

Long Biography of Louis Karchin

Louis Karchin (born, Sept. 8, 1951 in Philadelphia) began studying piano and writing short musical compositions at age 6. Over the course of a career now spanning four decades, he has amassed a portfolio of over 60 compositions, appeared as conductor with numerous performing ensembles, co-founded several musical organizations, including the Chamber Players of the League-ISCM, the Orchestra of the League of Composers, and the Harvard Group for New Music, and overseen the formation of a graduate program in Music Composition at New York University. His works have garnered distinguished honors, including two awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a Guggenheim Fellowship, three grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and Koussevitzky, Barlow, and Fromm commissions. The citation of the Walter N. Hinrichsen Award, presented by the American Academy, praised his *Songs of John Keats*, as “a striking conception, in which the sonic properties of the poetry interact with musical material in unprecedented fusion.” Alex Ross, music critic for the New Yorker, cited Karchin’s masque, *Orpheus*, in its 2005 Albany Records release, as one of the year’s best works, and Boston critic Richard Dyer singled out his instrumental trio, *Rustic Dances* as a “best of Boston” pick for 2001.

Recent performances of Mr. Karchin’s orchestral music have included his *Chesapeake Festival Overture*, premiered at the Alba Music Festival in Italy, in June of 2007, and repeated shortly thereafter by the Chesapeake Orchestra at the outdoor River Festival of St. Mary’s College Maryland, before an audience of over 3000. Karchin’s chamber opera, *Romulus*, received a fully-staged premiere in May of 2007, in a three-way collaboration between the Guggenheim Museum, American Opera Projects, and the Washington Square Ensemble, and featured acclaimed singers Katrina Thurman, Steven Ebel, Thomas Meglioranza and Wilbur Pauley. The premiere of his vocal-instrumental song cycle, *Orpheus*, by the Earplay Ensemble of San Francisco, highly praised by music critic Jules Langert, showcased the dancing and choreography of Angela Jones and L. Jonathan Collins, and the singing of baritone Dominic Inferrera. A Fiftieth Birthday Concert of the composer’s music in September of 2002, at Merkin Hall, included Karchin’s 25-minute vocal-instrumental cycle, *American Visions*, with the work’s poet, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, presenting a birthday tribute to the composer after the concert.

Mr. Karchin’s music has also been presented by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Louisville Orchestra, Tanglewood, the Group for Contemporary Music, the New York New Music Ensemble, and the Da Capo Chamber Players, among many other groups, and has been championed by soloists such as Fred Sherry, Rolf Schulte, Lucy Shelton, Elizabeth Farnum, Stephen Gosling, and Marilyn Nonken. The British journal, *Contemporary Music Review* singled out Karchin as one of twenty-five of the most exciting American composers born in the decade of the 1950’s, and Karchin was chosen as one of 52 composers selected to represent New York at the turn of the millennium in the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center’s “Great Day in New York” Festival at Alice Tully Hall.

Mr. Karchin has been an active conducting presence on the New York musical scene, appearing frequently to lead works of colleagues as well as his own music, often presenting world premiere performances. His regular conducting duties with the Chamber Players of the League-ISCM and the Washington Square Ensemble were augmented in 2009 with the formation of the Orchestra of the League of Composers (now in its third season). League President David Gordon, flutist Sue Ann Kahn, and Mr. Karchin, as conductor, collaborated on planning the orchestra's inaugural concert, which took place at Miller Theatre on June 10, 2009, and included works by Christopher Dietz, Alvin Singleton, Elliott Carter, Julia Wolfe, and Charles Wuorinen. Mr. Karchin has been a guest conductor with the New York New Music Ensemble, the East Coast Contemporary Ensemble, the New Music Consort, and this summer, will make his conducting debut at Tanglewood, leading his own *Chamber Symphony* in Seiji Ozawa Hall, as part of the 2011 Festival of Contemporary Music.

Karchin's music is available on New World, CRI and Albany labels, with a new disc of his opera, *Romulus*, forthcoming on Naxos Records. His music is published by C. F. Peters Corporation and the American Composers Alliance. He is Professor of Music at New York University.