

ANNA WEESNER

Anna Weesner (b. Iowa City, Iowa, May 13, 1965) is the recipient of a 2009 Guggenheim Fellowship and a 2008 award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She has received many other awards, including a 2006 Award for Excellence in the Arts from the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, where she was in residence during the summers of 2007 and 2008, and a Pew Fellowship in the Arts (2003). She has been in residence at the MacDowell Colony, the Wellesley Composers Conference, Blue Mountain Center, the Summit Institute for the Arts and Humanities, the Seal Bay Festival, and at Fondation Royaumont.

Weesner's music has been described as "animated and full of surprising turns" (*New York Times*, Oct. 10, 2003), as "a haunting conspiracy" (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 24, 2001) and cited as demonstrating "an ability to make complex textures out of simple devices" (*San Francisco Classical Voice*, March 27, 2001). John Harbison has written that "none of it proceeds in obvious ways. Her vocabulary is subtle and rather elusive; the effect is paradoxically confident and decisive."

Vocal music has always been an important part of Weesner's compositional work. In 1995 she completed a 30-minute chamber opera, adapting on her own Kate Chopin's short story, "The Story of an Hour", for one singer and chamber orchestra. Around the same time, Dawn Upshaw programmed three of her five settings of Emily Dickinson, performing one song in particular—*Alter? when the hills do*—many times. Weesner's output for voice includes two songs that set original text, entitled *Forgetting* and *Love Song with Counterpoint*, which exist in versions for voice and ensemble as well as for voice and piano. *Mother Tongues* is a piece for voice and five players that sets four haiku-style poems by Sonia Sanchez. *Snapshot of a Teenaged Moment When Everything Began* is a work for chorus and piano that integrates poetry by Emily Dickinson with original text by the composer.

Chamber music involving strings continues to represent a significant branch of Weesner's music. Her recent piano trio, *Lift High, Reckon—Fly Low, Come Close*, commissioned by Open End, has been performed five times in the past year and is programmed twice more in coming months. Her work includes solo pieces for violin and cello—*Possible Stories* is forthcoming on Caroline Stinson's solo cd *Lines* on Albany Records), three string quartets, and duos for violin and piano and for viola and piano. Melia Watras recently recorded *Flexible Parts* with pianist Kim Russell.

Weesner's music for larger forces has been performed and read by leading ensembles, including the American Composers Orchestra, Metamorphosen, the Indianapolis Symphony, and the orchestra of the Curtis Institute. Other important performances includes those by Dawn Upshaw with Richard Goode and with Gilbert Kalish, Judith Kellock, Mary Nessinger, Jeanne Golan, Scott Kluksdahl, the Cassatt Quartet, the Cypress Quartet, the MATA festival, Network for New Music, Veronica Kadlubkiewicz, Matt Bengtson, Ensemble X, Counter)induction, the Syracuse Society for New Music and Orchestra 2001. She has been commissioned by numerous performers and presenters, including Open End, the Newburyport Chamber Music Festival, violist Melia Watras, the MATA festival, Mary Nessinger and Jeanne Golan, the Cypress Quartet, Network for New Music, Dawn Upshaw, Sequitur and Orchestra 2001.

Weesner grew up in New Hampshire. She currently lives in Philadelphia, where she is Associate Professor at the University of Pennsylvania. As an undergraduate at Yale she studied flute with Thomas Nyfenger and composition with Jonathan Berger and Michael Friedmann. She went on to complete a D.M.A. at Cornell University where her teachers included Steven Stucky, Roberto Sierra and Karel Husa. She has also studied with John Harbison and George Tsontakis.