

Sonya Lifschitz, CV 2025

PIANIST/PERFORMANCE-MAKER/EDUCATOR

Dr. Sonya Lifschitz is a distinguished Ukrainian-Australian pianist, performance maker, pedagogue, artistic researcher, and cultural leader with 13 years' experience at the forefront of classical and contemporary art music. Her deep commitment to art music's sustainability and relevance within contemporary cultural ecology has led to an inclusive and diverse artistic practice. She has collaborated with Australia's foremost composers, music ensembles, and artists from theatre, dance, spoken word, visual, and screen-based disciplines to create cutting edge work which explores boundaries of musical expression and interdisciplinary artistic processes. Praised by the New York Times and The Age for her "dynamic" and "powerful" performances, by the Woodstock Times for her "miraculous keyboard technique and musicianship", and by arts critic Gar Jones as "a life force of extraordinary density and capacity", Sonya has performed on major international stages and in world's foremost arts festivals to critical acclaim.

Sonya's creative practice and research interests are increasingly growing in the direction of diversification, inclusivity, and access in respect to performance-making and collaborative artistic processes. Of specific interest is collaboration with composers and artists from a diverse range of disciplines to create multi-artform performance works with strong social outcomes and broad community reach. Notable collaborations include video artist Angelica Mesiti, sound designer Bob Scott, and composer/director Max Lyandvert (*Assembly*, which represented Australia at the 2019 Venice Biennale); choreographer Rafael Bonachela and the Sydney Dance Company (YEARS, music-dance film which premiered in 2021 to an international audience of 6000 at the Brighton Digital Festival); dancer-choreographer Martin Del Amo (*Mirage*, commissioned by Campbelltown Arts Centre and presented by the 2022 Sydney Festival); performance artist Christine Johnston (*Clothing Music*, 2022, *Crumb's Lyre*, 2019, *Above/Below*, 2017, *Cosmic Mechanics*, 2016, presented by Melbourne Recital Centre, City Recital Hall, Ten Days on the Island, Canberra International Music Festival, UKARIA, BackStage, and Australian National Academy of Music); composer/media artist Damian Barbelier and interactive video artist Tim Gruchy (*Duet for One*, premiered at 2025 Canberra International Music Festival).

A fierce advocate for new Australian music, Sonya has commissioned and premiered works by Australian composers Kate Neal, Robert Davidson, Alice Chance, Damian Barbelier, Andrew Schultz, Jessica Wells, Felicity Wilcox, Anthony Lyons, Larry Sitsky, Bree Van Reyk, Max Lyandvert and Steve Adam among others. She regularly work with pioneering new music ensembles, including Ensemble Offspring, Topology, Clocked Out, and members from Bang on a Can All-Stars (USA), International Contemporary Ensemble (USA) and Eighth Blackbird (USA), to champion music of the 21st century. From 2014-2016 she was the Artistic Director of award-winning new music ensemble *Press, Play*, receiving the Contemporary Masters Award from the Melbourne Recital Centre in 2015.

In addition to making work, performing, and researching, Sonya is a passionate educator who strives to inspire and nurture the unique creative potential in all her students. She is an ardent advocate for music as a powerful agency to affect positive social change and uplift the human spirit. In pursuit of pedagogical excellence, she has designed and delivered a range of Music Creative Practice courses and Ensembles at the University of NSW that are unanimously recognized by peers and students as innovative, boundary-pushing, transformative, and current with the increasingly challenging and complex demands of the creative industries.

Sonya has been featured on ABC and SBS TV and on national radio, including ABC Classic's *Legends*, *Duet*, *Festival of Female Composers*, *New Waves* and ABC Radio National's *Music Show*. A Fulbright Scholar, Sonya studied with the legendary American pianist-conductor Leon Fleisher at the Peabody Conservatory of Music (John Hopkins University, USA) and holds a PhD from the University of Melbourne. Sonya is a regular broadcaster on ABC Classic, using the platform to advance the public discourse on art music.

CURRENT POSITION

2018-present Lecturer in Music Creative Practice, University of New South Wales (UNSW)

2019-present Founder and Artistic Director of UNSW New Music Collective

PREVIOUS ROLES

2017-2018 Lecturer in Music and Ensemble-in-Residence, Australian National University

2014-2016 Artistic Director: *Press, Play*

TERTIARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2009-2013 PhD, University of Melbourne (Nominated for University Award)

2007-2008 Attended masterclasses, intensive summer schools and private lessons with Europe's leading piano pedagogues

2004-2006 MMus (Performance), Peabody Conservatory, Johns Hopkins University, Teacher: Leon Fleisher (Dean's List)

2002-2004 Graduate Performance Diploma, Peabody Conservatory, Johns Hopkins University, Teacher: Leon Fleisher (Dean's List)

1998-2001 BMus Performance (First Class Honours), Queensland Conservatorium, Griffith University, Teacher: Natasha Vlassenko

RECENT HIGHLIGHT PERFORMANCES

- 2025** *Duet for One* – Canberra International Music Festival (WP)
- 2025** Phillip Glass: *METAMORPHOSIS* – Canberra International Music Festival
- 2025** *Opus: Her* – Orange Chamber Music Festival (Festival Gala)
- 2023-2024** *So Much Myself: Piano Portraits* – Australian Tour (WP)
- 2024** *Psychedelic Frenzy* with Ensemble Offspring – ACO Pier 2/3
- 2024** *Klange: Kandinsky* with Ensemble Offspring – Art Gallery of NSW
- 2023** *Celestial and Submerged Objects* – Four Winds Festival
- 2023** *Creative Women* – Melbourne Recital Centre (WP)
- 2022** *Crumb's Lyre* – Melbourne Recital Centre
- 2022** *Mirage* – Sidney Festival (WP)
- 2021** *Above/Below* – UKARIA
- 2021** *YEARS* – with Sydney Dance Company
- 2021** *The Surge* Tour – with Ensemble Offspring
- 2021** *Crumb's Lyre* – Canberra International Music Festival
- 2021** *Clothing Music* – Now You Hear Her Festival
- 2020** *Ten Thousand Birds* – UNSW New Music Collective online screening
- 2019** *Love-Death Music* – Extended Play (WP)
- 2019** *Stalin's Piano: Voice Portraits – Arts, Power and Politics* – Barbican Centre & De Doelen
- 2019** *ASSEMBLY* – Venice Biennale
- 2018** *HANDWORK* – National Tour
- 2017-2018** *Stalin's Piano* – Melbourne Festival, Brisbane Festival, MONAFOMA, Adelaide Festival, Ten Days on the Island, Canberra International Music Festival
- 2018** *Life Cycle* – Melbourne Recital Centre (AP)
- 2016** *Sweet is the Torment* – Melbourne Recital Centre
- 2016** *Crashing Through Fences* – Metropolis Festival
- 2015** *Canzone* – Melbourne Festival

SELECTED AWARDS AND PRIZES:

- Intermedial Composition Network –
- 2025** Research Grant, School of Arts and Media, UNSW
- 2024** Australian Women in Music Awards – Winner: Excellence in Classical Music
- 2024** Creative Australia Arts Projects for Individuals – recipient (*Duet for One*)
- Best Creative Work of the Year – Winner (*So Much Myself*), Faculty of Arts, Design & Architecture, UNSW
- Intermedial Composition Network –
- 2022** Research Grant, School of Arts and Media, UNSW
- 2021** Bundanon Centre Artist Research & Development Residency
- Best Creative Work of the Year – Winner (*Stalin's Piano*), Faculty of Arts, Design & Architecture, UNSW
- Australia Council Arts Projects for
- 2020** Individuals and Groups – recipient (*So Much Myself*)
- 2019** Australia Council UKARIA Residency – recipient
- 2018** Australian Art Music Awards – Finalist: Best Work of the Year (*Stalin's Piano*)
- 2015** Contemporary Masters Award – Winner (*Press, Play*), Melbourne Recital Centre
- 2013** Australia Council Skill Development Grant – recipient
- 2013** Australian Art Music Awards – Finalist: Best Performance of the Year (*Bright Birds*)
- 2013** Alan C. Rose Memorial Scholarship – recipient, University of Melbourne

STUDY SCHOLARSHIPS

- 2009** Australian Postgraduate Award¶
- 2001** Fulbright Scholarship
- 2001** Ian Potter Travelling Scholarship
- 2001** American-Australian Arts Fund
- 2001** Lord Mayor of Brisbane Scholarship

ARTIST RESIDENCES

- 2021** Bundanon Centre Artist Residency: *Before You Go* Creative Development (with Christine Johnston)
- 2021** Bundanon Centre Artist Residency: *Music for Plants* Creative Development (with Anthony Lyons)
- 2019** UKARIA Cultural Centre Artist Residency: *Dark Well* Creative Development (with Andrew Schultz, Alyssa Rothwell, and Stephen Emmerson)
- 2017** Malthouse Theatre Residency: *The Interview Project* Creative Development (with Christine Johnston)
- 2017** Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity Themed Residency: Concert in the 21st Century
- 2015** Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity Themed Residency: Concert as Theatre (with *Press, Play*)