

Deborah Henson-Conant

Composer - Performer - Educator

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Artist Overview

Deborah Henson-Conant is a Grammy-nominated composer, performer and creative mentor, who combines story, music and - in her own performances - electric harp. Her works range from one-woman operas and song cycles, to musical theater, suites, and concertos.

She's premiered many dozens of her own works for electric harp, voice and orchestra with both regional and national ensembles from the Pittsburgh and Baltimore Symphonies to the Bechtler Ensemble and Fulcrum Point New Music Ensemble. She's performed her music-theater works at the Chicago Humanities Festival, Kennedy Center, Boston's Lyric Stage and Central Square Theater.

Inventor of her own signature instrument, the "DHC" electric body-harp, she performs with this wearable instrument which is manufactured by CAMAC harp company in France and now played by harpists around the world. Her TEDx talk tells the story of its invention.

As a mentor she has developed "Hip Harp Academy," an international online school teaching harpists performance and improvisation. She also mentors dozens of harpists in professional development and concert creation in her "Harness Your Muse" mentorship program.

She's received grants and awards from NEA, "Meet the Composer" and many private commission including a major private grant from philanthropist Peter Wege to compose and perform "Invention & Alchemy" - a full-length original symphonic story-music program with the Grand Rapids Symphony for DVD, CD and PBS broadcast- which received a GRAMMY- Nomination for "Best Classical Crossover Album," and appeared on PBS Stations throughout the US.

Her operatic works for soprano and chamber ensemble were featured in Boston University's 2014 "Mythic Women" collaborative chamber ensemble project. Her concertos "Soñando en Español" and "Baroque Flamenco" are performed by harp soloists with orchestras internationally.

Music Theater: Opera, Operetta, Song Cycles & Musicals

- **The Golden Cage** – Two-character musical. (Major revision '18)
- **Invention & Alchemy** - Musical stories with electric harp, voice & symphony (Grammy Nomination '06, PBS Special '07, various performances '07 - present)
- **Songs of the Pyre** – Operatic story cycle for soprano, harp, cello and piano (Boston Univ. '14)
- **Persephone Lost** - One-Act One-Woman Opera (soprano, harp, cello, clarinet) (Boston Univ. '14)
- **Electra's Lyre** – One-Woman music theater (Regent Theatre, Arlington, MA '11)
- **Shrunk** – One-woman music & movement piece (Regent Thtr, Arlington, MA '10)
- **What the Hell are you Doing in the Waiting Room for Heaven??** – One-woman musical (Central Square Thtr, Cambridge, MA - '09)
- **The Frog Princess** – Spoken word, song and symphony. (Buffalo Philharmonic, Kennedy Center "Imagination Celebration," Chicago Humanities Festival)
- **The Zero Club** – Full-length, large-cast musical. (Elizabeth Peabody House, Somerville, MA ('83), Regent Theater, Arlington, MA, concert presentation ('06)

Orchestral & Chamber Ensemble Works

- **Invention & Alchemy** – Voice, electric harp, symphony. Grammy-Nominated CD - Grand Rapids Symphony ('05), CD & DVD Release('06), Grammy Nomination ('07), PBS Special ('07-'08), various symphony performances to current time
- **Soñando en Español** – 3-movement concerto for harp and symphony (Premiered with Missouri Symphony Orchestra; currently in various performances)
- **Concierto Dobles** – 3-movement concerto for 2 harps and symphony (Prague Radio Orchestra, '01)
- **Stress Analysis of a Strapless Evening Gown** – 5-Movement suite for narrator, harp and symphony (Springfield Symphony (MA) '01; currently in performance with Chamber Ensemble.
- **Season of Celebration** – Two 5-movement holiday suites for harp and string orchestra (New England String Ensemble ('96-'97) and with various orchestras '96 - present
- **Single-Movement Works for Electric Harp, Voice and Orchestra** – In current performance
- **Chamber Ensemble arrangements** – Harp, string quartet, bass, percussion, flute and clarinet (International Harp Festival in Caernarfon, Wales ('10), International Harp Festival in Sydney, Australia ('14), CCPC Residence ('17), etc.

Prizes, Awards, Private Grants & Commissions

- **1996-Present:** Commissions & project funding (Bernard Marcus, Rachael Solem, etc.)
- **2013 Citizen Cultural Ambassador** to Paraguay
- **2007 Grammy Nomination** (Classical Crossover) for "Invention & Alchemy" CD
- **2007 International Songwriting Competition** First Prize in Instrumental category for "Danger Zone" for electric harp and orchestra
- **2007 Mass Council on the Arts** production grant for "Inviting Invention" Cross-Discipline Collaboration Series with the Cambridge Science Festival
- **2005 Private Grant** (Peter Wege / Steelcase Corporation). Development and production of original DVD/CD and TV special "Invention & Alchemy" for symphony and soloist
- **1985 NEA Study Grant**
- **1985 Meet the Composer** Grant for "The Zero Club"
- **1984 & 1982 Massachusetts Artists Fellowship** for Composition

Recording Projects & Public Television Special

- **Essential DHC** (2018) – Double-Album Compilation
- **Invention & Alchemy** (2007) – Public Television Special (PBS Stations nationwide)
- **Invention & Alchemy** (2007) – GRAMMY-Nominated (Classical Crossover) with symphony
- **Artist's Proof** (2004) – Solo harp, voice, bass and strings (Singer/Songwriter)
- **The Frog Princess** (2000) – Story, Song & Symphony (Musical Theater/Spoken Word/Children's)
- **The Celtic Album** (1998) – Solo harps (Celtic)
- **Altered Ego** (1998) – Solo harp and voice (Singer/Songwriter)
- **Just for You** (1995) – Harp, voice, bass and percussion (Jazz-Influenced Originals)
- **The Gift** (1995) – Solo harps (Traditional Holiday Music)
- **'Round the Corner** (1993) – Harp, bass and drums (Jazz Standards)
- **Naked Music** (1994) – Solo harp and voice (Singer/Songwriter)
- **Budapest** (1992), **Talking Hands** (1991), **Caught in the Act** (1990), **On the Rise** (1989) – Harp, bass, guitar, percussion and synthesizer (Contemporary Jazz)
- **Songs My Mother Sang** – Solo harp and voice (Children's)