Amy Beth Kirsten’s music combines popular idioms with fierce expressionism and theatre and often requires musicians to play, vocalize, act, and move simultaneously. Her work is distinguished by an intense physicality that pushes players to extremes by making their bodies and voices instruments of artistic expression.

A composer, librettist, and vocalist, Kirsten begins the 2016-17 season in residence at Montclair State University (NJ) with her ensemble, [HOWL](http://www.wearehowl.org), to develop *Quixote* - an evening-length theatrical work inspired by Cervantes and performed by vocal trio and vocalizing percussion quartet. This 2-year extended residency includes six weeklong workshops and culminates in a world premiere performances directed by Mark DeChiazza in March 2017.

Her most recent staged work, [*Colombine’s Paradise Theatre*](http://colombinesparadisetheatre.org/)*,* opened the 2014-15 seasons of Chicago’s Museum of Contemporary Art and New York’s Miller Theatre selling out both venues. *The Washington Post* called it a “tour de force” and said it has “a beguiling element of the grotesque throughout, and the music is complex and multilayered, rich in allusions, and often extraordinarily beautiful.” Anthony Tommasini at the *New York Times* found it “dark, wild and engrossing” with a “wondrously eclectic score, which combines spiky modernism, breezy pop, hints of Indian music, percussion wildness and more.” The work was commissioned and produced by the multi-Grammy-winning [eighth blackbird](http://www.eighthblackbird.org/) and directed by [Mark DeChiazza](http://markdechiazza.com/).

In 2014 Kirsten made her Carnegie Hall debut with *strange pilgrims*, a concert work for chorus, orchestra, and film commissioned by the [American Composers Orchestra](http://www.americancomposers.org). She was also the inaugural Composer-in-Residence for London’s [Riot Ensemble](http://riotensemble.com/) which gave the world premiere of*she is a myth* as well as the U.K. premieres of several of her solo and chamber works.

She has been recognized with artist fellowships from the John S. Guggenheim Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. Most recently she received the Leonard Bernstein Award from ASCAP. In 2014 the College of DuPage (where she was a student from 1990-1992) appointed her to the inaugural class of Distinguished Alumni.

Educated at Roosevelt University (MM) and the Peabody Institute (DMA), Kirsten is co-founder and director of HOWL – a modular new music ensemble that specializes in instrumental and vocal theatre. In 2014, HOWL's record label, Bad Wolf Music, releasedits first recording, [If this world could stop.](http://www.lindsaykesselmancd.com/) Upcoming releases include she is a myth, the first CD of Kirsten's solo and chamber works. Kirsten's music is also recorded on the Parlour Tapes+ label.

Kirsten lives and works in New Haven, CT and teaches music composition privately and at the [HighSCORE](http://www.highscorefestival.com/about.asp) summer festival in Pavia, Italy. She was recently appointed Adjunct Faculty of Music Composition at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University for 2015-17 academic years.