

ANNIE GOSFIELD
ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My life as a composer has been balanced between writing for my own group (combining notated pieces, loosely structured compositions, and improvisation) and composing music for a wide range of ensembles and soloists. After many years of developing my compositional voice in chamber music and solo pieces, my practice has expanded into opera and extended works for orchestra. For me, it has been an artist's dream to develop larger works that build on one's experience, and a gift to address new challenges at any point in one's career.

My work draws on my varied experiences in classical music, improvisation, jazz, and rock. My background in classical music has given me a common notated language with a specific group of musicians who speak many different languages, and has allowed me to communicate non-traditional ideas using a traditionally notated score. Improvisation has created a means of collaboration and communication with a beautifully varied range of musicians. Improvisation has also given me a much freer mindset in composing, and taught me to consider all musical possibilities. Having my own band has allowed me to develop music that emphasizes collaboration with my bandmates more than working within predetermined structures. New works are often inspired by individual musicians; I love to work closely with performers and draw on their knowledge and personal experience, making composition a dynamic, collaborative process. In recent years, the balance of my work has shifted towards notated music. This mysterious language, these odd little dots on the page and what they become, keep me in their thrall, and help me negotiate the fine line between music and noise.

My compositions often explore the inherent beauty of found sounds, and are inspired by unusual sources such as machines, warped 78 records, and radio noise. Incorporating these elements into my music is as natural as creating a rhythmic figure or choosing a set of pitches: it simply means working with an extended palette of sounds and a deeper pool of influences. I consider these sounds to be "equal partners" with more traditional musical materials, and I strive to emphasize the hidden beauty in our sonic environment by using found sources. If there is any message that I want to convey to the listener, it is to pay attention to all sounds, without dividing the world into separate categories of music and noise.

Many of my pieces combine electronic and acoustic elements, and incorporate both notation and improvisation. Shifting between composing for my own ensemble and writing for others has forced me to consider the challenge of creating carefully crafted, unified work in any context, and has compelled me to think beyond the mechanics of communicating merely which notes to play. Much of my work incorporates microtonality: instead of striving for perfect intervals, I use almost-unisons and microtonal scordatura to enrich the harmonic palette.

Being active as a composer/performer has led me to explore a more performative approach to electronic music. As a pianist, I find it critical to maintain a physical connection with my instrument. Using a keyboard-controlled sampler has allowed me to make use of my piano technique while accessing a wide range of non-traditional sounds. In recent years, technology has given me even more freedom to sculpt music that combines acoustic and electronic sources, while still maintaining a dynamic role as a performer.

I look forward to a lifetime's work of integrating these diverse influences, as I seek to further refine, balance, and breathe life into my music. Recently I've been reconsidering the great struggle in negotiating the fine line between music and noise. Simple as it sounds, it is always a challenge to work with melody, rhythm, and emotion while developing new sounds. I sift through the influences of everyday life, striving to create music that best expresses my artistic vision, always looking for the one perfect solution that completes each individual piece.

-New York City, 2017 (revised 2022)