

Erin Gee

## Bio

In January 2014, Erin Gee was cited by Alex Ross, music critic for *The New Yorker*, as a member of the short list of the most influential composer-vocalists of the 21st century and since then has been awarded the Charles Ives Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a Bogliasco Fellowship. This marks a turning point in the trajectory of international recognition through the performance of her series of compositions entitled *Mouthpieces*, which uses non-traditional vocal techniques, devoid of semantic language, to construct intricate and subtle patterns of a diverse array of vocal sounds. Linguistic meaning is not the voice's goal. The construction of the vocal text is often based on linguistic structure—vowel-consonant formation and the principle of the allophone—and is relatively quiet, with a high percentage of breath. The *Mouthpieces* began as solo vocal works, devoid of semantic text or language and notated with the International Phonetic Alphabet. In the *Mouthpiece* series, the voice is used as an instrument of sound production rather than as a vehicle of identity.

The series began as one piece for solo voice in 2000, which she began performing as a graduate student, and has grown to over 30 works for orchestra, opera, vocal ensemble, large chamber ensemble and string quartet, which have been performed internationally with some of the top ensembles for new music. Her works are taught in the composition and musicology programs of many leading universities such as MIT, University of Pennsylvania, Smith College, and Mills College, and she has lectured at Harvard, UC Berkeley, Dartmouth and Wellesley. Ms. Gee's career began with commissions for her own voice as a soloist or in combination with other instruments, but now regularly includes requests from singers wishing to perform her works, or commissions from ensembles and vocalists who would like to interpret a new *Mouthpiece* in the series.

Her debut portrait CD, *Mouthpieces* was released in January 2014 on the col legno label in Vienna and received a warm and thoughtful review in *Gramophone*, the premier review magazine for classical music. The review stated, "Erin Gee clearly has a contribution to make," and mentioned the "tangible virtuosity of Gee's formidable vocal execution, as well as the comparable (if relatively more orthodox) finesse of the instrumental component."

Gee's awards for composition include a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Radcliffe Fellowship, the 2008 Rome Prize, the Charles Ives Fellowship from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Zürich Opera House's Teatro Minimo, and the Picasso-Mirò Medal from the Rostrum of Composers, a Fromm Foundation Commission, and a CMA grant with Dal Niente, among others. She has been commissioned by the Zurich Opera House for the opera SLEEP, by the Radio Symphony Orchestra Vienna, the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group under Esa-Pekka Salonen, and for four pieces by Klangforum Wien. Gee has also worked with the Latvian Radio Chamber Choir, Ensemble Surplus, Alter Ego, Either/Or Ensemble, Wet Ink, Metropolis

Ensemble, Repertorio Zero, and many others. The American Composers Orchestra commissioned Mouthpiece XIII: Mathilde of Loci Part I for Zankel Hall in Carnegie Hall, which was highlighted in *Symphony Magazine* (March/April 2010), and cited in the *New York Times* as “subtle and inventive.” She has received a Tanglewood commission for 2016 and was a guest composer and performer at the Mizzou International Composers Festival. She is also one of the composers for Kronos Quartet’s 50-for-the-Future project. Frauke Aulbert premiered Mouthpiece 30 at the Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg in 2017, and Dal Niente premiered Mouthpiece 32 in 2018. Roulette hosted her first portrait concert in Feb 2019 with the Argento Ensemble, where they premiered Mouthpiece 33.

She has had performances in Europe, North America, South America, Hong Kong and Japan and in the Wittener Tage für Neue Musik, Musik Protokoll in Steirischer Herbst, Klangspuren, Darmstadt Festival Summer Courses, the Sonic Festival, and the Zurich Tage der Neue Musik among others. Gee was in residence at the Montalvo Arts Center and the Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart in 2010. She is active as a vocal performer of her own work, but it is not designed exclusively for her voice.

Ms. Gee is currently an Assistant Professor of Composition at Brandeis University. Her chapter titled “The Notation and Use of the Voice in Non-semantic Contexts: Phonetic Organization in the Vocal Music of Dieter Schnebel, George Aperghis and Brian Ferneyhough” is published by Routledge Press in the book *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities*, edited by Christian Utz and Frederick Lau.

Through her *Mouthpiece* series she has created an ephemeral world that expands the possibilities of the voice, leaves behind the constrictive structure of language, and replaces histrionic female vocals with a virtuosic mouth and a *tabula rasa* for an emotional palate. Composer, Professor and former Arts Director for the American Academy in Rome Martin Brody’s states in his CD liner notes, “Erin Gee presents a set of voluptuous enigmas – a taxonomy of finely-etched utterances devoid of meaning; an orderly syntax of sounds that vaporizes fixed forms; an aesthetic environment that feels at once extraterrestrial and uncannily familiar.”