

amy beth kirsten – full bio

Recognized by The American Academy of Arts and Letters, the John S. Guggenheim Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation, composer-director Amy Beth Kirsten's musical and conceptual language is characterized by an abiding interest in exploring theatrical elements of creation, performance, and presentation. Her body of work fuses music, language, voice, and theatre and often considers musicians' instruments, bodies, and voices as equal vehicles of expression. Ms. Kirsten has written and composed fully-staged theatrical works as well as traditional concert works for her own ensemble, HOWL (2012 - 2018), musicians from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the New World Symphony, Peak Performances, the multi-Grammy-winning eighth blackbird, American Composers Orchestra, and many others.

Ms. Kirsten begins the 2022/23 season in collaboration with Timothy Leopold (trumpet) writing and composing an evening-length music-driven theatrical work, *Jacob in Chains: A Christmas Ghost Story*, commissioned, produced, and performed by Alarm Will Sound.

In 2018, Ms. Kirsten composed and directed *Savior* - a collaboration between HOWL and musicians of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for the 20th anniversary of MusicNOW. A mystical re-telling of the story of Joan of Arc for two sopranos, mezzo-soprano, alto flute, percussion, cello, and pre-recorded voice, the 60-minute work was presented on April 2 at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance and made the Chicago Tribune's list of "10 Best Classical Concerts of 2018."

World premiere performances in 2017 of Ms. Kirsten's 90-minute *QUIXOTE* were the culmination of a 2-year artist residency at Montclair State University (NJ) with HOWL. A theatrical work inspired by Cervantes' epic novel and performed by vocal trio, singing percussion quartet, and actor/director, Mark DeChiazza, it was described as "wildly inventive" by *The New York Times*.

Colombine's Paradise Theatre, an evening-length work commissioned and produced by the multi-Grammy-winning eighth blackbird, 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."

Ms. Kirsten made her Carnegie Hall debut in 2014 with *strange pilgrims*, a concert work for chorus, orchestra, and film commissioned by the American Composers Orchestra. That season she was also the inaugural Composer-in-Residence for London's Riot Ensemble who commissioned *she is a myth* and gave the U.K. premieres of several of her chamber works.

Guest lectures have included those at Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester (U.K.), Yale University, Princeton University, Curtis Institute, Cornell University, and the Royal Academy of Music in London.

Ms. Kirsten grew up in the suburbs of Kansas City and Chicago and was educated at the College of DuPage, Benedictine University (BM), Roosevelt University (MM) and the Peabody Institute (DMA). In the fall of 2023, she joins the composition faculty at The Juilliard School where she will maintain a private teaching studio and teach a two-semester course called "Theatre Etudes." She also serves on the composition faculty at The Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, PA and, at Longy School of Music in Cambridge, MA she directs a two-year Residency program for artists in all disciplines. She has previously held faculty positions at Oberlin College and Conservatory and the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University.

Ms. Kirsten lives with in New Haven, CT with a big, fat, orange cat and cuddly doodle-hound.