

FILM AT REDCAT PRESENTS

Mon April 23 | 8:30 pm |

Jack H. Skirball Series

Chantal?

A performance by cello player Sonia Wieder-Atherton based on Chantal Akerman's work

Conceived by Sonia Wieder-Atherton and Renaud Bouchard-Gonzalez

A performance structured around an absence – the filmmaker Chantal Akerman (1950-2015), represented on stage by her first film and excerpts from one of her books – and a presence – the stellar cellist Sonia Wieder-Atherton, her companion and collaborator for many years, who “imagined” this dialogue: “I wanted to play along with her, her every move, her silences, her dancing at once burlesque and deadly serious, her anxiety as she is humming little tunes. Tracking her, surprising her, surprising myself at each step. It begins with Bartók’s *Sonata for Solo Violin* (1944), transcribed here for the cello. This is followed by the first images of *Saute ma ville* (1968). And there is a voice, that began long before and will continue long after, like a endless prayer, the voice of Chantal Akerman reading *A Family in Brussels*.” — Sonia Wieder-Atherton

REDCAT is proud to trigger the West Coast tour of *Chantal?* after a series of performances in Paris and Brussels (Flagey, Cinematek).

In person: Sonia Wieder-Atherton

“The short that launched Akerman’s career, *Saute ma ville*, had the impact of a gunshot. In this incandescent, mock-heroic and frenzied work, she puts herself in front of the camera – as a ‘grand-daughter’ of Charlie Chaplin, wrecking havoc in the kitchen, savagely diverting the use of detergents, food and domestic appliances before blowing herself up, and her entire city with her, by putting her head inside the oven, a burning piece of paper by her hand. This was in the insurrectional year 1968; she was eighteen.” – *Le Monde*

"Looking again at Chantal Akerman's work today is a willful refusal to say 'goodbye' to her." – *Trafic*

"Watching Sonia Wieder-Atherton play is like watching Rudolf Nureyev dance. Her instrument is as much a part of her body as her arms or legs, and she makes it sing in a way that would seem impossible from anyone else." – *Time Out New York*

"Sonia Wieder-Atherton does not allow her art to be restricted by boundaries; with her bow she is searching for the grain of the human voice." – *Télérama*

Credits

CELLO Sonia Wieder-Atherton

VOICE Chantal Akerman reading from *A Family in Brussels* (1998) (excerpts), first performed in English at Dia Center for the Arts, October 11-13, 2001. Translation: Deborah Theodore. Copyright © 2002 Chantal Akerman.

MUSIC Béla Bartók: *Sonata for Solo Violin*, Presto / Melodia
Leoš Janáček *Moravian Poem* – musical arrangement by Sonia Wieder-Atherton
Sonia Wieder-Atherton: *New York Quatuor*
Traditional Jewish Prayer – musical arrangement by Sonia Wieder-Atherton

Sergueï Prokofiev: Cadenza, excerpt from *Symphony-Concerto*, Op.125

FILM Chantal Akerman: *Saute ma ville (Blow Up My Town)*, 1968)

TEXT Chantal Akerman: *Une Famille à Bruxelles (A Family in Brussels)*, 1998)

The artists

Cello player/composer **Sonia Wieder-Atherton's** repertoire is in "conversation" with her 30-year collaboration and friendship with Chantal Akerman since the 1980s. She played Henri Dutilleux's music in *Rue Mallet-Stevens* (1986) and again in *Trois Strophes sur le nom*

de Sacher (1989); she researched and performed traditional Jewish songs for *Histoires d'Amérique* (1988) and wrote the music of *Un divan à New York* (1996). Akerman paid her homage with *Avec Sonia Wieder-Atherton* (2002) and *A l'Est avec Sonia Wieder-Atherton* (2009) – a musical echo of the 1993 documentary *D'Est*. In 2013, she presented *Odyssey for Cello and Imaginary Choir* at The Kitchen in New York, invited by Akerman to be part of the event presenting her installation, *Maniac Shadows*.

Born in San Francisco, she grew up in New York, then Paris where she entered Maurice Gendron's class at the *Conservatoire National Supérieur*. At 19, she went to Moscow, where she studied with Natalia Chakhovskaïa at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory. At 25, she returned to France where she won the Rostropovitch Competition.

She has premiered works of composers such Pascal Dusapin, Georges Aperghis and Wolfgang Rihm, and has played with prestigious orchestras including the Orchestre National de France; Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lisbon; Israel Philharmonic; Luxembourg Philharmonic; NDR Hanover Orchestra and REMIX Ensemble, Porto. She regularly collaborates with musicians including Imogen Cooper, Raphael Oleg and Elisabeth Leonskja.

She instigated a wide range of projects combining musical and visual experiences: *Jewish songs*, inspired by the art of the Hazzan; *Songs of Slavic Lands* – a journey through *Mitteleuropa*; *Vita* – the story of Angioletta-Angel via Monteverdi and Scelsi; *Odyssey for Cello and Imaginary Choir*, in which a woman, alone with her cello, faces the elements; *Little Girl Blue*, from Nina Simone; *From the East in Music*, incorporating footage from Akerman's *D'Est*; *The Night Dances*, with Charlotte Rampling; and Marguerite Duras' *Navire Night* with Fanny Ardant. In 2017, she conceived and performed *Exile*, in collaboration with the Compagnie Sans Père and the pianist Laurent Cabasso.

In 2011, she received the *Bernheim Foundation Award* and in 2015, she was named *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres*.

When **Chantal Akerman** died on October 5, 2015, she left behind a prolific and singular oeuvre. A truly independent filmmaker, she used to write or co-write all her screenplays. She worked in a variety of formats, exploring both documentary, fiction and the personal essay form – in more than 60 works: 18 features, countless shorts and featurettes, and a dozen multiple-screen installations – always mixing high art with popular culture, minimalist rigor with physical exuberance. Through this multiplicity of formats, though, a unique tone, the specific quality of the gaze, an inimitable mastery of the *mise en scène* constituted a style that can be immediately spotted.

Born in Brussels in 1950, Akerman fell in love with cinema when

she saw Godard's *Pierrot le fou* as a teenager. At 18 she made her first short, the irreverent *Saute ma ville* (1968), and at 25, with *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), she became a household name, defining an era, and influencing filmmakers as different as Béla Tarr, Gus Van Sant and Nina Menkes.

She often appeared in her films, racing, meditating, writing, sleeping, stumbling into things, singing – a “female Charlie Chaplin,” she used to say. Her presence was the index of a novel way of performing femininity, queerness *and* the anguish felt by the children of Holocaust survivors. Hers was an unclassifiable body exploding the boundaries of sex, race, ethnicity, genre, language and geography – at the border of the image, at the “border between documentary and fiction” – as an inimitable voice, the thinly melodious voice of a child, later made husky by the smoke of a thousand cigarettes.

Some of her most noted films include: *Hotel Monterey* (1972), *Je tu il elle* (1974), *News from Home* (1976), *Les Rendez-vous d'Anna* (1978), *Toute une nuit* (1982), *Golden Eighties* (1986), *Histoires d'Amérique* (1986), *D'Est* (1993), *Sud* (1999), *La Captive* (2000), *De l'autre côté* (2002), *Avec Sonia Wieder-Atherton* (2002), *Demain on déménage* (2004), *Là-bas* (2006), *La Folie Almayer* (2011) and *No Home Movie* (2015).

Her work has received many retrospectives around the world – the last one being at the Cinémathèque française (01/31-03/02/2018).

Other West Coast performances of Chantal?

Seattle

Monday, April 29 – 7:00 PM

Northwest Film Forum

1515 12th Ave, Seattle, WA 98122

(206) 329-2629

See: <https://nwfilmforum.org/events/chantal-on-the-boards-with-sonia-wieder-atherton/>

Presented by Northwest Film Forum and On the Boards

Portland

Tuesday, May 1, 7pm

Wednesday, May 2, 7pm

Pacific Northwest College of Art's Mediatheque

511 NW Broadway, Portland, OR 97209

415-321-9304

See: <http://www.zenazezza.org/detail.php?id=24,273>

Presented by Zena Zezza with Third Angle New Music, Pacific Northwest College of Art, Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education and Northwest Film Center

Presented in collaboration with the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States, the California Institute of the Arts School of Music, Zena Zezza, Northwest Film Center, Third Angle New Music, Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education, Pacific Northwest College of Art, Portland's Regional Arts & Culture Council, Northwest Film Forum and On the Boards – with the support of Fondation Chantal Akerman.

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