

Biography of Ian Krouse

American composer Ian Krouse is recognized internationally as one of the leading composers of classical guitar music still working today, though throughout his career he has written for nearly every ensemble and in nearly every genre, including opera. In addition to hundreds of performances annually by guitarists and guitar quartets all around the world, his works are performed and recorded each season by major artists and ensembles such as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Ukrainian Radio & Television Orchestra, the Philharmonic Orchestras of Cairo, Armenia, and New Zealand, the Mexico City and Pasadena Chamber Orchestras, the Aureole Trio, Dinosaur Annex, 20th Century Consort, Remix, Debussy Trio, Pacific Serenades, Dilijan Ensemble, May Festival Choir, and Los Angeles Chamber Singers.

Born in 1956 in Olney, Maryland, composer Ian Krouse has been hailed in Gramophone as “one of the most communicative and intriguing young composers on the music scene today.” Of his well-known *Bulerías*, Soundboard described his music as “absorbing, brutal, beautiful, and harsh, all at the same time.” He is widely known for his pioneering development of the guitar quartet, of which he has composed eleven to date, including the epic *Quartet No. 5 Labyrinth* (On A Theme of Led Zeppelin), most of which have received multiple recordings and are now featured regularly in the touring repertoires of the leading ensembles of our time. Several of his solo guitar works, most notably *Da Chara*, *Air*, (In the Irish style) and *Variations On A Moldavian Hora*, have received multiple recordings and are performed regularly by guitarists all over the world.

Though some have described his music as “universalism” or “totalism”, American composer Richard Danielpour has drawn a comparison between Krouse’s music and that of the great Hungarian composer, Béla Bartok, in that both composers rely heavily upon folk, popular, and world music influences. Though certainly true in Krouse’s case, many of his works also draw much from Renaissance, Baroque, and Medieval music.

Without a doubt, his most important work is the groundbreaking *Armenian Requiem*, Op. 66, scored for four vocal soloists, string quartet, organ, Armenian instruments, children’s chorus, choir, and orchestra, which received its premiere to general acclaim in April 2015, at UCLA’s Royce Hall. Commissioned by the Lark Musical Society to commemorate the 100th year anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, the *Armenian Requiem* is the first ever large-scale concert setting of the traditional Armenian requiem liturgy. The much anticipated debut recording of the work will be released in March 2019 on Naxos.

Krouse’s vocal works, of which there are dozens, including song cycles, three vocal symphonies, choral works, and an opera, have over the past few years brought the composer some attention. In the lead up to the premiere of the Armenian Requiem, the Lark Musical Society commissioned two works on Armenian texts: *Nocturnes*, on poems by Metzarents, Mahari and Terian, for baritone and string quintet, conducted by the composer in performances in Los Angeles, Tuscany and Yerevan, with baritone Vladimir Chernov and the UCLA

Camarades string ensemble, and *Fire of Sacrifice*, on poetry of Charents, for soprano and chorus, premiered by Vatsche Barsoumian and the Lark Master Singers. Of *Nocturnes*, critic Charles Fierro wrote in 2010: “The most striking work of the day was the song cycle *Nocturnes* for baritone and string quintet...The metaphors of darkness and light, both physical and psychological, inform the words and the music with depth and empathy. The trajectory of Krouse’s score is powerful because it is complex and truthful. His expert use of a widely extended tonality conveys strong emotion, as witnessed by the enthusiastic audience response. This is music that will repay many hearings. It clearly deserves a place in the standard repertory.”

Other vocal works for which he is known are his song cycles *Cantar de los Cantares* (Song of Songs) and *Invocation*, both written for American soprano Jessica Rivera who released the former in 2009 for Urtext Digital Classics to critical acclaim, and the earlier *Cinco Canciones Insólitas*, which has been championed and recorded by American mezzo-soprano, Suzann Guzman with the Debussy Trio. In 2010 Mr. Krouse’s a cappella setting of Walt Whitman’s *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking* received its successful premiere performance by the May Festival Chorus of Cincinnati under the direction of the work’s dedicatee, conductor Robert Porco. Writing of another of Mr. Krouse’s choral works, *it is at moments after I have dreamed* (on a text by E. E. Cummings) Nick Strimple wrote, in the American Choral Review: “Krouse’s work is varied, surprising, engaging, and gorgeous.”

Throughout his career he has received many awards and grants, including an AT&T American Encores Grant (for the second performance of an orchestral work), opera development grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and several from the American Composer’s Forum and Meet the Composer, as well as those from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations and the Atlantic-Richfield Corporation. He has won the BMI Award and the Gaudeamus Festival Prize, was a semi-finalist in the Kennedy Center Friedheim Awards, and a finalist in both the Barlow Competition and Big Ten Commissioning Project. His works have been recorded and released by Brain, Chandos, Delos, GSP, GHA, Koch, Lisaddell, Naxos, RCM, Voces de Iberoamerica, and Urtext Digital Classics among others. He is a Distinguished Professor of Music at the Herb Alpert School of Music at the University of California, Los Angeles.