

Elizabeth Brown, composer/performer

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About Elizabeth Brown

Elizabeth Brown combines a successful composing career with an extremely diverse performing life, playing flute, shakuhachi, and theremin in a wide variety of musical circles. Her chamber music, shaped by this unique group of instruments and experiences, has been called luminous, dreamlike and hallucinatory.

Brown's music has been heard in Japan, the Soviet Union, Colombia, Australia, South Africa and Vietnam as well as across the US and Europe. A 2007 Guggenheim Fellowship recipient, she has received grants, awards and commissions from Orpheus, St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble, Newband, the Asian Cultural Council, the Japan/US Friendship Commission, Meet the Composer, the Electronic Music Foundation, the Cary Trust, and NYFA. She is the only musician to have both played with Orpheus and also written for them; Orpheus commissioned **Lost Waltz** in 1997 and premiered it in Carnegie Hall. She has two solo CDs: **Elizabeth Brown: Mirage** (New World) and **Blue Minor: Chamber Music by Elizabeth Brown** (Albany), and her music is also available on CRI, Innova, and Music and Arts. Brown is Composer-in-Residence at the John J. Cali School of Music at Montclair State University for the 2013-14 season.

After hearing the instrument on a concert tour of Japan, Brown began studying shakuhachi (traditional Japanese bamboo flute) in 1984 and its music has been a major influence on her musical language. She is celebrated both here and in Japan for her compositions combining eastern and western sensibilities. Grand Prize Winner in the Makino Yutaka Composition Competition for Japanese traditional instrument orchestra in 2011, she was also a prizewinner in the SGCM Shakuhachi Composition Competition 2010, with performances in Tokyo's Kioi Hall and Tokyo Opera City Concert Hall, Takemitsu Memorial. Music from Japan presented the Japanese premiere of **Rubicon** in Fukushima prefecture, performed by members of Tokyo's celebrated Reigakusha gagaku orchestra. Music from Japan also commissioned **fragments for the moon**, for concerts featuring Brown with nohkan/shinobue artist Kohei Nishikawa in 2011 in New York City and at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. Brown has been Artist-in-Residence in the Grand Canyon, working on a series of solo shakuhachi pieces inspired by particular places in nature. She has also given solo moonlight shakuhachi performances in the sculpture quarry of the Lacoste School for the Arts in Provence, and as Artist-in-Residence in both Maine's Acadia National Park and Isle Royale National Park, a U.S. Biosphere Reserve in the middle of Lake Superior. Since she premiered **Mirage**, for shakuhachi and string quartet, with the Grainger Quartet at the World Shakuhachi Festival 2008 in Sydney, Australia, it has also been performed in Tokyo, Prague, and New York City. In 2008/2009, she lived in Japan on a Cultural Exchange Fellowship supported by the US/Japan Friendship Commission. Brown continues to write for Japanese traditional instruments. **Afterimage**, for shakuhachi and shamisen, was premiered in fall 2011 at Roulette Brooklyn, and **Slowly Toward the North**, for bass koto and shou (traditional mouth organ) was premiered in Tokyo in 2012. Brown performs both traditional and contemporary shakuhachi repertoire, often combining them in solo programs, such as her 2011 concert at the Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum in New York.

This season includes numerous performances of **A Bookmobile for Dreamers**, for live theremin, recorded soundscape and video, Brown's fourth collaboration with artist Lothar Osterburg. It was commissioned by the Electronic Music Foundation through Meet the Composer's Commissioning Music/USA program. A forty-minute performance for theremin, recorded sound, and video inspired by the joy of browsing, **A Bookmobile for Dreamers** celebrates the imagination as inspired by the printed word. Brown and Osterburg created much of the piece while in residence at the Liguria Study Center in Bogliasco, Italy, in 2011. In summer 2013, Lincoln Center and the Bogliasco Foundation co-presented **A Bookmobile for Dreamers** in Lincoln Center's Rubenstein Atrium. It has also been performed at the University of Montevallo (Al), Mercyhurst College and Kutztown University (PA), Union Arts Center (Sparkill, NJ), Greenwich House and Lesley Heller Workspace in NYC, and Buch und Kunst in Braunschweig, Germany,

with upcoming performances at MacMaster University (Canada), The New York Flute Club, Texas A&M, Montclair State University (NJ) and Miami Dade (FL).

Previous collaborations include **Piranesi**, for theremin, string quartet (the Momenta Quartet), and video, which was supported by Brown's Guggenheim (and helped Osterburg to earn his own Guggenheim in 2010). Brown has been guest composer and thereminist at both Monadnock Music and the Yale Summer School of Music in Norfolk, and has appeared as thereminist with the American Symphony Orchestra at both Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. In 2008, Brown shared a concert with composer Frances White on Tom Buckner's Interpretations series, and also in 2008, she appeared as soloist in **Seahorse**, her concerto for theremin and Partch instruments, with Montclair University's Partch Ensemble.

Other notable pieces include Brown's chamber opera **Rural Electrification** (2006), for theremin, voice, and recorded sound, funded by a Barlow commission; **Collected Visions**, an installation created in collaboration with photographer Lorie Novak, which has been presented by the International Center of Photography in NYC, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Center for Creative Photography in Tuscon; **Delirium**, featuring the original microtonal instruments of American composer/inventor Harry Partch, performed by Newband to open the 2001 Bang On a Can Marathon at BAM's Opera House; and **Migration**, for shakuhachi and strings, which was included on CRI's Emergency Music: Bang On A Can Live Volume 2, and has been widely performed. Brown was Artist-in-Residence at the Hanoi National Conservatory of Music in 2002, through a grant from the Asian Cultural Council. She has been a fellow at the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center in Italy and at the MacDowell Colony, and has been composer-in-residence at the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival, the Cape and Islands Chamber Music Festival, and the Bennington Chamber Music Conference and Composers' Forum of the East.

Brown performs as flutist with a number of New York-based ensembles, including the American Symphony and New York City Ballet Orchestra. Her flute music is performed around the world. Brown was born in 1953 in Camden, Alabama, where she grew up on an agricultural research station. After receiving a Master's degree in flute performance from The Juilliard School in 1977, she started composing in the late 1970's. She lives in Brooklyn with visual artist [Lothar Osterburg](#).

"...cool, sustained architecture...a suspension of recollected memories." Los Angeles Times

"...otherworldly...passionately lyric...tenaciously melodic..." New York Times

"...sounds both innocently sweet and foreboding..." Houston Post

"...gently spellbinding..." Village Voice

"...heartrending..." New York Native