

BETH CUSTER Biography

Beth Custer is a San Francisco based composer, performer, producer, bandleader, clarinet and composition teacher, and the proprietor of BC Records.

She is a founding member of the notorious silent film soundtrack purveyors The Club Foot Orchestra, 4th world ambient ensemble Trance Mission, the quartet of esteemed clarinetists Clarinet Thing, the trip-hop duo Eighty Mile Beach, the Latin-jazz-rock influenced Doña Luz 30 Besos, and The Beth Custer Ensemble. Each ensemble has released recordings and Beth has over 26 releases that she was instrumental in creating. Several of these ensembles have received Bay Area music awards for their innovative styles.

From 2002-05, under a Meet The Composer New Residency Grant, Beth was composer-in-residence at The Lab in San Francisco. During her residency, she collaborated with the Joe Goode Performance Group composing two of their annual shows; held composing for film and music business workshops; produced a compilation CD for The Lab's 20th anniversary; composed and premiered a suite for string quartet and voice with the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble; and co-curated, hosted and performed at three annual music festivals at The Lab.

Beth has been composer for the cutting edge dance-theater troupe The Joe Goode Performance Group for over 15 years, having composed for seven of their annual productions including Take/Place I & II; Maverick Strain; Undertaking Harry; What the Body Knows; Folk; and Hometown in 2005 in which her ensemble performed live. Beth's Maverick Strain score won an Isadora Duncan award in 1997.

The Headlands Center for the Arts has granted Beth two artist's residencies, she was the first Bay Area artist to receive a second artist residency there. During her 1991 residency, she collaborated with renowned Czech painter Vladimir Kokolia and sculptor Billie Lynn on a multi-media performance piece entitled Betide the Wellsprung Jowl. In her 1998 residency, she composed for, performed in, and produced three monthly concerts entitled Vinculum Chamber Concerts wherein she brought together chamber musicians and experimental instrument builders to perform an evening length work. This residency led to a Phyllis Wattis Residency at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and a Meet the Composer Commissioning Grant in 1999 wherein she composed and produced Vinculum Symphony. Vinculum Symphony combined a 22-piece chamber orchestra comprised of members of the Left Coast Chamber ensemble and Bay Area improvisers, with 10 experimental instrument builders, people who build and perform on their own inventions. Vinculum enjoyed a 4-night, sold-out run at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. In 2002, Beth received a McKnight fellowship to compose and produce Vinculum Twin Cities with Zeitgeist contemporary chamber ensemble and 10 Twin cities experimental instrument builders at the Southern Theatre.

Under an NEA commissioning grant in 2000, the Pacific Film Archive commissioned Beth to create a live soundtrack for the very rare 1929 Soviet Georgian comedy My Grandmother. Beth then received an Aaron Copland Recording Fund award in 2003, to record and produce the soundtrack for DVD release. Other live soundtracks to film include Club Foot Orchestra's collaborative scores for Metropolis, Sherlock Jr., and Pandora's Box and a season of the cartoon The Twisted Tales Of Felix The Cat for CBS/Film Roman. Other TV/movie soundtracks include Independent View theme for KQED television; feature film The Unoccupied Zone by Cathy Lee Crane, and films of Esther Paik, Betsy Bahya, Will Zavala, Craig Baldwin and Kwon & Iger.

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Beth received a Gerbode Award in 2004 with writer Octavio Solis to collaborate on a musical comedy *The Ballad Of Pancho And Lucy* which premiered in 2005 to sellout crowds. Theatre work includes composing for productions at Intersection for the Arts, California Shakespeare Company, Magic Theater, Overtone Industries, and Berkeley and San Diego Repertory Theaters.

Other commissions and awards include chamber works for Kronos Quartet and Earplay; two San Francisco Arts Commission Individual Artists grants in 2004 and 2006; a Bay Guardian Goldie for composition in 1992; two Wammie music awards in 1990 and 1994; and several Meet The Composer and NEA commissioning grants.

As a Bb, alto, and bass clarinetist, Beth has performed with Fred Frith, Miya Masaoka, Pamela Z, Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, Connie Champagne, Jin Hi Kim, Will Bernard, Grassy Knoll, Violent Femmes, Joshua Brody, Sky Cries Mary, the late Snakefinger and many others.

As a record label owner, Beth has composed, performed, and produced eight releases in the past eleven years. Her ninth release, *Bernal Heights Suite*, a chamber music recording with the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, will be released in October, 2006. Beth's music receives regular independent radio play on stations around the world and her business enjoys steady sales.

Beth received her Bachelors degree in Musical Studies with a Clarinet Performance certificate at the Crane School of Music at the State University of New York at Potsdam in 1980. She went on to study in the clarinet masters program at Michigan State University with Else Ludewig-Verdehr and finished her Masters degree in Clarinet Performance at San Francisco State University in 1985. Beth continued to study privately for four years with the eminent clarinetist, the late Rosario Mazzeo and attended a Stockhausen festival in Portugal to study with Suzanne Stephens.

As a clarinet teacher, Beth has held a private teaching practice for over 30 years and also created an annual, 5-week clarinet workshop called Clarinet Monster in which her students learn to play jazz and new music styles in a group setting. As a composition teacher, Beth has taught at Mills College as a substitute teacher for professors Anthony Braxton and Fred Frith and in 2005, was added on as an Adjunct Professor of Composition. This past summer she taught composition at the Youth Music Program of UC Berkeley and two of her students received scholarships for pieces they composed under her guidance.

For inspiration, Beth swims in the San Francisco Bay and takes annual sojourns to the California desert.

Recent Awards

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| 2006-2008 | San Francisco Arts Commission Individual Artists Grant for <i>MISSION:PEACE</i> . |
| 2002-2005 | Meet the Composer New Residency Grant at The Lab, San Francisco in collaboration with The Joe Goode Performance Group, Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, and TILT. |
| 2005 | Zellerbach Family Fund and Composers Forum grants for <i>Bernal Heights Suite</i> concert with Left Coast Chamber Ensemble at St. Kevin's Church, San Francisco. |

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- 2004-2005 San Francisco Arts Commission Individual Artists Grant for composition of a soundtrack for *A Glimpse of Soviet Science*, a companion short for the DVD release event of *My Grandmother*.
- 2004 Gerbode Award with writer Octavio Solis for the creation of *The Ballad of Pancho and Lucy* musical performed by Campo Santo Theatre, Intersection for the Arts.
- 2004 CEC Artslink grant for live collaborative film score and performances of *Periferie* with filmmaker Martin Blazicek and the ensemble Metamorphosis in the Czech Republic.
- 2003 Aaron Copland Recording Fund award for silent film score and DVD release of *My Grandmother*.
- 2003 CEC Artslink grant for a music collaboration and performances with Amy Denio and The Legendary Poptones in Bulgaria.
- 2002 McKnight Fellowship for *Vinculum Symphony Twin Cities* production with Zeitgeist chamber ensemble and Minnesota experimental instrument builders at the Southern Theatre, Minneapolis.
- 1999 Meet the Composer Commissioning grant, NEA Presenting grant, Phyllis Wattis Residency for composition and production of *Vinculum Symphony* with the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, Bay area improvisers, and ten west coast experimental instrument builders, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.