

Susan McDonald

Guitar

B I O

Susan McDonald is a concert guitarist, composer, writer, educator and director of Remember the River, a 501c3 nonprofit organization which supports artists in regions of isolation or conflict through performances, teaching, mentorship and donations of musical instruments and art supplies.

As a concert artist, Susan's performances have spanned four continents, ranging from venues such as Carnegie Hall to refugee camps along the Syrian border. Her music has been enthusiastically received in concert halls, universities, festivals, schools, and hospitals. She served four terms on the Touring Roster of Texas Commission on the Arts and the Mid-America Arts Alliance and has released 10 CDs on the Mayfly label. Her recordings and live performances have been heard on radio and television broadcasts worldwide.

Her career and priorities shifted when her father, the harpsichordist and composer Myron McDonald, fell ill with cancer. She took a hiatus from touring to spend her days and nights playing and composing music for cancer and hospice patients and their families, from whom she grew to understand that the greatest power in music lay in its ability to provide comfort and hope. From that point on, while still maintaining a busy concert career, she has dedicated herself to sharing her music with those experiencing trauma.

As a composer, Susan is inspired by literature, nature and personal stories. She specializes in creating Animal Ballets, an art form which combines her original music with video she has filmed in locations including the Galápagos Islands and the Ecuadorian Amazon to create performances in which the animals shown on large screens with whom she musically interacts are the "dancers" and she is their "orchestra."

A passionate advocate of the arts in the classroom and with marginalized communities, Susan works domestically with Young Audiences of Houston and serves as Artistic Director for Fine Arts Foundation. She has taught at the High School for Performing and Visual Arts in Houston, Houston Community College, and the Houston Conservatory and has conducted masterclasses in North and South America and Europe. She has created guitar programs for YES Academies in Iraq, where she directed the Mesopotamian Guitar Orchestra and Ensemble

Enkidu and at the University of Notre Dame Louaize in Lebanon, where she directed the Orontes Quartet and the Taous Guitar Orchestra, which was comprised of musicians from Lebanon, Jordan, Iraqi Kurdistan and Syria.

Susan lives outside of Austin, Texas, where she enjoys hiking, beekeeping and gardening with her pet peacock Quetzalcoatl (a.k.a. "Binky.")