



For Immediate Release

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Kashimana Ahua Chosen as *In Common* Willmar Composer-in-Residence

SAINT PAUL, MN (June 26, 2018) -- The American Composers Forum (ACF) is thrilled to announce that Kashimana Ahua has been selected as composer-in-residence for *In Common*, a year-long community songwriting project in Willmar, funded by the Otto Bremer Trust.



Through the creation and performance of new songs, the project aims to bridge cultural differences and share the stories of the diverse people who call Willmar home. "The program is a very exciting opportunity for us to showcase the capabilities of a living composer to bring disparate peoples together through the creation of new music," says John Nuechterlein, President and CEO. "ACF has a long history of community engagement work, and we know from experience this

program will leave a lasting mark on Willmar."

Beginning this summer, *In Common* will include activities for story sharing, songwriting & performing, drum circles, cultural dance, communal meals, music classes in Willmar area schools, and other events designed with the community. With her experience writing and performing a wide range of musical styles, Kashimana believes that "music is the greatest communicator, and this project has the potential to be powerful! It can bring together the different cultures in Willmar and create songs that the community can enjoy, share, and pass on from generation to generation."

Conversations with many community members shaped the project. ACF asked, whose stories need to be told and more widely heard? What ideas do you have to make Willmar a better place to live? Each conversation gravitated toward community members' hopes to foster understanding between people from different cultures. And as the project came into focus, the organizers realized that they wanted something very special: a composer who could guide people of all ages and abilities through the process of writing their own songs, so that the music would be a genuine reflection of Willmar and its people.

Community members envisioning the project and selecting the composer include Terry Brau, Mary Sawatzky, and Paula Uilscni Halvorson (Willmar Public Schools), Maggie Harp (Music Director & Educator), Jennifer Mendoza and Darlene Schroeder (Willmar Community Center), Leila Ismail (Journalist), Rev. Dale Handeen and Mary Lou Werner (Unitarian Universalist Church of Willmar), and John Jahr and Cynthia Koll Tengwall (West Central Singers).

The organizers are currently seeking Willmar area residents who are interested in attending activities with Kashimana and sharing stories during the coming year. Please visit the *In Common* website or contact project manager Kris Kautzman if you would like to learn more and get involved. kkautzman@composersforum.org or 651.251.2842. Follow *In Common* via Willmar Community Center social media, Kashimana's website, and the American Composers Forum website.



About Kashimana Ahua

Born in Nigeria, composer/performer Kashimana lived in Kenya and Ethiopia and traveled the world before making her home in the Twin Cities. Her songs paint compelling stories of her experiences in Africa, Europe and America, and she loves helping others explore their own creativity. Describing her passion for songwriting, she shares, "it pushes you to look within and outward at the same time; you are a participant and an

observer; a storyteller and a lead character, a voice and a listener, ultimately you are a communicator. Everyone should have the opportunity to tell their story through song in a safe, nurturing environment." Kashimana is a graduate of McNally Smith College of Music and holds degrees in Music Production and in Composition and Songwriting. She has led songwriting circles and workshops for people of all ages, including the production of an album of original songs with children in the Big Brothers and Big Sisters program.

About *In Common* and the American Composers Forum

In Common is a new collaborative artist residency that gives communities the opportunity to explore and celebrate their unique diversity through the sharing of stories and the creation of new music. The composer's residency in the community centers on creating music together and organizing events where people of all ages can gather to discover what they have in common. Each community hosts a yearlong project that is unique to their needs, and which brings diverse people together, including civic leaders, a faith congregation, service organizations, and artists.

The American Composers Forum (ACF) is a national nonprofit arts organization based in Saint Paul, MN. Founded in 1973, the organization has grown from an innovative regional initiative into one of the nation's premier composer service organizations. Over the course of four decades, ACF has nurtured the work of thousands of composers: programming now reaches composers and communities in all 50



states, and helps composers engage communities with music as a source of inspiration, self-reflection, and delight.

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American Composers Forum: <https://composersforum.org/>

In Common: <https://composersforum.org/programs/in-common/>

Kashimana Ahua: <http://www.kashimana.com/>

Otto Bremer Trust: <http://ottobremer.org/>

Willmar Community Center: <https://www.facebook.com/WillmarCommunityCenter/>

West Central Singers: <http://www.westcentralsingers.com/>

Unitarian Universalist Church of Willmar: <http://uuchurchofwillmar.org/>