

# Laura Kaminsky, Composer

[laura@laurakaminsky.com](mailto:laura@laurakaminsky.com) | [laurakaminsky.com](http://laurakaminsky.com)

## LONG BIOGRAPHY - 1600 WORDS

Laura Kaminsky, cited in *The Washington Post* as “one of the top 35 female composers in classical music,” frequently addresses critical social and political issues in her work, including sustainability, war, and human rights. Possessing “an ear for the new and interesting” (*The New York Times*), “her music is full of fire as well as ice, contrasting dissonance and violence with tonal beauty and meditative reflection. It is strong stuff.” (*American Record Guide*).

Her first opera, *As One*, (2014; co-librettists Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed) is the most produced contemporary opera in the U.S. with productions to date in 29 states and Washington D.C.; overall its 50+ productions have also included those in Europe, Canada, Australia, and South America. “*As One* is a piece that haunts and challenges its audience with questions about identity, authenticity, compassion, and the human desire for self-love and peace” (*Opera News*). The original cast recording, featuring Grammy award-winning artists, mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke and baritone Kelly Markgraf, on the BSS label, was named one of the best new opera recordings of 2019 by *Opera News*.

The *As One* team has since been commissioned twice—by Houston Grand Opera for *Some Light Emerges* (2017), described in the *Houston Chronicle* as “nothing short of a pronunciation of American ideals. The piece remained sublime, a testament to both the performers and the writing”—and by Opera Parallèle/American Opera Projects for *Today It Rains* (2019). The *San Francisco Chronicle* review of *Today It Rains* noted that “the inventive charm of Kaminsky’s music keeps finding new sonic possibilities with economical resources. (She) shows a blessed willingness to write dramatic music with a strong rhythmic backbone. *Today* treads with suave assurance through the fields of both sexual and artistic politics. It comes as a welcome bestowal from a team of artists plowing new and interesting terrain. It seems ripe for adoption by opera companies nationwide.”

With Reed, she has created *Hometown to the World*, inspired by the devastating Immigration and Customs Enforcement raid in Postville, IA in 2008, commissioned by The Santa Fe Opera and Opera For All Voices as a co-commission with Hawaii Opera Theatre. A digital premiere by Hawaii Opera Theatre in Spring 2021 preceded the stage premiere at Santa Fe Opera in December 2021. Upcoming are *Finding Wright* (librettist Andrea Fellows Fineberg; Dayton Opera; 2022) and *February* (co-librettist with

novelist Lisa Moore; Newfoundland's Opera on the Avalon; 2023). Kaminsky is currently developing two new opera projects for 2023-2026. A new work, *Uncover*, for Hub New Music will premiere at the Morgan Library and Museum in 2022. She is also developing ideas for her seventh string quartet, for the Fry Street Quartet, with whom she has collaborated in the past (*As One*; *Rising Tide*).

Her sixth string quartet, *Rising Tide*, is the musical centerpiece of The Crossroads Project, a multi-disciplinary performance where science and the arts merge to address environmental sustainability. The brainchild of physicist Dr. Rob Davies, the Crossroads Project brings together spoken word, visual art and music; a film version was released in 2020. Of the CD (Navona Records NV6054; 2016), *The Boston Globe* asserts that "Rising Tide" moves from organic, eddying lines to more rigid structures. In "H2O (Source of Life)," a lonely solo voice meanders through layers of shifting strings, amassing momentum and might until all four lines are crashing forward in rapids that diminish to the solo again. "Bios" and "Forage" evoke the pulsing lives of plants and animals, and "Societas" deconstructs into haunting, harried almost-chaos among innumerable towers of chords." Since its premiere, the Crossroads Project has been presented 75+ times across the U.S., in Europe and South America, in concert venues, nature conservancies, universities, and has served as the keynote address at several conferences on sustainability.

Other recent recordings include *Fantasy: Oppens Plays Kaminsky* (Cedille Records CDR 9000 202) and *Blythe Gaissert: Home* (Bright Shiny Things BSTC-0137).

*Fantasy* features iconic pianist Ursula Oppens performing *Piano Concerto* with the ASU Symphony Orchestra (Jeffery Meyer, music director), *Piano Quintet* with the Cassatt String Quartet, the solo *Fantasy*, and *Reckoning: Five Miniatures for America* for piano four-hands, where Oppens is joined by Jerome Lowenthal. Of the cd's title piece, *New York Classical Review* describes how the "extensive *Fantasy* for solo piano explores, in episodic fashion, piano sonorities from Debussyesque gongs and watery burbles to jazzy dialogue between the hands." Allan Kozinn notes in *The Portland Press Herald* that the *Piano Quintet* "is a comment on the chaos and brutality of what passes for political discourse in Trump-era America."

On the 2021 cd *Blythe Gaissert: Home*, *Carne Barata* (Scene 8 from *Hometown to the World*) is one of nine works responding to Gaissert's challenge "what is home?" With Reed's libretto, *Carne Barata* offers a heartrending lamentation of the plight of immigrants to this country with its brutal track record of offering sanctuary, with Gaissert singing the principal character Linda Morales' cry, "America is impossible... without us."

Awarded the 2016 Polish Gold Cross of Merit (Złoty Krzyż Zasługi RP), a decoration awarded by the President of Poland for exemplary public service or humanitarian work, Kaminsky's other grants, awards and fellowships include those from the National Endowment for the Arts, Koussevitzky Music Foundation, Opera America, Chamber Music America, BAM/Kennedy Center De Vos Institute, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Aaron Copland Fund, Virgil Thomson Foundation, Newburgh Institute for Art and Ideas, Roger Shapiro Fund for New Music, American Music Center, USArtists International, CEC ArtsLink International Partnerships, Likhachev-Russkiy Mir Foundation Cultural Fellowship, Kenan Institute for the Arts, Artist Trust, New York State Council on the Arts, Bronx Arts Council, Arts Westchester, North Carolina Arts Council, Seattle Arts Commission, and Meet the Composer. She has received six ASCAP-Chamber Music America Awards for Adventuresome Programming, a citation from the Office of the President of the Borough of Manhattan, and the Polish Ministry of Culture National Heritage 2010 Chopin Award. She has been a fellow at the Hermitage Artist Retreat, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Centrum Foundation, Dorland Mountain Arts Colony, Millay Colony for the Arts, and the Camargo Foundation in France.

Kaminsky's works are frequently performed across the U.S. and abroad. Her music has been presented in New York at BAM, Miller Theater, Bargemusic, The Greene Space, Subculture, Merkin Concert Hall, Here Arts Center, Weill Recital Hall, Symphony Space, Skirball Center, Greenwich House, Tenri Cultural Center, Austrian Cultural Forum, New York Society for Ethical Culture, Robert Miller Gallery, and the 92nd Street Y, among other venues. Internationally, she has been featured at Wigmore Hall and King's Place (London); Glinka Hall, Rimsky-Korsakov Conservatory of Music, and Dostoevsky Museum (Russia); Fundacion Juan March (Madrid); Naregatsi Art Institute and Philharmonic Hall (Yerevan, Armenia); Forum of Contemporary Music Leipzig and Ballsaal-Studio Berlin (Germany); Bratislava Conservatory of Music (Slovakia); Vernissage Salzburg (Austria); and the American Embassy in Ghana, among others.

She has been a featured composer at Boston, Oberlin, Purchase and Shanghai Conservatories; North Carolina School of the Arts; Peabody Institute of Music; Mannes College of Music; Westminster Choir College; Cornish College of the Arts; CalArts; Longy School of Music; Cincinnati Conservatory of Music; Tisch School of the Arts/ NYU; The Juilliard School; Hartt School of Music; Bard, Hunter, St. Olaf's, Doane, Earlham, Augustana, and Sarah Lawrence Colleges; Arizona State University; Carnegie Mellon University; Vanderbilt University; Universities of Colorado, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oregon, Pittsburgh, Puget Sound, Puerto Rico, Utah, Washington; and the National Academies of Music of Armenia, Ghana and Slovakia; Rimsky Korsakov Conservatory of Music in St. Petersburg, Russia; at the Wolfson Center for National Affairs at the New School; Vernon Center for International Affairs at New York

University; and at festivals including the Seattle Chamber Music Festival; Soundfest Summer Institute and Festival (Cape Cod); Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival (VT); Seal Bay Chamber Music Festival, Bar Harbor and Atlantic Music Festivals (ME); Connecticut Summerfest; International Festival (Skopje, Macedonia); International Festival of Women Composers (São Paulo, Brazil); Casalmaggiore International Music Festival (Italy); and others.

Kaminsky has been a panelist and/or adjudicator for the NEA, New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, Chamber Music America, Opera America, American Opera Projects, New England Foundation for the Arts, CEC ArtsLink, Yaddo, Meet The Composer, American Music Center, Newmusic USA, Cary Trust, Creative Capital, USArtists International, among many.

Currently a Composer Mentor for Juilliard School of Music's Blueprint Fellowship Project and Artistic Director of The American Opera Project Advisory Council, Kaminsky served as Composer Mentor for Washington National Opera's American Opera Initiative from 2019-2020. She is chair of the composition department at the Conservatory of Music Purchase College/SUNY, where she was dean from 2004–2008. Previously she was chair of the music department at Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle, and in New York held the positions of Artistic Director of Symphony Space, Director of Music and Theatre Programs at The New School, Artistic Director of Town Hall, and Associate Director of Humanities at the 92nd Street Y. As Artistic Director of the European Mozart Academy, based in Poland, she presented concerts throughout Eastern Europe in 1996/97. She was visiting faculty at the National Academy of Music in Ghana in 1992/93. Kaminsky serves on the boards of Opera America and the Hermitage Artist Retreat.

A native New Yorker, Kaminsky graduated from Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music and Art, received her bachelor's degree in psychology magna cum laude from Oberlin College, and her master's degree from the City College of New York/CUNY, where, as a Tuch Foundation Fellow, she studied with Mario Davidovsky.

**Scores:** [Bill Holab Music](#)

**Recordings:** Affeto, Albany, Bridge, BSS, Cedille, CRI, Capstone, Mode, MSR, and Navona labels. A complete list of available recordings can be viewed at the [Buy CDs](#) page. Kaminsky is a BMI composer.