

Lecture/Performance – Anna Rubin (Proposed length 30 min.)

Electroacoustic music has allowed for a profound development of narrative structures through a complex exploration of the human voice. From soundscapes exploring fragmented text in the work of Elainie Lillios to multi-level narratives such as in the work of Francis Dhomont, to new ‘instruments’ of vocal shards in Paul Lansky’s work, composers have teased and pulled at traditional vocal story-telling. I would like to explore some of these approaches to speech composition in the work *FAMILY STORIES: SOPHIE, SALLY* which was co-composed by Anna Rubin and Laurie Hollander, while reflecting on Lillios, Dhomont and Lansky’s approaches.

*FAMILY STORIES* is a text/sound piece using narrative, sampled ambient sounds and computer-generated music. Through a series of vignettes, it tells the story of a few years in the early life of Rubin's mother, Sophie Rubin, the child of Russian Jewish immigrants in Atlanta. Fragments of Yiddish, her mother tongue and klemzer music were part of her childhood memories of her early life. She was also deeply attached to an African-American woman, Sally Johnson, who took care of her after her mother became seriously ill. But her mother’s death and the surviving family’s leaving Atlanta – without Sally Johnson – suddenly robbed her of both women who had nurtured her. The racism and anti-Semitism in early 20th century Atlanta are the atmosphere in this story of a child's unbearable loss. The text was written by Rubin with help from actress/choreographer Aleta Hayes who portrays Sally Johnson in song and text within the piece.