francisco Chronicle* as “hauntingly lovely and deeply personal,” Lembit Beecher’s music combines “alluring” textures (*The New York Times*) and vividly imaginative colors with striking emotional immediacy. Noted for his collaborative spirit and “ingenious” interdisciplinary projects (*The Wall Street Journal*), Lembit is currently the composer-in-residence of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, having previously served a three-year term as the inaugural composer-in-residence of Opera Philadelphia in collaboration with Gotham Chamber Opera and Music-Theatre Group. A constant across his wide range of works is a potent sense of drama, which manifests itself through a quirky, thoughtful musical language, filled with both poignant intimacy and propulsive rhythmic energy. Born to Estonian and American parents, Lembit grew up under the redwoods in Santa Cruz, California, a few miles from the wild Pacific. Since then he has lived in Boston, Houston, Ann Arbor, Berlin, New York and Philadelphia, earning degrees from Harvard, Rice and the University of Michigan. This varied background has made him particularly sensitive to place, ecology, memory, and the multitude of ways in which people tell stories.

Recent premieres include “Say Home” for the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, “The Conference of the Birds” for A Far Cry, “100 Years Grows Shorter Over Time” for the Juilliard String Quartet, and “Sky on Swings,” a chamber opera for Opera Philadelphia starring Frederica von Stade and Marietta Simpson. Based on a libretto by Hannah Moscovitch, the opera follows the relationship of two women diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. “[Beecher] and [Moscovitch] have created a shattering musical and theatrical evocation of what it feels like to have Alzheimer’s disease,” wrote Heidi Waleson in the *The Wall Street Journal*. The opera was praised as, “a monumental achievement” (Parterre), “a triumph for everyone involved” (Broadway World), and “theatrically true and artistically distinguished ...[Beecher’s] musical invention is astonishing here.” (Philadelphia Inquirer)

Many of Lembit's latest projects involve the incorporation of untraditional elements into opera, symphonic works and chamber music, including baroque instruments, sampled interviews, animation, electronically-controlled sound sculptures and devised theatre actors. In 2015 he received a major grant from the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage to develop and produce “Sophia’s Forest,” a chamber opera for soprano Kiera Duffy, the Aizuri Quartet, and a multi-piece sound sculpture, built in collaboration with architects and engineers at the University of Pennsylvania and Drexel University's ExCITE Center.

This interdisciplinary approach was seen in Lembit’s first major dramatic work, the documentary oratorio “And Then I Remember,” which incorporated recorded interviews with his grandmother and subtle video elements. “Evoking laughter at times, chilling nostalgia and a sense of timelessness,” (CultureMap Houston) the piece chronicles his grandmother’s journey from Estonia to the United States in the aftermath of World War II. Carl Schoonover, host at WKCR-89.9 FM, raved: “Lembit Beecher’s searing oratorio...employs microscopic historical narratives, the minutiae of human relations, and the cultural contingencies that shape them, to achieve a work of striking universality.” Completed while a fellow at the University of Michigan Institute for the Humanities, “And Then I Remember” won the Opera Vista Competition for new opera, and has been produced as a concert piece, semi-staged oratorio and fully staged opera in Ann Arbor, Houston, New York and San Francisco. Lembit’s New York City opera debut came in 2014 with Gotham Chamber Opera’s premiere of “I Have No Stories To Tell You,” staged in the medieval sculpture hall of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Paul Pelkonen, of Super-

Conductor, hailed the work, a collaboration with librettist Hannah Moscovitch, as “richly written,” musically “hypnotic,” and a “harrowing account of post-traumatic stress disorder.”

Lembit’s work has been performed at the Tanglewood, Aspen and Cabrillo Music Festivals and by the New Jersey Symphony, Shepherd School Symphony, New York Youth Symphony, UNL Symphony Orchestra, University of Michigan Symphony Band, Tapestry New Opera, Opera Vista, Cantori NY, Ensemble ACJW, Del Sol String Quartet, Aizuri Quartet, Sospiro Winds, Third Sound, and Claremont Trio, among others. The Grand Prize Winner of the S&R Foundation’s Washington Award, he has received honors and grants from the American Music Center, New Music USA, ASCAP, American Composers Forum, and NewMusic@ECU. Lembit was a graduate fellow at the University of Michigan Institute for the Humanities, served as Visiting Assistant Professor of Music at Denison University, and has been in residence at the Copland House, MacDowell Colony, Penn Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, White Mountains Festival, Scrag Mountain Music, and the Decoda Skidmore Chamber Music Institute. Continually adventurous artistically, Lembit has worked on projects with vocalist Bobby McFerrin, choreographer Elizabeth Bergmann, artist/film-maker Kevork Mourad, and the puppeteering group An Exciting Event. Lembit’s primary teachers have included Evan Chambers, Bright Sheng, Karim Al-Zand, Pierre Jalbert, Kurt Stallmann and Bernard Rands. An advocate for Estonian contemporary music, Lembit is also active as a pianist and concert producer. He plays the concertina on special occasions.

Medium Bio

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The Grand Prize Winner of the S&R Foundation's Washington Award, Lembit has served as Visiting Assistant Professor of Music at Denison University, and has been in residence at the Copland House, MacDowell Colony, Penn Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, White Mountains Festival, Scrag Mountain Music, and the Decoda Skidmore Chamber Music Institute. Lembit's primary teachers have included Evan Chambers, Bright Sheng, Karim Al-Zand, Pierre Jalbert, Kurt Stallmann and Bernard Rands. His work has been performed at the Tanglewood, Aspen and Cabrillo Music Festivals and by the New Jersey Symphony, Shepherd School Symphony, New York Youth Symphony, UNL Symphony Orchestra, University of Michigan Symphony Band, Tapestry New Opera, Cantori NY, Ensemble Connect, Del Sol String Quartet, Aizuri Quartet, Diderot Quartet, Third Sound, and Claremont Trio, among others.

Short Bio

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