

Jess Keyes

jessica.m.keyes@gmail.com

Composer and Performer

Exploring interdisciplinary music-making, ecstatic energy, and communion with the audience.

Selected Affiliations

2015 - present	Solo Performer and Artistic Collaborator Composer, arranger, improviser, and instrument designer. Instrumentalist on synthesizers, saxophone, piano, voice, and banjo.
2017 - present	Bedlam Brass Bandleader, composer, and baritone saxophonist for this 12-piece brass band.
2021 - 2024	Mid-Atlantic Wilderness Organizer, host, and performer for this series of improvised music shows featuring musicians from a wide range of backgrounds.

Recognition

- [Rubys Artist Grant](#) 2024 recipient for *Patien(t/ce)*
- [“Sensing the Stage - Jessica Keyes.”](#) Dogbotic Labs artist profile. March 15, 2024.
- [“Rousuck's Review: Baltimore Rock Opera Society's 'The Gold Night'.”](#) WYPR. October 19, 2023.
- [“Celebrating Art and Science at Voyages: Chapter 2.”](#) National Aquarium. February 10, 2023.

Notable Performances and Projects

Patien(t/ce)

A system of handmade DIY electronics in wearable knitted, woven, and crocheted objects for controlling Eurorack modular synth and a suite of original music composed for performance with this system.

Patien(t/ce) uses music, poetry, movement, fiber arts, and lighting design to make visible the invisible experience of chronic illness and pain.

2025

International tour to present lecture-demonstrations about the *Patien(t/ce)* system and artistic process. Performances introducing a fourth controller and refined musical arrangements.

- Panel discussion with Tom Boram about artistic process and instrument design for modular synth, with a performance of *Patien(t/ce)* with both gloves (Mar 15)

- Performance with both gloves at the “Melt ‘n Ooze” music festival (May 2)
- Debut performance with new tethered socks controller, plus basket and both gloves (May 29)
- Guest lecture biofeedback-based synth controllers at Johns Hopkins University (Oct 15)
- Guest lecture and performance for the XiME ensemble at University of Alberta, Canada (Nov 3)
- Guest lecture and demo for a computer music class at University of Alberta, Canada (Nov 4)
- Performance with both gloves and tethered socks at Blakbar in Edmonton, Canada (Nov 5)

2024

Five performances, each featuring a newly designed element of the *Patien(t/ce)* system and newly composed music.

- Concept performance of “Aphasia,” without wireless controllers (Mar 23)
- Full-length performance using prototypes controllers, featuring “Aphasia” and concept performance of “Be Patient” (Apr 12)
- Debut performance with first knitted wireless glove controller in solo improvisation (Aug 25)
- First performance with both gloves and the original songs “Partners in Distress” and “Erdman” (Sept 29)
- Collaborative improvised performance with *Patien(t/ce)* system (Oct 27)
- Third controller: woven basket holding felt balls, along with both gloves (Dec 14)

2023

Two performances exploring the themes of chronic illness and disability and experimenting with gestural approaches to controlling Eurorack modular synth.

- First concept performance (Feb 3)
- Proof-of-concept performance using prototype controllers (July 2)

Will the Great Water Remember

May 2, 2025

6-Album Digital Release

Released on Bandcamp and streaming services, this collection represents three movements from the Voyages performance of *Will the Great Water Remember* and three from the National Aquarium Harbor Wetland installation. For “Present,” the 10 tracks each represent a historical date of some personal or Baltimore local significance for which water quality data was available from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Eyes on the Bay program, from which tracks were generated to reflect how the music would have sounded that day in Harbor Wetland.

August 2024

Music Installation in the National Aquarium Harbor Wetland

An adaptation of the 2022 commission *Will the Great Water Remember* by Jess Keyes and Patrick McMinn with three new movements for a permanent installation in the new Harbor Wetland at the National Aquarium. “Past” was composed by McMinn, “Future” was composed by Keyes, and “Present” is a collaborative algorithmic composition that takes live water quality data collected by Eyes on the Bay at the Inner Harbor testing station and transforms it into generative music that changes from day to day depending on the water conditions.

November 17, 2022

***Voyages, Chapter II* at The National Aquarium**

Collaborators Jess Keyes and Patrick McMinn were selected as the featured performers for this immersive event attended by over 400 people. *Will the Great Water Remember* was a four-movement piece in which all the movements were performed simultaneously for 2.5 hours. The audience listened on 3-channel headphones on which they chose between a solo generative performance by Keyes called “The Body is the Foundation,” a solo generative performance by McMinn called “A Coefficient of Memory,” and a collaborative live performance by both called “What Follows the Stochastic Event.” Concurrently, a 10-piece ensemble of musicians roamed through the Aquarium performing “Lateral Lines,” composed by Keyes, which included music, movement, and audience interaction that could be experienced independently of the music in the headphones, or alongside it.

Additional Performances and Projects

- Fall 2025 ***The Mad Lover* by John Fletcher** with the US Naval Academy Masqueraders
Composed new music in a synth pop style for the original Renaissance-period songs.
- April 18, 2025 **Bedlam Brass’ Second Annual Big F*cking Desk Concert** at Current Space
Brought the very large desk back out and produced a sold-out show.
- Mar 23, 2025 **Solo Performance** at Wax Atlas
Saxophone with electronics.
- Apr 19, 2024 **Bedlam Brass’ First Annual Big F*cking Desk Concert** at Current Space
Designed a very large desk to serve as a stage platform and produced a sold-out show.
- Fall 2023 ***The Gold Night*** with the Baltimore Rock Opera Society
Pitched the original idea for this full-length rock opera. Collaborated on the script and co-wrote the music. Acted as music director and band leader for the production. Provided additional support with graphic design and project management.
- Dec 18, 2022 **Mid-Atlantic Wilderness + Sustain Us** at The Crown
Hosted and performed at a special edition of MAW featuring a collaboration with the improvised movement project Sustain Us.
- July 8, 2022 **Bedlam Brass** album release show at the Crown
Booked and performed at this show to celebrate the release of our first album *Exit Seeking Behavior* alongside Baltimore musicians Kevin Sherry, Eze Jackson, and Chiffon.
- Mar 6, 2022 **High Zero Group Reprise** at the Baltimore Museum of Art
Performed three sets of improvised music with other women from the 2021 High Zero festival for a BMA community day event.

- Nov 2021 **Bedlam Brass** mini-tour with Dan Deacon
Opened act for Dan Deacon at Brooklyn Steel in New York and the 9:30 Club in Washington, DC. Also joined Dan on stage for the second half of his set. I arranged four of Dan's songs for Bedlam Brass.
- Sept 24, 2021 **High Zero Festival**
Saxophone with electronics. Performed an improvised set with two other musicians.
- May 31, 2021 ***Mercy Athena***, album release
Musical collaboration with Thomas Ward for the *Mercy Athena* project by poet Andrea Applebee to bring her short book to audio. Co-wrote and recorded the music, and mixed and published the album on Bandcamp.
- Nov 2020 ***Upbraid the Permitting Stars***, solo album release under name Mueo
I composed this durational ambient album on my bedside synthesizer setup during the period between two spine surgeries when I was bedridden. The music served as a powerful pain management tool.
- Mar 8, 2020 **Ecstata** (duo with April Camlin) at Rituals
Saxophone with electronics.
- Nov 8, 2019 **Solo Performance** at The Waiting Room (Philadelphia)
Saxophone with electronics.
- Oct 18, 2019 **Ecstata** (duo with April Camlin) at Brentwood Arts Exchange (DC)
Saxophone with electronics.

Education

"Thread and Circuits" course, 2023 Dogbotic Labs
Master of Arts, *Ethnomusicology*, 2007 University of Alberta
Bachelor of Music, *Saxophone*, 2004 University of Alberta

Employment

Johns Hopkins University Sheridan Libraries. *User Experience Analyst*, 2016 - present
Baltimore Museum of Art. *Manager of Interpretation*, 2014 - 2016