

Composer and conductor Justine Koontz uses music as a way of exploring identity. Her work, encompassing composing, conducting, entrepreneurship, teaching, and international scholarship, explores how music can help answer the question, "Who am I?"

As a composer, Justine writes primarily for choir and chamber ensembles in musical languages that are accessible yet diverse. Her music can be sacred or irreverent, contemplative or whimsical. She takes as her inspiration literature, modern dance, applied science, and spirituality. Her pragmatic approach to composition is apparent in the wide variety of pieces in her catalogue, ranging from unison works for small choirs to advanced compositions for large ensembles. Her compositions have been performed at national and international venues, including regular performances at the Saito Conducting Workshop in Saskatchewan, the 2026 and 2019 London Festival of Contemporary Music, the 2018 Intercollegiate Men's Chorus's National Seminar, and the 2012 World Choir Games. Her compositions have placed in the American Prize, and various other local and regional competitions. An avid entrepreneur, she self-publishes her compositions.

As a conductor, Justine's diverse interests in repertoire includes music by women, Baltic composers, new works, and "classics" of the 20th and 21st centuries. She has premiered works at Butler University, at the Oregon Bach Festival Composers' Symposium, and with the Azimuth Orchestra. As an advocate for community music-making, she founded the Program Choir of Baltimore, which allows singers who can't commit to a nine-month calendar year to participate in quality projects and performances. She has been the Music Minister at Memorial Episcopal Church in Baltimore since 2018, where her fascination for all manners of choral and liturgical genres is on display every week.

Other musical activities have included international scholarship, presenting, and teaching. Curious about the phenomenon of "singing cultures," Justine completed a year of study in Latvia on a Fulbright scholarship, where she researched the country's choral culture. A thinker about many aspects of the musical world, she has led presentations and written blog articles on all manner of subjects -- the music of Latvia, reading sessions, entrepreneurship in music, and even language-learning -- to organizations as varied as the International Alliance of Women in Music, the American Choral Director's Association, and the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies. As a teacher, she has led workshops for K-12 students in Indianapolis and Baltimore. She currently co-directs a private teaching co-op and teaches a private studio of piano and guitar students of all ages.

Justine completed an M.M. in choral conducting and composition at Butler University and a B.A. in music theory and composition at McDaniel College, where her primary instrument was classical guitar. She has completed additional studies at Juilliard, Peabody, the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Music Academy, and the Conductor's Institute. Since 2019 she has studied the Saito conducting method with Wayne Toews in Saskatoon, developing her trademark clarity of gesture and economy of motion. She is an active member of ASCAP and Chorus America. She lives outside of Baltimore, and when she is not making music, she is usually engaged in fine craft, language study, or gardening.