

## **SHEILA SILVER, composer**

### **FULL LENGTH BIO**

Sheila Silver is an important and vital voice in American music today. She has written in a wide range of mediums: from solo instrumental works to large orchestral works; from opera to feature film scores. Her musical language is a unique synthesis of the tonal and atonal worlds, coupled with a rhythmic complexity which is both masterful and compelling. Again and again, audiences and critics praise her music as powerful and emotionally charged, accessible, and masterfully conceived. “Only a few composers in any generation enliven the art form with their musical language and herald new directions in music. Sheila Silver is such a visionary.” (Wetterauer Zeitung, Germany, 2004)

Born in Seattle, Washington in 1946, Silver began piano studies at the age of five. Ms. Silver earned her Bachelor of Arts from the University of California at Berkeley in 1968 where she began composition studies with Edwin Dugger. Upon graduation she was awarded the coveted George Ladd Prix de Paris for two years study in Europe where she worked with Erhard Karkoschka in Stuttgart and Gyorgy Ligeti in Berlin and Hamburg. She earned her doctorate from Brandeis University where she studied with Arthur Berger, Harold Shapero, and Seymour Shifrin. Her studies also included an Abraham Sachar Traveling Grant which enabled her to spend 18 months in London and a Koussevitzky Fellowship for a summer at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood where she studied with Jacob Druckman.

Sheila Silver’s compositions have been commissioned and performed by numerous orchestras, chamber ensembles, and soloists throughout the United States and Europe including: the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, the RAI Orchestra of Rome, the American Composers Orchestra, the Lithuanian State Orchestra, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, the Stockton Symphony, the Chicago String Ensemble, the Richmond Symphony, the Illinois Symphony, the Gregg Smith Singers, the Hartford Chamber Orchestra, Alexander Paley, Dawn Upshaw, Gilbert Kalish, Timothy Eddy, the Guild Trio, Heidi Lehwalder and the Muir Quartet, the Ying Quartet, and Tapestry Vocal Ensemble.

Sheila is currently composing an opera based on Khaled Hosseini's international best-selling novel, ***A Thousand Splendid Suns***, which takes place in contemporary Afghanistan. She recently returned from her third trip to India where she studies Hindustani music with Pandit Kedar Narayan Bodas. Silver is incorporating an authentic Hindustani color into her score for the opera. Recent honors for this opera-in-progress include: a 2014 Opera America Discovery Grant for Female Composers, funded by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation; selection in Opera America's 2016 New Works Forum and New Works Showcase concert; a 2015 NEA Opera Development grant through American Opera Projects; a 2013 Guggenheim Fellowship, and a 2016 NYSCA Commission Award.

Other honors include: the 2007 Raymond and Beverly Sackler Prize in Music Composition in Opera, for her opera, *The Wooden Sword*; Bunting Institute Fellowship; the Rome Prize; the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Composer Award; twice winner of the ISCM National Composers Competition; and awards and commissions from the Rockefeller Foundation (Bellagio Residency), the Camargo Foundation, the MacDowell Colony, New York State Council of the Arts, the Barlow Foundation, the Paul Fromm Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Cary Trust.

2010 saw the premiere of ***The Wooden Sword***, a one act opera commissioned as a result of the Sackler Prize in Music Composition for Opera, and ***The White Rooster, a Tale of Compassion***, commissioned by the Smithsonian's Freer and Sackler Gallery for the exhibit, *In the Realm of the Buddha*. The dramatic cantata was written for the vocal ensemble, Tapestry, plus 6 Tibetan singing bowls and frame drums. Tapestry is currently touring with the work.

In 2013 ***Beauty Intolerable***, a Songbook based on the poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay, was premiered in Hudson New York and New York City, with performances by Lauren Flanigan, Deanne Meek, and Risa Renae Harman, and poetry recitations by Tyne Daley and Tandy Cronyn. The work has since been performed by numerous artists in various venues, including at Tanglewood.

Her opera, ***The Thief of Love***, A Lyric-Comic Opera in Three Acts, was featured in New York City Opera's Showcasing American Composers, May 2000 and received its fully staged world premiere in March 2001 by the Stony Brook Opera with David Lawton,

conductor, Ned Canty, director, and sets by Phillip Baldwin. A film of that production was released on DVD to critical acclaim, following its NYC premiere screening at Makor sponsored by American Opera Projects.

Recent recordings, both on the Naxos label, include her ***Piano Concerto*** and ***Six Preludes for Piano*** on poems of Baudelaire, with Alexander Paley, piano, and the Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra, Gintaras Rinkevicius, conductor; and her ***Shirat Sara*** (Song of Sarah) with Gerard Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony Strings; and ***Twilight's Last Gleaming***, for two pianos and percussion on the Bridge Label. ***Midnight Prayer***, commissioned and premiered by the Stockton Symphony Orchestra, received its second performance in March 2005 by the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra. "Silver describes her work as a "prayer for world peace," but it is no quiet, passive meditation. Rather, it is a remarkable 12 minute tone poem that conveys a sense of urgency through its ingenious use of harmonic tension and orchestral color." (Democrat and Chronicle, Rochester)

Silver composed the sound track to *Who the Hell is Bobby Roos?*, a feature film which was awarded the New American Cinema Award at the Seattle International Film Festival, 2002 and is currently available on DVD. She has just completed a score for ***Symbiotic Earth: How Lynn Margulis rocked the boat and started a scientific revolution***. Release date is Spring, 2017.

Sheila Silver lives in Spencertown, New York, with her husband, film writer and director, John Feldman, and their 18 year old son, Victor Feldman, a Freshman at Brandeis University. Silver is Professor of Music at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. Her music is published by Lauren Keiser Music, Studio 4 Productions, and Argenta Music, and is recorded on various labels.

## **SHORT BIO**

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Silver lives in Spencertown, New York, with her husband, filmmaker John Feldman, and their 18 year old son, Victor Feldman, who is now a Freshman at Brandeis University. She is Professor of Music at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. Her music is published by Lauren Keiser Music, Studio 4 Productions, and Argenta Music and is recorded on various labels. Her teachers include Gyorgy Ligeti, Arthur Berger, Harold Shapero, and Erhard Karkosckha. For more information go to: [www.sheilasilver.com](http://www.sheilasilver.com)



