MICHAEL KUREK

Full Length Biography

Throughout his stylistic evolution from modernism to postmodernism to a fully narrative traditionalism, Michael Kurek's ever-present integrity of craft and his music's emotional power have steadily earned him both national and international recognition, with performances by symphony orchestras and chamber ensembles on five continents and downloads on six. He has received some of the nation's most important composition awards and has enjoyed world-wide publication, recording, and broadcast of his works for the concert hall. His numerous prizes for composition include the prestigious Academy Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Academy's highest annual "lifetime achievement" award in music (now called the Arts and Letters Award; the Academy had earlier also awarded him their Charles Ives Prize). His 2017 album, The Sea Knows, made its debut at No. 1 on the Billboard Traditional Classical chart, and all of his works on Spotify are currently approaching a total of a million streams, just to name one of the online streaming services offering his music. On March 18, 2022, the governor of Tennessee signed into law a bill from the State House of Representatives and Senate naming Michael Kurek "Composer Laureate of the State of Tennessee."

Michael Kurek's music has been performed live and/or heard on radio or TV throughout the U.S. and, internationally, multiple times in 43 other countries, including France, England, Germany, Japan, Korea, Denmark, the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Russia, Portugal, Australia, Brazil, Italy, and Sweden. A variety of professional soloists and chamber groups have performed his works during numerous guest composer residencies at universities, music festivals, conferences, and concert venues (e.g., the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D. C.). Michael Kurek's works have been featured by the principal professional symphony orchestras of cities as diverse as Atlanta , Indianapolis, Green Bay, Nashville, Bridgeport, Lansing, and Fargo, by the Pacific Symphony Orchestra in Los Angeles, the Czech Radio Philharmonic in Prague, the Tomsk Philharmonic (Russia), the Reutlingen Philharmonie (Stuttgart, Germany), the Limeira, Brazil Symphony, the Brisbane, Australia Philharmonic, and several university orchestras and chamber ensembles worldwide. He has been profiled in numerous magazines, journals, and newspapers, and his music has been widely broadcasted on classical radio stations, including nationally on NPR's "Morning Edition" and nation-wide on Germany's "KlassikRadio." A BMI-affiliated composer, he is published by Gems Publications, Lyon & Healy (Chicago), The Tuba Euphonium Press, and

Spectrum Music Press (Los Angeles), Harp Column Music, CIR Music (choral works), and SheetMusicPlus.com. His works are available internationally on compact disc through Amazon, New World Records, PARMA/Navona Recordings, and over 50 major digital download distributors.

Kurek has garnered a MacDowell Fellowship from the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire; a Fromm Fellowship in Composition at the Tanglewood Music Center; a Fellowship at the Wellesley College Composers Conference; and first-place wins in many national composition competitions, along with important awards and recognitions from Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI), the American Symphony Orchestra League, Meet the Composer Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Music Teachers' National Association.

He serves on several professional boards and committees, including voting membership in The Recording Academy, with fourteen years on their Classical Grammy Awards Nominations Committee in Los Angeles. His service has also included many years of membership on the Board of Directors of the John W. Work III Memorial Foundation, which awards minority music scholarships nationally. A popular guest composer at Universities and music schools, Dr. Kurek also serves as an adjudicator in national music competitions, such as the Music Teachers National Association's MTNA-Shepherd "Distinguished Composer of the Year" award, the Golden Key Honor Society, the Young Texas Artists Music Competition, the National Federation of Music Clubs Young Composers Competition, the Marion Richter American Music Awards, and the Victor Herbert/ASCAP Awards.

Professor Kurek served several years as Chair of the Department of Music Composition at the Blair School of Music of Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, then gave up administrative duties in order to devote himself more fully to teaching and an increasing number of commissions. In May, 2020 he began a new chapter in his career, devoting himself full-time to composing and writing, by taking on the title Professor Emeritus of Composition at Vanderbilt University. He previously held positions at the State University of New York at Fredonia and at the Chicago Musical College of Roosevelt University. His own teachers included European composers Hans Werner Henze and Eugene Kurtz, along with American Pulitzer-prize winners Leslie Bassett and William Bolcom at the University of Michigan, where he received the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in composition. In 2006, the

Panhellenic Council and all ten sororities of Vanderbilt University presented Michael Kurek with the award “Best Blair Educator at Vanderbilt.”

At the American Academy of Arts and Letters May, 1994 Ceremonial in New York, composer Ned Rorem read aloud the following citation: “Michael Kurek’s music harmonizes in a charming and compelling way, intense lyricism with intellectual depth, clear and elegant formal design, and with a richly imaginative orchestral surface. His harp concerto exemplifies his ability of displaying a musical narrative that is as accessible as it is demanding. His musical world is an intensely traditional one, accented and punctuated by gestures and rhythms of today.”

