

Friends of Today's Music Commissions



Photo By: Ann Marsden

Libby Larsen

2005 Commissioned Composer

Ms. Larsen will compose

a Piano Solo, Intermediate Level for ages 11-13

“Music exists in an infinity of sound. I think of all music as existing in the substance of the air itself. It is the composer's task to order and make sense of sound, in time and space, to communicate something about being alive through music.”

Libby Larsen (b. 24 December 1950, Wilmington, Delaware) is one of America's most prolific and most performed living composers. She has created a catalogue of over 200 works spanning virtually every genre from intimate vocal and chamber music to massive orchestral and choral scores. Her music is noted for its dynamic, deeply inspired, and vigorous contemporary American spirit. Constantly sought after for commissions and premieres by major artists, ensembles and orchestras around the world, Libby Larsen has established a permanent place for her works in the concert repertory.

Larsen has been hailed as "the only English-speaking composer since Benjamin Britten who matches great verse with fine music so intelligently and expressively" (USA Today); as "a composer who has made the art of symphonic writing very much her own." (Gramophone); as "a mistress of orchestration" (Times Union); and for "assembling one of the most impressive bodies of music of our time" (Hartford Courant). Her music has been praised for its "clear textures, easily absorbed rhythms and appealing melodic contours that make singing seem the most natural expression imaginable." (Philadelphia Inquirer) "Libby Larsen has come up with a way to make contemporary opera both musically current and accessible to the average audience." (The Wall Street Journal) "Her ability to write memorable new music completely within the confines of traditional harmonic language is most impressive." (Fanfare)

In April 2003, the Library of Congress announced Libby Larsen's appointment as the first holder of the Harissios Papamarkou Chair in Education and Technology in the John W. Kluge Center. Larsen has received numerous awards and accolades, including a 1994 Grammy as producer of the CD: *The Art of Arleen Augér*, an acclaimed recording that features Larsen's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Her opera *Frankenstein, The Modern Prometheus* was selected as one of the eight best classical music events of 1990 by *USA Today*. The first woman to serve as a resident composer with a major orchestra, she has held residencies with the California Institute of the Arts, the Arnold Schoenberg Institute, the Philadelphia School of the Arts, the Cincinnati Conservatory, the Minnesota Orchestra, the Charlotte Symphony, and the Colorado Symphony. Larsen's many commissions and recordings are a testament to her fruitful collaborations with a long list of world-renowned artists, including The King's Singers, Benita Valente, and Frederica von Stade, among others. Her works are widely recorded on such labels as Angel/EMI, Nonesuch, Decca, and Koch International. In 2001, two new recordings were released on Koch International: *Love After 1950*, performed by mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer (for whom the song cycle was written), with Craig Rutenberg, piano; and an album of her orchestral works, including the world premiere of her fifth symphony, *Solo Symphony*, performed by the Colorado Symphony under the direction of Marin Alsop.

Libby Larsen is a vigorous, articulate champion of the music and musicians of our time. In 1973, she co-founded (with Stephen Paulus) the Minnesota Composers Forum, now the American Composers Forum, which has been an invaluable advocate for composers in a difficult, transitional time for American arts. Larsen's commitment to the wider issue of music in society has led her to activity on a national level: she has served on the boards of the American Symphony Orchestra League, *Meet the Composer*, and on the Music Panel of the National Endowment for the Arts. She has been Vice President of the American Music Center and a director of the College Music Society. Consistently sought-after as a leader in the generation of millenium thinkers, Libby Larsen's music and ideas have refreshed the concert music tradition and the composer's role in it.