

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

Kristin P. Kuster, associate professor of music, with tenure, Department of Composition, School of Music, Theatre & Dance, is recommended for promotion to professor of music, with tenure, Department of Composition, School of Music, Theatre & Dance.

Academic Degrees:

D.M.A.	2002	University of Michigan, Composition
M.M.	1998	University of Colorado at Boulder, Theory & Composition
B.A.	1995	University of San Diego

Professional Record:

2014 – present	Associate Professor of Music, Department of Composition, University of Michigan
2008 – 2014	Assistant Professor of Music, Department of Composition, University of Michigan
2004 – 2005	Visiting Assistant Professor, Denison University

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching: Professor Kuster’s teaching record is exemplary. She nurtures the development of each student’s compositional and artistic voice, while holding them to high standards for compositional technique and the execution of their ideas. In her one-on-one applied studio teaching, she addresses students as individuals and endeavors to support their current intellectual and artistic sensibilities. Her syllabi are detailed while still providing room for aesthetic thought and variation. In addition to her work with individual composition students, she also teaches Introduction to Composition (COMP 221/421), Creative Composition (COMP 222), and Your Story: Your Terms (COMP 233), an innovative course taught collaboratively with a colleague from musical theatre, designed to “examine and practice the art of collaborative creative expression in short mediums.” It is worth noting that she specifically addresses in her teaching the issue of navigating the public sphere, a topic that is crucial for the success of a composer. She prepares her students for success in the profession. Her students have secured prominent positions in the field as composers-in-residence (Albany Symphony, Opera Company of Philadelphia, Lexington Philharmonic), and faculty at peer institutions (Colorado, Michigan State, Missouri, Nebraska, Peabody Conservatory at Johns Hopkins), and have received notable recognition, including commissions (New York Youth Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble), and prestigious fellowships and prizes (Tanglewood, Aspen, American Academy of Arts and Letters).

Professional Activities: Professor Kuster is a composer of concert music, whose works explore a wide variety of settings for instruments and voice. She has been commissioned by many high-profile musical organizations including the Des Moines Metro Opera, the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, and the Detroit, Baltimore, and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestras. The Detroit commission was supported by a prestigious BMI Foundation grant. Professor Kuster has been invited for residencies as a guest composer by the Cabrillo Festival, the Boulder Philharmonic, Washington University, Oberlin, Cornell, and the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami – all highly visible and important venues, and reflective of her standing in the profession. She is prolific, and has composed thirteen works since 2014, the year she received tenure. Many of her compositions are for large musical forces and of substantial length. She has written for solo violin, orchestra, choir, chamber ensemble, voice soloist with orchestra, saxophone quartet, as has a full-length opera and a piece for violin and

orchestra in progress. As further evidence of the artistic value and import of her work, her compositions are regularly performed nationally by high profile ensembles and soloists (Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, Roomful of Teeth). Public pre-concert talks, guest lectures, and participation on panel discussions are important activities for her as a composer and these appearances provide important connection points with audiences. Professor Kuster shows a consistently high level of productivity as a composer and there is every indication that this trajectory will continue into the future.

Service: Since 2017, Professor Kuster has served as the chair of the Department of Composition and has provided exemplary leadership that supports students and faculty. She has also served as the director of graduate studies for composition since 2010, and as her department's representative on the SMTD Faculty Council on Graduate Studies (graduate curriculum committee) for several year. In service to the school, she has contributed to many important committees, including the most recent searches for two faculty positions in percussion, and the committee that reviewed SMTD's merit process, among others.

Professor Kuster has been engaged in meaningful service to the profession, as well, and has served as an adjudicator for many important national composition contests, including those sponsored by OPERA America, BMI, the Aspen Music Festival, New Music USA, and the Music Teachers' National Association. Recently, she was as a consultant to the Mellon Foundation's New Orchestral Commissioning & Programming project.

External Reviewers:

Reviewer A: "Prof. Kuster has a consistent level of creative output, with typically 2-3 commissions per year, including from many important organizations (Detroit Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, etc.), which is a substantial track record...Prof. Kuster has participated as judge or mentor in a number of significant national competitions and programs...She seems to be in demand as a respected adjudicator and panelist."

Reviewer B: "She is passionate and articulate in the way she approaches her teaching duties, for with finesse she is able to tailor her advice and guidance to the needs of composition students at all levels. Kristin's compositional output is more than impressive – her work shows a deepening appreciation and understanding of form and structure, the importance of engaging ALL elements to serve the whole."

Reviewer C: "It would be an understatement to say that listening to the music contained in Dr. Kuster's dossier was enjoyable. Dr. Kuster is a composer of the highest order, who has produced a large volume of work of exceptional quality. Her numerous glowing reviews in major publications attest to the success of performances of her pieces...Few composers are ever performed by major orchestras, and Dr. Kuster seems to have cracked that code by dint of her exceptional skill."

Reviewer D: "In my view, Kuster's professional reputation, while strongest at the local and regional levels, is gaining nationally...Kuster is highly regarded as a gifted teacher of composition and spokesperson for the artform. Her articles for newmusicusa.org have brought her to the attention of readers of that platform, and several of her students are enjoying successful careers."

Reviewer E: "Kristin is a prolific and accomplished composer, a dedicated teacher, and a positive voice in the new music community...Her works have been performed and presented by some of the most recognized institutions in the US...That she has balanced a significant composing career alongside teaching and service is indeed impressive."

Reviewer F: “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 fresh and innovative, idiomatic and original, bright and colorful, dynamic and energetic, fluent and effective, in wide range of instrumentations...In short, her excellent creativities and activities proved that she is an established composer in the new music field, and her contribution is unmistakable.”

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Kuster is a highly effective teacher with a strong record of student success. She is a prolific composer whose works have captured the attention of top-level ensembles and soloists, and she has a strong and sustained record of service to the School and the larger profession. With the unanimous support of the School of Music, Theatre & Dance Executive Committee, I enthusiastically recommend and support Kristin P. Kuster for promotion to professor of music, with tenure, Department of Composition, School of Music, Theatre & Dance.



David Gier
Paul Boylan Collegiate Professor of Music
and Dean, School of Music, Theatre & Dance

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