

Larysa Kuzmenko

Larysa Kuzmenko is a leading Canadian composer, performer and music educator. In addition to composing music, she teaches at the University of Toronto, performs extensively as a pianist and conductor, presents scholarly papers and works to improve music education and increase appreciation for new trends in music. Born on 23 January 1956 in Mississauga, Canada, to Ukrainian immigrant parents, Kuzmenko began performing as a piano accompanist while still a teenager and went on to study music at the University of Toronto.

Her compositions have found an appreciative audience in Canada, the United States, Ukraine, Russia, New Zealand and various western European countries. Music critics often suggest that contemporary music reflects too much of the world's pain, anger and uncertainty. Larysa Kuzmenko has a slightly different approach. In her compositions one senses a delicate balance between power and tenderness, great, bold statements and sensitive lyricism. The music editor of Mooredale Concerts, where Kuzmenko's music had been performed over the years, confirmed that "her colorful, vibrant compositions are performed across the nations to critical acclaim, and she is rapidly heading for international prominence."¹

Indeed, the composer presents works of different genres, for different groups and combination of instruments, intended for different audiences. Her melodic development and rich and elegant orchestration can sometimes be compared to Shostakovich or Boulez, but her compositions are distinguished by a unique inner energy and masterful construction. The range and emotional palette of Kuzmenko's music is difficult to fit into a traditional description—its spectrum is too broad. However, one feature that sets her music apart from many contemporaries is a humane and positive approach in the presentation of musical material. One reviewer mentioned that she is an audience-oriented composer. In a note to a concert in which Kuzmenko's works were presented, including *Song Cycle*, "In Memoriam of the Victims of Chernobyl" for piano, as well as her Suite, a critic wrote that her compositions represent a New Music that doesn't hurt. Even though the comment was droll, there is truth in it. Kuzmenko's compositions can be described as a projection of new concepts within contemporary music.

¹ Kristine Bogoyo, "Larysa Kuzmenko – A composer Canada can be proud of," *Mooredale News*, March 2003.

The spectrum of Kuzmenko's professional interests is wide. She writes music with a distinctive rhythmical pattern that often serves as the core of the composition; in other compositions a lyrical strain with broad melodic phrases dominates the score. Kuzmenko's works naturally balance classical structure and contemporary harmonic vocabulary and compositional techniques. In addition to many compositions for piano, cello, saxophone, brass, organ, accordion and a variety of combinations of instruments, there are compositions for solo chorus, chorus and soloists, and chorus with piano trio. An example of the last, titled *Dreams*, was completed in 2005 on commission from the Gryphon Trio and the Elora Festival. The Trio commissioned the piece as part of its endeavor to present the best in contemporary compositions with unique features, such as multimedia elements or unconventional combinations of instruments. In *Dreams* Kuzmenko presented an atypical combination of chorus and trio, derived to some extent from an idea imbedded within the piece. As often happens in her works, there are several layers to the main concept, and one of these includes philosophical elements. As the title suggests, the composer explores different types of dreams through the juxtaposition of modes and sonoristic and rhythm-melodic combinations. There are four parts in the piece, with the first and the last presenting a duet between chorus and trio. The text of the first movement comes from Alfred Lord Tennyson's "The Lotos-Eaters." Its atmosphere is serene and ethereal, suggestive of a lotus-induced sleep. In the second part, set to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, soprano and violin play the leading role. This movement suggests fear and anxiety, as the sleeper begs to be awakened. In the third part the instrumental trio is dominant and rhythmically driven; by not constraining the listener's imagination with a text, this approach provides an opportunity to present the idea of the work in a more abstract way. The final movement is set to Caliban's song from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Kuzmenko's niece, who died at the age of 37, often talked about a dream she had that was so beautiful that she did not want to awaken. Kuzmenko found such a dream in Caliban's song. Its atmosphere is somewhat scented with music that is sweet and sensual.

In June 2004 the Elora Festival Singers and the Gryphon Trio, conducted by Noel Edison, premiered "Dreams." The work was performed again in Toronto early in 2005. In a review of the premiere, a critic mentioned that Kuzmenko is not an avant-garde composer, in the sense of using extreme elements of technique or sonoristic combinations. Praising the composer for her

masterful scoring and instrumentation, the *Toronto Star* critic pointed that the scoring was “so well judged that verbal clarity was never sacrificed and the union of violin, cello and piano with the voices of a chamber choir sounded entirely natural.”²

In her compositions Kuzmenko combines two elements that distinguish her from many contemporary composers. In her works she is able to maintain a balance between traditional elements, derived from the Classical and Romantic traditions, and the freshness of new and unique melodic patterns or rhythmic combinations. It is not surprising that her music has found an audience outside the “elite” compound of the avant-garde and that her works enjoy popularity among professionals and the general public. In a review of the Made in Canada Festival gala concert by the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in 1996, during which leading Canadian contemporary composers presented their works, Kuzmenko’s Piano Concerto won great appreciation from the public.³

The concerto has a defined structure in three movements and, according to critics, possesses broad, sweeping gestures and a strong melodic profile. A central theme and variations movement is framed by two sections, resembling concertos in the Romantic tradition. The first movement, marked *preludio con cadenza*, begins with an orchestral cluster that quickly spreads until the entry of the first cadenza, or solo passage. Next, the piano introduces the main theme, accompanied by the orchestra; this leads to a longer, highly rhythmic cadenza. The woodwinds then recall the main theme, accompanied by a piano obligato. The movement ends with a bright coda.

The second movement, a theme and variations, is lush, with rich orchestral textures and harmonies. A solo violin plays the main theme, accompanied by solo piano and cello. Then comes the first variation; atmospheric and ethereal, it sometimes explores crystal-like orchestral sonorities by combining such instruments as vibraphone, glockenspiel, high string harmonics, wind chimes and high register on the piano. A piano solo starts the second variation before the orchestra joins in.

² William Littler, “Toss ‘n’ turn night for uneven Dreams,” *Toronto Star*, 8 March 2005.

³ William Littler, “Symphony back at home in Massey Hall,” *Toronto Star*, 12 October 1996.

The third variation is dark, sinister and majestic; the piano and orchestra are unified, growing together towards a powerful climax. And the final variation recalls the movement's opening piano figure; the music becomes dream-like, with pointillistic and repeated textures. The movement ends with the piano playing the main theme. The finale is an energetic and rhythmic toccata requiring virtuosity of both pianist and orchestra. Its orchestration includes a variety of percussion instruments. The movement features two contrasting themes: the first is angular, presented in dialogue with piano and orchestra; the second is rhythmic, first heard in the piano. The movement's barbaric character and rhythmic drive continue to the end.

Kuzmenko's Piano Concerto, commissioned by the CBC, was premiered on 23 January 1996, by the Winnipeg Symphony under the direction of Bramwell Tovey with soloist Christina Petrowska Quilico. In October 1996 it was performed by Petrowska Quilico and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Jukka-Pekka Saraste. In March 2011 Petrowska Quilico's recording of Kuzmenko's Piano Concerto was nominated for a Juno Award in the category of Classical Composition of the Year.

Larysa Kuzmenko maintains a busy professional schedule not only as a composer, but as a performer as well. She has appeared as a pianist in several countries and has performed at Carnegie Hall, the St. Lawrence Centre, Roy Thomson Hall and Massey Hall. Her versatile music personality has been enhanced by extended studies with several prominent musicians. She studied piano with Antonina Manko; with Kenneth Harrison, Clifford Poole, Dr. Samuel Dolin and Boris Lysenko at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, as well as theory with Dolin and Kenneth Harrison. She continued her study of theory with John Hawkins, Oskar Morawetz, Edward Laufer and Lothar Klein at the University of Toronto. Kuzmenko's professors in composition were Dolin, Morawetz and Walter Buczynski, and she studied electronic music with Dennis Patrick and Gustav Ciamaga. She also studied conducting with Victor Feldbrill and vocal coaching with Roxolana Roslak.

Kuzmenko began giving solo recitals a year before graduating from high school in 1973 and first appeared as a soloist with orchestra in 1980. At the beginning of the 1980s she began to participate in new music programs, performing as accompanist and chamber musician with Roxolana Roslak, at Massey Hall, 1980; in Edmonton, 1984; at Roy Thomson Hall, 1985; St.

Lawrence Centre, 1985; Premiere Dance Theatre, 1985; Canadian Contemporary Music Workshop, 1986; ACWC, 1990. She has given recitals at the Royal Conservatory of Music at Ontario Place in 1987 and with the Vesnivka Choir at Carnegie Hall in 1978 and 1988. She had been invited several times to perform and present her music in Europe; she participated in the concert tour of Great Britain in 1981 and had several Massey Hall appearances with the Toronto Ukrainian Opera Company, (1979-82) and the Cosmopolitan Opera Company (1979, 1981).

Kuzmenko's passion for chamber music led her to the stages of the Lawrence Centre, 1980; Heliconian Hall, 1979, 1981 and 1982, and later the Stratford Festival Chamber Music Workshop, 1982, where she participated as a chamber music performer. As a conductor she led the Cosmopolitan Opera Company Chorus in 1979 and in 1982 the Stratford Festival Workshop.

In 1990 the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, under the baton of Simon Streatfield, performed her Concertino for Vibraphone, Marimba and Orchestra with soloist Beverley Johnston. This performance was recorded for broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for the radio program Mostly Music and was chosen for re-broadcast as a highlight of the season during the summer. This same work was performed in April 1991 in Bayreuth, Germany, and in April and May 1991 in Russia and Ukraine. Also in April 1991, her work "Traveler on a Dark Wind" was premiered at the Music Gallery in Toronto by Continuum and was recorded for broadcast for the program Two New Hours in July 1991. In June 1991 the Elmer Iseler Singers premiered her work "Spirits of the Dead," to a text by Edgar Allan Poe, at St. Andrew's in Toronto.

In March 1992 Ms. Kuzmenko appeared as pianist in the premiere at the Jane Mallet Theatre of her Sonata for Cello and Piano. This work was repeated on a Continuum concert in June 1992 and was broadcast on Two New Hours in August 1992. It was subsequently released on CD.

In 1992, the Royal Canadian College of Organists commissioned a new work for solo organ, "Atlantis," which was published by the Jaymar Publishing Company. "Atlantis" was premiered by Michael Bloss on 15 July 1993, in Montreal. The piece is in three sections, an Overture, Passacaglia and Epilogue. The Passacaglia variations build like the rising and falling waves threatening Atlantis. In a series of massive chords, the ocean claims the civilization of the legendary city. Kuzmenko describes this as a "metaphor for the swarming of forces which finally

submerge life into death. The piece ends with a reverberation of the opening material, like the ever-diminishing ripples of a life that has passed.” The piece is dedicated to the memory of Kuzmenko's father.

On 19 February 1993, “A Prayer for String Orchestra” was premiered by the Mississauga Sinfonia Chamber Orchestra. The composition was also inspired by Kuzmenko’s late father. The essentially tonal piece is melodic and has a liturgical quality, set in a lyrical one-movement form. After a brief introduction, the violins enter with a song-like expressive melody. The second contrasting theme is presented by the lower strings. A development of these materials builds to a climax, after which the opening theme is recalled. The piece ends in a peaceful manner. As one critic put it, “Prayer does not musically depict a meditative moment with God, but emotions wrung from a soul in turmoil.”⁴

In March 1993 *Tekahionwake* for narrator, voice and piano, based on the life and poetry of Indigenous writer E. Pauline Johnson, was premiered at the George Ignatieff Theatre in Toronto. The piece was composed to mark the 80th anniversary of Johnson’s death and the title comes from Johnson’s Mohawk name, meaning “double wampum.”⁵

On 24 July 1993, The Composers' Orchestra premiered Kuzmenko's Accordion Concerto, with soloist Joseph Macerollo, conducted by her husband, the composer Gary Kulesha. This was broadcast on Two New Hours in the fall of 1993. Describing the concerto, Kuzmenko said, “There are three movements with the opening very eerie. Then the second movement is very tonal, romantic, very lyrical and melancholy. The last movement is very fiery, very rhythmic, like running through a jungle.”⁶ The first movement begins with the accordion playing a quasi-cadenza against a rhythmically free orchestral accompaniment. Following this section, a new rhythmic motif is presented with a variety of percussion and string glissandos. This culminates with a huge crescendo. The accordion plays a full cadenza and the movement closes with a tempestuous coda. The second movement opens with a solo cello playing a dark lyric theme. The accordion takes over and develops its theme into a *piu mosso*. The movement ends quietly. The final movement is a bright and rhythmic rondo. The middle episode recalls some of the free

⁴ Jenni Mortin, “Fialkowska’s confidence shines through,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 19 October 1998.

⁵ Tamara Bernstein, “Cabaret pays tribute to native writer,” *The Globe and Mail*, 9 March 1993.

⁶ Sonya Procenko, “Album sponsored by city’s Elton John,” *Toronto Star*, 26 September 1996.

material of the first movement and the cello and accordion themes of the second movement. The movement ends loud and fast.

In 1996, she received an Ontario Arts Council commission to write a Cello Concerto for Shauna Rolston. It was premiered in November 2004 by Rolston and the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Geoffrey Moull.

On 6 July 1998, her song cycle *In Search of Eldorado* was premiered by mezzo-soprano Catherine Robin. All three songs are set to the poems by Edgar Allan Poe, to which Kuzmenko was drawn because of its fantastical atmosphere. In her program notes Kuzmenko wrote that, “Poe’s works are a sensitive exploration of memory and imagination. I am drawn to his language and I am inspired by the images of his poetry which are by turns ecstatic and nightmarish. Poe’s poetry seems to exist on the boundary of the conscious and unconscious mind which makes it an ideal partner for music.”

I chose to set my first song to Poe’s poem “*Evening Star*”. I have always admired the moon and the stars in the evening sky. I wanted to create a mood that reflected this sense of sparkling light, therefore I chose to open and close the song with an accompanimental texture that is in the high range of the piano. The tempo, dynamics and texture change in the middle part of the piece. Here we reach the climax on the words “For joy to my heart thou bearest in heaven at night.” The opening material returns once again, and the song ends with music that seems to rise and disappear into space.

The second song is based on Poe’s poem “Eldorado” I wanted to imitate musically the knight on his horse galloping away desperately trying to find this land of gold. The opening accompaniment is rhythmic and the mood is somewhat quirky with its many time signature changes. It first sets an optimistic atmosphere until the knight grows old and has yet not found Eldorado. There is a sense of frustration on the words “Where can it be.” A pilgrim shadow tells him to keep riding. The song ends with the knight frantically riding searching for Eldorado. The galloping texture is thicker, louder and more dissonant creating a sense of endlessness and frustration.

The poem “A Dream within a Dream” is a somewhat darker text. I originally composed a cello piece that was inspired by this poem. In fact, I used some of the melodic material from the cello piece and incorporated into this song.

Musically I tried to create a kind of profound and intense atmosphere. The music is both jarring and heartfelt. There is a sense of helplessness and sadness on the words “How few yet how they creep through my fingers to the deep while I weep.” The music intensifies, the tempo quickens as it moves towards the climactic *maestoso* and the song ends on the words “Is all that we see or seem but a dream within a dream?”

This song cycle was commissioned by the Laidlaw Foundation, as was her Suite of Dances for flute, cello and piano, which was premiered at the Glenn Gould Studio and released on CD by Musica Viva.

Kuzmenko’s solo piano piece “In Memoriam: To the Victims of Chernobyl” (1997) was released on CD by Christina Petrowska Quilico. In November 1998 Petrowska Quilico toured this work in New York City, China and Taiwan. In January 2002 Naida Cole performed this work at the Jane Mallet Theater. This work was subsequently performed throughout the world by several pianists.

Its opening theme is dark and ominous, setting the tragic mood of the piece. Kuzmenko quotes a sad but lyrical Ukrainian folk tune that describes a grave in the field, begging the wind to keep it from dying and asking the sun to shine over it. The tempo suddenly quickens, and the music becomes rhythmic, creating a chaotic atmosphere. The music reflects the mechanical sound of the nuclear reactor. The folk tune assumes a different character. It no longer is lyrical and is supported by jarring harmonies. The music signals the reactor’s first explosion at its first climax. Following this explosion, the music becomes quiet and slows down. Here, the folk tune essentially has exploded into little fragments, creating a kind of pointillistic texture. At this point, the music represents the invisible, yet fatal radioactive particles that are poisoning the atmosphere. The tempo builds up once again, and the music moves towards the second climax signaling the second explosion. Here Kuzmenko quotes a sacred chant from the Ukrainian

Orthodox Church, asking God for forgiveness. The piece ends with the reappearance of the opening material, setting a mood that questions the future of our planet.

In September 2000 Kuzmenko was commissioned through the Ontario Arts Council to compose *Lilith* for English horn and string quartet, and a concerto for piano, percussion and string orchestra. *Lilith* was premiered at the Jane Mallet Theatre by Mooredale Concerts, and the concerto was premiered by Bev Johnston, Mary Kenedi and the Windsor Symphony, conducted by Susan Haig, on 12 January 2001.

Lilith is a programmatic, 30-minute work in 14 movements, inspired by the mythic tale of Lilith preceding Adam and Eve's adventures with the snake and apple in the Garden of Eden. According to Hebrew legend, Lilith was Adam's first partner and his equal. Soon after creation however, he became arrogant, intending to dominate; an angry Lilith sprouted wings and escaped. Eve, a woman of passive dreams, was then fashioned out of his rib, while Lilith was pursued by demons who tried to turn her into a viper, a vulture and a voluptuous devil. But love intervened and with it comes a distinctly new twenty-first century conclusion. Of the piece, Kuzmenko said, "When Lilith is born from the earth, in the first part of the poem, [I wrote] oozing, murky music, almost like Stravinsky. I wanted to make it that organic, so you could really get the idea that someone was being born...[In] Lilith's flight, where Lilith grows wings and flies away, I wanted to create music that sounded like flying. There's no melody. It's based on triads, with these little tremolos in the strings. For the section called 'The Dance of Lilith' I wanted to make something quite seductive, so I created a kind of jazz dance. I chose whatever I needed."⁷ A critic wrote that "Kuzmenko's exciting, absorbing and intriguing score made vivid programmatic work of the story components."⁸

Kuzmenko was commissioned to compose a work for string quartet, percussion and four flutes. It was premiered in March 2003 by Mooredale Concerts with soloists Beverly Johnston and Vicky Blechta. She was also commissioned by the Hannaford Silver Band to write a Concerto for Piano and Brass, which was premiered in November of 2002 with pianist Andrew Burashko and conductor Gary Kulesha.

⁷ Sarah B. Hood, "Aloft with Lilith," *Performing Arts and Entertainment in Canada*, 33, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): 26-27.

⁸ Geoff Chapman, "Words *Song of Lilith's* weakest link," *Toronto Star*, 16 March 2001.

In March 2003 Concertmasters presented a concert featuring the music of Kuzmenko, including the premiere of Capriccio for multiple flutes, percussion and string quartet. In June 2003 the Illinois State University Faculty Brass Quintet premiered Impromptu and Toccata, commissioned by the International Women's Brass Conference. In July 2003 Kristine Bogyo and Anton Kuerti premiered her “Entre Amis” at the Festival of the Sound in Parry Sound, Ontario.

In November 2003 The Composers' Orchestra, with soprano Katerina Tchoubar and conductor Gary Kulesha, premiered “Voice of Hope,” commissioned by the Vesnivka Choir in remembrance of the Ukrainian Holodomor of 1932-33. Set to a poem by Iryna Voitenko, translated into English by Marko Carynnyk, the work opens with a dark and ominous theme presented by the strings in the high register. The music creates an atmosphere of despair and sorrow when a child sees a little bird at her window begging for food. She asks the bird to tell the world that they are dying from starvation. The music suddenly speeds up and becomes rhythmic and intense, depicting Stalin’s police gathering up all the food from the villagers and leaving families to die from hunger. The opening theme reappears in the last verse, but with a stronger sense of helplessness, as many have died. As the music intensifies, it reaches a dramatic climax with both soprano and full orchestra on the words “But we as a people will not give up, we have not died, we are still alive.”

“Voice of Hope” is dedicated to the family of Kuzmenko’s mother, especially her great grandmother, grandmother and grandfather, and three of their children, all of whom starved to death. Kuzmenko’s mother, Paraskevia Breha Kuzmenko, orphaned at the age of nine, survived the Holodomor.

Kuzmenko was chosen to be a composer-in-residence in January 2009 for the New Music Festival at the Memorial University in Newfoundland. In 2010 she was chosen by the North York Music Festival to be its Senior Festival Composer. On 5 February 2010 a concert of her music was presented in Walter Hall at the University of Toronto. *Polynia* for basset horn, violin and piano and “Silver Birds” for solo piano were both premiered during the event. Featured performers included Christina Petrowska Quilico, Simon Fryer, Lorna MacDonald and the Riverdale Ensemble.

Larysa Kuzmenko's *Behold the Night* was premiered at Roy Thomson Hall by the Toronto Children's Choir, under the direction of Elise Bradley, and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Peter Oundjian during the orchestra's opening-night gala concert on 22 September 2011. The concert celebrated the Toronto Symphony's 90th anniversary. Kuzmenko wrote: "I have always enjoyed working with children's choirs. There is a purity and clarity in their sound which is unlike any other musical medium. When Peter Oundjian and the Toronto Symphony Orchestra asked me for this new work, I immediately thought of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Shakespeare, both because it is one of my favourite Shakespeare plays and because of the magical atmosphere of the play. It seemed like a natural choice for children, because it has a fairy-like quality that children can relate to. As a child, I always hoped that fairies were real. Their magic takes us to another place, far from the world we live in."

The work opens with a short orchestral introduction, which leads to the first section, "Over hill, over dale," a bubbly and innocent song. An orchestral interlude changes the atmosphere to a more serious mood. The second song, "Now the hungry lion roars," starts with a solo flute accompanied by horn and strings, suggesting the spirit of nature haunting the night. The song gradually builds from mystery to exaltation as the night's secrets yield to morning.

"A Journey to a New Life" for string quartet was commissioned by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Hamilton Branch, on the occasion of the 120th anniversary of Ukrainian settlement in Canada. The work was premiered by the Annex Quartet in Hamilton on 24 September 2011.

Metropolis Overture for orchestra was commissioned by the Mississauga Symphony Orchestra to commemorate the 40th anniversary of Mississauga's incorporation as a city. It was premiered by the MSO and conducted by Denis Mastro Monaco on 8 October 2014. In her program notes Kuzmenko wrote, "I was born and raised in Mississauga and lived there for 24 years. Therefore, I was thrilled when I was asked to compose an orchestral overture celebrating the city's 40th anniversary. I have set to music my recollections of the old and new city of Mississauga."

The opening of the piece starts softly. The music slowly builds towards a majestic climax featuring the full orchestra. The opening idea reflects the vast open space of the farmlands and the apple orchards of the old Mississauga. A brief moment of silence occurs, the music speeds

up, as we hear the strings present the “city” motif. This rhythmic and energetic theme reflects the hustle and bustle of the city. The music slows down, and a lyrical theme is presented by the flutes, vibraphone and harp. It reflects memories of beautiful swans swimming on Credit River, sail boats in the harbour and how beautiful the old Mississauga landscape looked after a snow storm on a sunny day. As the flute holds its final note in this passage, the music speeds up once again. The “city” motif returns and the music builds towards an exciting and grand finale.

Kuzmenko's *Golden Harvest*, an oratorio for soprano, baritone, chorus and orchestra, was commissioned by conductor Laurence Ewashko and funded by the Shevchenko Foundation to commemorate the 125th anniversary of Ukrainian settlement in Canada. Composed over a period of ten months, the work was premiered on 18 March 2016 at Centennial Hall in Winnipeg. It was conducted by Alexander Mickelthwaite and performed by soprano Andriana Chuchman, baritone Michale Nyby, the Mennonite Festival Chorus and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. The oratorio was subsequently performed in Saskatoon, Toronto and Montreal. A newly arranged and shortened piano quintet version, was performed during the Ottawa International Chamber Music festival on 22 July 2016. This arrangement was performed by members of the Gryphon Trio, violinist Noemi Racine Gaudreault, violist Graham Oppenheimer, soprano Monica Whicher, baritone Russell Braun and the Ewashko Singers, conducted by Laurence Ewashko.

Weaving together the textures of voices and orchestra into a musical tapestry, it is set to a trilingual Ukrainian/English/French libretto by Ukrainian-Canadian poet Talia Zajac. The piece reflects the experiences of Canadians, who had to survive in the wilderness, literal or otherwise. It also takes inspiration from the introduction of rust-resistant *halychanka* (red fife) spring wheat from Ukraine across the Canadian prairies, which turned them into the country's breadbasket.

The orchestral overture opens with the Ukrainian song, “Reve ta stohne Dnipr shyrokyi” (The mighty Dniro River roars and bellows), set to the text by Taras Shevchenko. Kuzmenko wrote, “I grew up loving this folk tune and felt that since the tune is almost a kind of Ukrainian national anthem that it would be perfect for this piece. The tune becomes an important element that runs through the course of all of the movements in some shape or form.” The overture represents the immigrant's ocean journey to Canada. The music reflects the sound of the waves and wind, exciting and fearful at the same time. The choir gently enters on the words “The wind whispers

Canada.” The movement ends with an ominous oboe solo, while the choir becomes the sound of the dark wind, foreshadowing the many struggles to come.

The second movement begins with an exciting and energetic train ride across Canada. The music becomes darker as the immigrants angrily realize that there is no homestead here, and that they will have to work the land with their bare hands. In order to survive, the Father character, sung by the baritone soloist, and the men, must leave their families to find work. While the father is away, his son dies of starvation. The mother is grief stricken. The soprano soloist sings a heartfelt melody about how she must bury her son alone. The male choir accompanies her with a Ukrainian funeral dirge that translates as “Memory eternal.”

The final movement opens with a stern and rhythmic motif. It represents the start of World War I. The men are taken to internment camps, treated as prisoners because they were considered citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while the women stay to work the land. Once the war is over, the men come home to the harvest of the red fife wheat. The music ends on an optimistic note, with a full orchestra and choir, celebrating the harvest that became one of the economic engines of Canada and its most important international export.

Trade Song for violin, viola, cello, guitar, spoons and full orchestra was premiered on 18 October 2018 in Thunder Bay, performed by the Metis Quartet, Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra and conductor Paul Haas. *Trade Song* tells a story of a fiddler and a Metis girl with whom he falls in love. He goes on a journey to learn the Trade Song so that he can win her as his bride. The composition has four movements with narration, described as “a full-fledged, lush composition in the romantic classical form.” After the premiere a critic wrote that “*Trade Song* is a brilliant, original composition, and I suspect it will be heard in performances by other Canadian orchestras in coming years.”⁹

Skartaris, a double concerto for solo violin, solo piano and string orchestra, premiered on 8 November 2019 at the Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto, performed by violinist Marc Djokic, pianist Christina Petrowska Quilico and Sinfonia Toronto under the direction of Nurhan Arman.

⁹ Michael Sobota, “The Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra launched their 2018-2019 season,” *Thunder Bay Chronicle Journal*, 20 October 2018.

On 14 February 2020 the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Rune Bergmann premiered her Fantasy on a Theme by Beethoven, inspired by the first movement of his first symphony. In Kuzmenko's words, "The theme goes through different permutations, but remains recognizable, largely because of its shape and rhythm. The work opens with the theme being presented in a fugal texture by strings alone. There are variations that feature the solo oboe and others that feature horns, trumpets and even timpani, which, appropriately, was first featured as a solo orchestral instrument by Beethoven in his ninth symphony. The biggest challenge when writing this piece was being restricted to Beethoven's instrumentation—the orchestra in the classical era was much smaller than the contemporary orchestra. My other orchestral scores generally include trombones, bass clarinet, tuba and a variety of percussion instruments." The work was commissioned in anticipation of the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth.

Since 1989 Kuzmenko has been on the staff of the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto, where she teaches piano, harmony and composition. She received a Bachelor of Music in Composition from the University of Toronto Faculty of Music in 1979 and took Master of Music in Composition course studies at the University of Toronto in 1979-81, completing all but her dissertation.

Kuzmenko also taught theoretical subjects at the Royal Conservatory of Music Community School in 1981-2000, giving instruction in all grades of harmony, history, analysis, counterpoint, composition, orchestration, theory and piano. In 1996 she joined the Glenn Gould Professional School where she teaches keyboard harmony, dictation and composition.

Larysa Kuzmenko is a Board Member of the Association of Canadian Women Composers, an Associate Composer of the Canadian Music Centre and member of the Canadian League of Composers. Her choral works have been published by Boosey and Hawkes.

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- “Ritual,” for concert band (1978)
- Elegy and Song for Flute, Vibraphone, Harp and Soprano (1978-79)
- Three Songs for Soprano and Piano (1980)
- Nocturne and Dance for Soprano, Flute and Piano (1980)
- Fantasy for Band (1981)
- Improvisations for Alto Saxophone and Percussion (1981)
- Little Suite for Piano (1982)
- “Grimoire,” for brass quintet (1982)
- “Doctor Faustus,” for soprano and piano (text by Christopher Marlowe; 1984)
- Concertino for Vibraphone and Marimba with Orchestra (1986-87)
- “Prayer,” for SSA choir and piano (text by Bohdan Ihor Antonych; 1988)
- “Traveller on a Dark Wind,” for two pianos (1991)
- “Spirits of the Dead,” for SATB choir (text by Edgar Allan Poe, 1991)
- Sonata for Cello and Piano, “A Dream within a Dream” (1992)
- “Atlantis,” for organ (1993)
- Concerto for Accordion (1993)
- “Romance” and “Mysterious Summers’ Night,” for solo piano (1993)
- *Tekahionwake*, four songs for mezzo-soprano (based on the poetry of Pauline Johnson; 1993)
- “A Prayer for String Orchestra” (1993)
- *The Faywood School Songs*: “Night,” “Stars,” and “Wind,” for choir and piano (1995)

- Piano Concerto (1995)
- *Suite of Dances*, for flute, cello and piano (1997)
- *In Memoriam: To the Victims of Chornobyl*, for solo piano (1997)
- Cello Concerto (1998)
- Concertino for Organ and Strings (1998)
- *In Search of Eldorado*; song cycle for mezzo-soprano and piano (1998)
- *Lilith*, for string quartet, solo violin and English horn (2000)
- Concerto for Piano and Percussion (2000)
- *Singing with the Light of a Thousand Stars*: “Lone Note,” “Anger in A minor” and “Celebration Chorus,” three songs for SSA choir (2001)
- “Set Me as a Seal upon Thy Heart,” for soprano and organ (2001)
- Capriccio, for string quartet, percussion and flute (2002)
- Piano Concerto with Brass Band (2002)
- Impromptu and Toccata for Brass Quintet (2003)
- “Entre Amis,” for cello and piano (2003)
- “Voice of Hope,” for soprano and string quartet (2003), also for soprano and piano trio (2015)
- *Dreams*, for SATB choir and piano trio (2004)
- *Sea Without a Shore*, for cello and orchestra (2004)
- “Ave Regina Coelorum,” for SSA choir and piano (2008)
- Fantasy, for solo cello (2008)
- “Daffodils,” for SSA children’s choir (2009)
- “Silver Birds,” for solo piano (2010)

- *Polynia*, for piano, violin and basset horn (2010)
- “Christmas Bells,” for SA children’s choir (2010)
- “A Journey to a New Life,” for string quartet (2011)
- *Behold the Night*, for children’s choir and symphony orchestra (2011)
- Rhapsody, for string quartet (2012)
- “Gloria,” for women’s choir and piano (2013)
- Metropolis Overture, for orchestra (2014)
- “Diabolic Dance” and “Mysterious Summer’s Night,” for solo piano (2014)
- *Golden Harvest*, oratorio for soprano, baritone, SATB choir and orchestra (2016)
- “Dance Macabre,” for marimba and tube (2015)
- “Melancholy Waltz,” for flute and piano (2015)
- “Fly Like the Seagulls, for women’s choir and piano (2016)
- *Three Original Ukrainian Love Songs*, for baritone and piano (2017)
- *Heirloom*, an arrangement of Brahms’ Intermezzo, op. 118, no. 2, for children’s choir and orchestra (2017)
- “Behold the Night,” for children’s choir and orchestra (2017)
- *Trade Song*, for violin, viola, cello, guitar, spoons and orchestra (2019)
- “Holy God,” for SATB choir (2018)
- “One Sister Have I,” for women’s choir (2019)
- “Daffodils,” for violin and piano (2019)
- *Skartaris*, double concerto for violin, piano and string orchestra (2019)
- Fantasy on a Theme by Beethoven, for orchestra (2020)

- “Star, Wind and Night,” for children’s choir (2020)