

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION
The University of Michigan
School of Music, Theatre & Dance

Kristin P. Kuster, assistant professor of music, without tenure, Department of Composition, School of Music, Theatre & Dance, is recommended for promotion to associate professor of music, with tenure, Department of Composition, School of Music, Theatre & Dance.

Academic Degrees:

D.M.A.	2002	University of Michigan, music composition
M.M.	1998	University of Colorado at Boulder, music theory and composition
B.A.	1995	University of San Diego

Professional Record:

2008 – present	Assistant Professor of Music, University of Michigan
2004 – 2005	Visiting Assistant Professor, Denison University
2003 – 2004	Adjunct Lecturer, University of Michigan, School of Music, Theatre & Dance
2002 – 2003	Visiting Lecturer, University of Michigan, School of Music, Theatre & Dance

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Kuster is an engaging, inspiring and devoted teacher who has a keen sense of the specific needs of individual students. She subscribes to the philosophy that there is no single approach to the pedagogy of composition, and her flexible teaching style reflects this belief. Her students consistently produce fine work, and the demand for her studio is consistently high. Some of her students' more distinguished awards and commissions include a Charles Ives Scholarship from the American Academy of Arts & Letters, the Donald Sinta Quartet National Composition Competition, the Druckman Prize of the Aspen Music Festival, MIZZOU International Composers Festival (resident composers), Presser Foundation Music Awards, and the American Bandmasters Association Commission. Professor Kuster is a gifted teacher at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Her course evaluations are consistently in the higher ranges, with praise for her mentoring abilities, her respectful nature, and her no-nonsense, informative approach to the sophisticated topic of composition. In the past few years, she has served on 13 doctoral dissertation committees, including one as the chair. Her students speak to her positive influence in their lives while at university and beyond.

Creative Activities: Within the past five years, Professor Kuster has been extraordinarily prolific in her professional accomplishments, including 17 compositions commissioned, 24 completed compositions, 12 important critical reviews of her works published, 20 public appearances, 100 performances of her compositions, and six performances released on commercial recordings. It is just not the quantity of her work but also the quality that is impressive. She has received prestigious commissions from the American Composers Orchestra, the Prism Saxophone Quartet, Sequitur, Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, and the Colorado Music Festival. She is recognized nationally and internationally, including two recordings of her work on the internationally renowned Naxos label. She has been favorably reviewed by such prominent

publications as the *New York Times* and the *Baltimore Sun*. Professor Kuster's work has been supported by a wide variety of organizations, such as the League of American Orchestras/Meet the Composer, American Opera Projects and American Composers Forum; and she has been honored with a Charles Ives Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Professor Kuster's music is inventive, approachable and in vocal music deeply sensitive to the text. She has a natural affinity for bridging the gap between inventive and understandable, and is able to connect with a wide range of audiences. Her work has been described as accomplished, well-realized, beautifully orchestrated and personally motivated. She creates music in many genres, for ensembles large and small (orchestra, wind ensemble, chorus, and chamber music), and she is regarded as a significant artist taking her place among the most gifted American composers of her generation.

Service: Professor Kuster's service is commendable and meaningful. She attends all departmental Student Composers Forums, admissions meetings and departmental events. She has served several terms on the Faculty Council on Graduate Studies and the Council of Departmental Representatives (the two curricular committees of the School). Professor Kuster is currently the Composition Department graduate advisor and its director of social media. Service for the school includes a one-year term as an elected member of the Scholarship Committee, participation on a faculty search committee, and guest presentations for the American Music course on several occasions. Beyond the school, Professor Kuster was invited to serve on the UM International Institute Individual Fellowship Review Panel, the Living Arts Core Course Evaluation Committee, and the Department of State U.S. Student Fulbright Program Campus Evaluation Committee.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: "Professor Kuster has received a number of prestigious commissions. She seems to have successfully maintained an active presence on the national music scene, while simultaneously holding a demanding teaching job."

Reviewer B: "Kristin Kuster is clearly an excellent composer. Every work reveals a substantial musical mind. I would assess Professor Kuster as a significant artist who is taking her place among the most gifted American composers of her generation."

Reviewer C: "Kristin Kuster's professional accomplishments are exemplary both in terms of productivity and the overall quality of the work. Professor Kuster's visibility at the national level is more than respectable. Her work has already been extensively recorded on CD, including two recordings of her work on the internationally renowned Naxos label. Her work has been favorably reviewed in prominent publications such as the *New York Times* and the *Baltimore Sun*, among others."

Reviewer D: "Professor Kuster has worked diligently writing and engineering a wide array of performances. This is an astoundingly large output, and is to be applauded and recognized. She has certainly made a solid and robust effort to create a national presence as a composer for herself and for the composition department at UM."

Reviewer E: “I know with each piece that she writes, I can expect a high quality musical experience. She is an exceptional individual, managing to balance a very active composing career while serving as an effective teacher, mentor, and colleague. She is very visible on the world stage, musically and through the written word. I’m envious that the University of Michigan has her as a faculty member. Her students are fortunate to have such an educator and mentor.”

Reviewer F: “Professor Kuster has also contributed to the progress of the composition program in the School of Music, exemplifying its vitality not only through what appears to be thoughtful teaching, but also an unusual number of appearances throughout the country. Kuster’s music sparkles with lively energy and detail. I am grateful to have learned so much about intelligent and beautifully wrought musical work.”

Reviewer G: “Her music is meticulously notated and has a dramatic impact. I am particularly impressed with her ability to write in many genres, which include both large and small ensembles such as orchestra, wind ensemble, chorus, and chamber music. Composition can be a difficult thing to teach, but her approach has obviously worked for the students, and from her evaluations, she has cultivated a nurturing and supportive environment.”

Reviewer H: “Professor Kuster is not only one of the most important composers of our time, but it appears that she is also a gifted and dedicated teacher. In a relatively short amount of time, Professor Kuster has produced students of the highest caliber who are enjoying great success and accolades. I see and hear the work of one of the leading composers of her generation.”

Reviewer I: “Dr. Kuster has experienced great success as a composition professor as evidenced by the strong appearances of her current and former students at important festivals and in composition contests. I believe that she will continue to be a vibrant contributor to your storied composition program, to the university, and to the music community at large for many years to come.”

Reviewer J: “Her music is well represented by performers and ensembles around the country. She has also written articles in some of the public forums for contemporary music that have impressed me. This in itself is a good indication that she has indeed achieved a national reputation as one of the leading composers of her generation.”

Reviewer K: “Dr. Kuster is clearly a prolific and dedicated composer. Certainly, the record of achievement of former students is quite impressive, as one would expect from Michigan composers.”

Reviewer L: “Her national profile is growing steadily, and she seems to be on a path towards national prominence with notable performances. She is a marvelous composer and respected colleague, witty, charming, gracious, actively involved in a wide array of organizations (she cares), passionate about her career, and wholly committed to her job as a teacher. Her music reflects this same passion, and seems to be getting better and better. I think you may have a gem in your midst.”

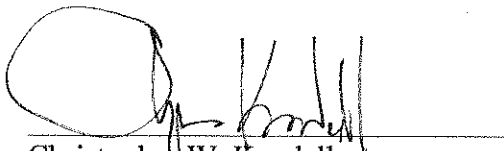
Reviewer M: "I am deeply impressed by the quality of each work presented in the portfolio, and think that Kristin is highly prolific and her music is bright and colorful, dynamic and energetic, fluent and effective, idiomatic and original. Kristin's excellent creative and professional activities proved that she is a [junior] established composer in the new music field, and her contribution is unmistakable."

Internal Review:

Professor Kuster is highly regarded as a gifted composer as well as a highly valued member of our musical community. She is supportive and dependable, and is extremely efficient and organized with her administrative duties. Her work extends beyond our community and contributes substantially to the reputation of the department and school. She frequently works with the Men's Glee Club, orchestras, bands, and other departments, providing a broad spectrum of compositional engagement across programs. Her positive energy and diplomatic skills are significant and will allow her to assume departmental leadership roles in the future.

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Kuster is a devoted and enthusiastic teacher who selflessly provides mentoring and inspiration to our students. She is a strong contributor to her department and represents an important part of its future. Her works are nationally and internationally recognized, and she is considered among the most prolific, gifted, emerging American composers of her generation. It is with great enthusiasm and with the support of the School of Music, Theatre & Dance Executive Committee that I recommend Kristin P. Kuster for promotion to associate professor of music, with tenure, Department of Composition, School of Music, Theatre & Dance.



Christopher W. Kendall
Paul Boylan Collegiate Professor of Music
and Dean, School of Music, Theatre & Dance

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