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AMERICAN COMPOSERS FORUM ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF THE NEXTNOTES® HIGH SCHOOL COMPOSITION AWARDS

ST. PAUL (April 23, 2018) - The American Composers Forum (ACF) is thrilled to announce the winners of the fourth annual *NextNotes® High School Composition Awards*. *NextNotes* is a national program designed to nurture the next generation of creative voices in music composition regardless of musical style. Awards encourage and recognize the creative and talented composers with mentorship, scholarship funds, and a performance of their work by professional musicians.

The following outstanding 2018 *NextNotes* winners were selected for their compositional skills and strong creative voices (more on each winner below):

- **Isaac Applebaum and Nimah Nayel** (Potomac and Silver Spring, MD): *Black Odyssey* for flute, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, trumpet, trombone, bass, piano, drums, and electronics
- **Elise Arancio** (Tucker, GA): *Lalochezia* for percussion quartet
- **Benjamin Ballmer** (Evanston, IL): *Sign Here!* for voice and piano
- **Michael Gaspari** (Robbinsville, NJ): *Ocean* for voice and synthesizers
- **Esther Ollivier** (Los Angeles, CA): *Stream of Consciousness* for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano
- **Isaac Santos** (Hollywood, FL): *Crunch Time* for flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, French horn, bassoon, and piano

“The American Composers Forum is thrilled to acknowledge and reward the talent of these young composers and offer this unique opportunity of a professional performance and mentoring experience that will impact their future,” said John Nuechterlein, ACF president and CEO. “Each young composer brings their own viewpoint and talent to their work and represents the next generation of composers in our country.”

The distinguished panel of composers who evaluated the **155 submissions from 35 states** were Jocelyn Hagen, Scott L. Miller, Angélica Negrón, Jeff Parker, and Stella Sung. The panel named 7 winners, 3 alternates, and 14 honorable mentions. After listening to all of the entries, the *NextNotes* jury commented, “The number of incredible, deserving candidates for *NextNotes*

was truly impressive. Along with the creative ability shown, we noticed great maturity and sophistication in the writing-- and such diversity and range in the music! Composers learn something from every piece of music completed, so we encourage all of these young composers to keep writing and collaborating to develop their skill and get their music out there!"

The *NextNotes* winners will travel to Minneapolis, Minnesota in June for mentorship with leading professional composers [Carol Barnett](#), [Joshua Clausen](#), and [Joseph Horton](#), as well as rehearsals and performance of their winning works by professional musicians. ACF is particularly excited because this year's winners includes co-composition team Isaac Applebaum and Nimah Nayel, *NextNotes*'s first co-creators. The collaborative approach to artistic creation will provide the winning cohort and mentors with even more to process during their time together. The culminating ***NextNotes Showcase Concert*** will take place on **June 23rd at 7:30pm** at the Lab Theater (700 N 1st St, Minneapolis, Minnesota.) The showcase is free and open to the public.

2019 NextNotes High School Composition Awards applications will be accepted starting May 14, 2018.

Students in grades 9-12 are invited to apply with a single composition in any genre or style by the deadline of January 7, 2019 for the fifth anniversary year of the *NextNotes High School Composition Awards*. Interested high school composers are encouraged to visit the website www.NextNotes.org and connect via [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#).

NextNotes applications are submitted electronically through an online process. Six composers will be chosen to receive a scholarship along with travel to Minneapolis-St. Paul for a two-day workshop with professional composer mentors and professional musicians in June 2019. The workshop will conclude with an awards ceremony and culminating concert of the winning works. All applicants receive a free one-year American Composers Forum student membership and a free one-year subscription to [Noteflight Premium](#).

The *NextNotes* High School Composition Awards are generously supported by The Augustine Foundation, the Rosemary and David Good Family Foundation, The Thelma Hunter Fund, the Dr. Fred Noah Gordon Charitable Fund of The Minneapolis Foundation, and other generous individuals. In-kind support is provided by program Partners MakeMusic, Inc and Noteflight.

For more information, please visit www.composersforum.org, www.NextNotes.org, [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), or email Laura Krider, Director of Education and Community Partnerships, at lkriders@composersforum.org.

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About the NextNotes High School Composition Awards Winners

Isaac Applebaum (Potomac, MD): *Black Odyssey* for flute, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, trumpet, trombone, bass, piano, drums, and electronics



Isaac Applebaum is a junior at Richard Montgomery High School in Rockville, MD. He started playing classical piano at the age of four and was introduced to jazz in the seventh grade. An accomplished jazz pianist, composer, and bandleader, he has performed at venues including the Kennedy Center, the Blues Alley Jazz Club, the Mid-Atlantic Jazz Festival, and the Strathmore Music Center. He studies with jazz pianist Janelle Gill and classical pianist Jamie Pasho and has been a member of groups including the Maryland All-State Jazz Ensemble, the Blues Alley Youth Orchestra, and his high school big band. Last year, he released “Song of Myself”, a professional jazz album of standards and his own compositions that will help raise money to fight Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, an often-debilitating genetic disorder. His compositions blend jazz, classical, gospel, Afro-Cuban, and hip-hop influences to bring joy to listeners and to tell stories with personal and social significance.

Elise Arancio (Tucker, GA): *Lalochezia* for percussion quartet

Elise Arancio is a senior at Lakeside High School in Atlanta, GA. She has attended summer programs at Interlochen Center for the Arts and the Curtis Institute of Music, and was a guest young composer at the Lake Champlain Chamber Music Festival. She has won awards and honors from the National Young Composers Challenge and the Tribeca New Music Young Composers Competition, and was a finalist for the 2017 BMI Student Composer Awards. This summer she will join Carnegie Hall's National Youth Orchestra of the USA as an apprentice composer. She currently studies with Richard Prior of Emory University, and will be attending the Curtis Institute of Music in the fall, where she will study with David Ludwig.



Benjamin Ballmer (Evanston, IL): *Sign Here!* for voice and piano



Ben Ballmer is an 18-year-old senior at Evanston Township High School in Evanston, IL. When he reached the age of 11, he began taking Piano lessons with Gary Geiger for 7 years, as well as studying voice with Cole Seaton for the last two of those years. He has composed, produced, and vocal directed the scores to two musical theater works: *Killing Time: A Murder Mystery Musical* (staged at Evanston's own the Musical Offering) and *Produce: the Musical*. His writing is regionally and nationally

recognized, receiving Gold and Silver Scholastic Writing awards regionally for his lyrics, a silver medal nationally for his lyrics, International Torrance Creativity Music Composition Awards for music, a Nextnotes honorable mention, and Illinois Federation of Music Clubs Superior Rating. He attended the National Federation of Music Clubs Junior Composers Summer Program as well as serving as a Guest composition workshop leader for Evanston Children's Choir's Three Choirs Live children's choir festival. He is thrilled to be attending Indiana University in the fall to pursue a BFA in Musical Theatre.

Michael Gaspari (Robbinsville, NJ): *Ocean* for voice and synthesizers

Michael Gaspari, 18, is a senior at Robbinsville High School in Robbinsville NJ. He has been a Juilliard Pre-College student for the past 5 years studying composition with Dr. Ira Taxin. Michael plays piano/keyboards and loves to explore synth. and electronic music. He has attended the Tanglewood Institute and Curtis Summerfest the past two summers. His works have been played at the Juilliard School, Curtis Institute and other venues in NYC and NJ. Michael has received awards and honors from ASCAP, NAFME, the YoungArts Foundation, *NextNotes* and Tribeca New Music among others. He will attend Oberlin Conservatory this fall.



Nimah Nayel (Potomac and Silver Spring, MD): *Black Odyssey* for flute, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, trumpet, trombone, bass, piano, drums, and electronics



Nimah Nayel is a junior at Richard Montgomery High School. She became interested in spoken word in 8th grade, and has since cultivated and refined her pieces growing each ear as a spoken word artist. Her pieces reflect the change of her style, from slam poetry to pieces that spoke truths she often found herself otherwise not strong enough to speak.

Esther Ollivier (Los Angeles, CA): *Stream of Consciousness* for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano

Esther is a senior at Harvard-Westlake School where she is the choir president of the Chamber Singers choir. She began taking piano lessons at the age of 5, adding classical guitar, flute, theory and composition lessons later on. In 2014, she won the Robert Turner Piano Concerto Competition. That same year she was awarded the Honorable Mention of the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) composition competition in California. In 2015, she placed first in the state. In 10th grade, Esther was accepted into the Young Musicians Foundation Composers' Program. That same year, her orchestra piece was performed by the Harvard-Westlake Symphony. In



summer 2017, she was accepted into the Sunset ChamberFest Composers Workshop. Esther was a part of the Large Ensemble Cohort of the Nancy and Barry Sanders Composer Fellowship Program at the La Phil this year. She is honored to have been invited to be featured on the “From the Top” radio show, which will include a performance of her orchestra piece *Brisé* by the La Phil.

Isaac Santos (Hollywood, FL): *Crunch Time* for flute, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, French horn, bassoon, and piano



Isaac Santos is a senior at South Broward High School in Hollywood, FL. He was introduced to concert music in 7th grade, when he started to play the bass clarinet. Isaac has participated in the Broward All-County Honor Band and travelled with the South Broward High School Wind Symphony to perform at Carnegie Hall. Isaac was introduced to composition through literature played in the wind symphony. He has been composing since the latter half of his junior year and has plans of attending the Oberlin Conservatory in the fall.

NextNotes High School Composition Awards Alternates

Solomon Ge (CA)

Dianna Link (CO)

Eric On (NV)

NextNotes High School Composition Awards Honorable Mentions

Michael Acevedo (CA)

Mary Simpson (MS)

Benjamin Beckman (CA)

Jenny Yao (SC)

Rachel Billington (CA)

Justin Zeitlinger (NJ)

Wyatt Cannon (CA)

Daniel Cho (PA)

Jordan Curtis (MN)

Shengying Gu (FL)

Sam Hanson (MN)

Peter Mainetti (NY)

Charles Meenaghan (CA)

Luke Poeppel (NY)