



AMERICAN
COMPOSERS
FORUM

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JEROME
FOUNDATION

Celebrating the
creative spirit of
emerging artists



Composers Selected for 2017 Jerome Fund for New Music & Minnesota Emerging Composer Award (MECA)

ST. PAUL, MN – The American Composers Forum is pleased to announce the results of two programs supported with funds from the Jerome Foundation; **The Jerome Fund for New Music (JFund)** and the **Minnesota Emerging Composer Award (MECA)**.

Now in its 36th year, **JFund** supports the production of new works by emerging composers in a variety of genres. It seeks to boost a composer's career by offering an important commission and collaboration opportunity at an early stage in their professional development. Composers apply in conjunction with a partner to present a new project. They request funding to underwrite the commissioning fee and an additional amount in enhancement support to help the project reach its maximum potential. From a total pool of 155 applicants, ten projects totaling \$80,500 were funded this year. Awards ranged from \$7,500 to \$8,500.

The panelists for this grant round of the Jerome Fund for New Music (JFund) were composer **Samantha Boshnack** (<https://samanthaboshnack.wordpress.com/>), **Shawn Okpebholo** (<http://www.shawnokpebholo.com/>), and **Ken Ueno** (<http://www.kenueno.com/>). In addition to the JFund panelists, **Aby Wolf** (2014 MECA) (<https://abywolf.bandcamp.com/>) and **Davu Seru** (2013 MECA) (<https://davuseru.com/>) joined the panel to select the recipients of the 2017 Minnesota Emerging Composer Award.

For the JFund program, applications were considered in two separate pools: those from composers based in Minnesota, and those in which the composer is based in New York City.

About the winners

Lea Bertucci (Queens, NY) <http://lea-bertucci.com/>

Lea Bertucci will compose a 40-minute electroacoustic percussion work for Tigre (<http://tiguemusic.com/>). The piece will be developed for a custom multichannel speaker configuration at Fort Jay on Governor's Island. Mixing live percussion with electroacoustic tactics, this new piece will be designed to sonically engage with this unique site and its unusual acoustic properties.

Michael Betz (Minneapolis, MN) <http://michaelbetzmusic.com/>

Michael Betz will compose a 15–20-minute work for marimba and electronics for percussionist Eri Isomura (<http://www.eriisomura.com/>). Conceptually, the work will draw from themes found in cyberpunk science fiction, focusing primarily on the relationship between human and machine. Aesthetically, the work will be both at home in the concert hall and in the club, reflecting the cyberpunk social order disparity. Betz will explore these concepts musically via the following axes: Organic vs. Mechanical, Marimba vs. Electronics, Fixed vs. Live, Notated vs. Improvised, Reactive vs. Proactive, and Tonal vs. Nontonal. It will at times be unclear who is in control: the performer

or the electronics.

William Healy (New York, NY) <http://willhealymusic.com/>

Healy states “Last year, I wrote a piece called “Grand Central”, a 9-minute work for the group ShoutHouse. The piece aims to capture both the “moving hive” of a modern transit hub, and how that is juxtaposed with the beauty and serenity of the terminal. Because my background is in hip-hop, jazz, and classical genres, the result is a piece that reflects the complexity and diversity of the people inhabiting that space. For my Jerome Fund Project, I would expand this piece into a three-movement work, “Terminals”, reflecting on one transit station in each movement. The piece would progress chronologically, with each station representing a different time period in the evolution of New York. The first movement would reflect on City Hall Station, which is an abandoned station on the 6-train line. The first-ever subway station, built in 1904, it was abandoned in 1945 after it’s curved tracks proved ill-equipped for larger, modern subway cars. This part of the project builds upon my past work with abandoned ghost towns and cities. I recently completed an orchestra piece that depicts an abandoned town, called Kolmanskop, which is located in the Namibian desert. In 2015, I traveled there to research the piece, and I discovered that there is no better place to think about time, loss, and nostalgia than somewhere that is frozen in time.” Healy will collaborate with Jack Frerer for this project.

Eric Mayson (Minneapolis, MN) <http://ericmayson.com/>

Eric will compose a piece entitled *It’s all real, it’s all fake* for two musicians and five dancers for DaNCEBUMS (<http://www.dancebums.com/>). Eric states “My musical career has followed three distinct tracks; a composer for plays and musicals, a recording and touring musician, and a dance accompanist. While these experiences influence one another stylistically in my work, this project marks my first attempt to combine these skills in a single project. This project is significant because it will broaden my definition of what a composer is or does, where and how that work gets disseminated and consumed.”

Joel Mellin (Brooklyn, NY) <http://www.joelmellin.com/>

Joel Mellin will compose an eight to ten-minute work, *Nor’easter* (working title), for Gamelan Dharma Swara (<http://www.dharmaswara.org/>), a leading Balinese arts ensemble of 20+ musicians and dancers based in NYC. Mellin writes, “The Nor’easter is a snow storm of extreme and damaging conditions, but when it’s gone, leaves blankets of glistening, white snow and the calmness that nature brings after difficult times. I see enduring this phenomenon as uniquely characteristic of growing up in New England, but there are parallels to life on the stormy island of Bali, Indonesia, where torrential storms are frequent. The storm is a universal metaphor for clashing styles, cultural exchange, and the unity that is created by melding seemingly disparate constructs. It’s a theme I will explore through the lens of the Balinese performing arts traditions which have greatly influenced my artistic development over the last 10 years.”

Martin Nevin (Brooklyn, NY) <http://www.martinnevinbass.com/>

Martin Nevin will compose a thirty-two-minute work for chamber ensemble and vocalist entitled *Scratch at the Same Table*. The premiere will take place in partnership with Alex Nguyen and St. George’s Church. The song cycle is based on a set of poems, by poet Jonathan C. Creasy, which were written in Marfa, Texas when Creasy was taking part in the Lannan Residency. The backdrop is the open, high desert. The name of the piece comes from the final poem where Creasy writes, “I sleep where great poets have slept/and scratch at the same table”. The artist is simultaneously inspired and burdened by the weight of following in the footsteps of the masters in the search for truth and beauty. Each song has its own character and atmosphere but all the songs are bound by shared musical and textual themes.

Lester St. Louis (Brooklyn, NY) <https://soundcloud.com/lester-st-louis>

Lester St. Louis will compose *A Metonym for Our New Minds* a thirty-minute work for the JACK Quartet (<http://jackquartet.com/>). *A Metonym for Our New Minds* is proposition and a determination for futures. With this piece I want to propose a few things. 1. What potentialities can be created from a single source? And what are the practices and processes that change us as artists? I find a great deal of things that excite me in the world and in my work express themselves from self generating spaces, as in how responses to the conditions can call for extraordinary and new results.

Walken Schweigert (Saint Paul, MN) <https://www.facebook.com/pg/wastelandsproject/about>

Walken Schweigert will compose a ninety-minute opera entitled *The Garden* an outdoor, traveling, site-responsive performance that will premiere at Philadelphia Community Farm (<http://www.buttermilkcsa.com/>) in Osceola, WI in 2020. *The Garden* is part two of his operatic triptych called *The Rewilding Cycle*, the premise of which is that what destroys the natural world, including ourselves, is all our efforts to control it. Western civilization attempts to control nature in order to utilize it. This objectification often looks “beautiful”, manicured, pristine, but it hides suffering, darkness, and oppression. *The Garden* investigates the attempts of this white-supremacist/colonizer culture to beautify/manage/control nature (including people) and reveals the horror that ensues when we do.

The Wastelands, Walken’s first opera and part one of the triptych, asks the question: how do you find hope when faced with the despair of social oppression and environmental devastation? *The Garden* asks the question: With hope in hand, what is it that we must confront in order to liberate our world and our hearts?

Shelley Washington (Brooklyn, NY) <https://www.shelleywashington.com/>

Shelley Washington will compose a new fifteen-minute suite of miniatures, each based on a specific textile or fabric, for Bearthoven (<http://www.bearthoven.com/>). Shelley states: “I am fascinated by textiles and our relationship with fabric. As a composer, I am particularly interested in the parallels between the functions of fabric and music in our society and psychology. There are styles of textiles and music that accompany virtually all cultural events and practices. We have garments and music intended for weddings and funerals, for religious and secular events, for the wealthy and the poor. Our music and fabric preferences can also reflect deep-seated individual traits, even extending so far as to reflect our various emotional and mental states. What we wear and listen to often has the ability to boost our highs, sooth our lows, and can provide an expressive outlet for the individual human experience in all its various states. My goal with this new piece is to create a work highlighting this symmetry, drawing musical inspiration from the patterns, rites, and emotions related to the fabrics of our culture.”

Mark Yodice (New York, NY) <https://thejunerise.bandcamp.com/>

Mark Yodice will compose *North Star* a dramatic and evocative instrumental work honoring the life of my closest friend, Maria Lianandonakis, who died suddenly in August of 2015. *North Star*, the title invoking a feeling of being disoriented and lost, but guided to safety, will embody the life of a special human being; drawing inspiration from influences like Takamitsu, Scriabin, Bernstein, Gismonti, everything really..., it will be expansive and powerful, like the strongest of friendships.

In a separately administered nomination process, three area creative musicians have been selected to receive Minnesota Emerging Composer Award (MECA). They will each receive \$3,000 to pursue a new project that will help them take the next steps in developing their careers. The MECA program, now in its ninth year, seeks to identify artists whose work falls outside the Forum’s typical granting and panel processes. ACF announced an open call to nominate original,

creative musicians with significant potential working in MN. The selected candidates are invited to describe a project that will boost their career and artistry, to be completed within the following twelve to twenty-four months.

Queen Drea <https://www.queendrea.com/>

Queen Drea is a sound designer/composer, vocalist and performance artist who creates conceptual soundscapes. By applying a poetic and often metaphorical language to her lyrics and compositions, she approaches a wide scale of subjects in a multi-layered way and likes to involve the audience in conversation as they accompany her on her musical journey. Her compositions directly respond to the surrounding environment and uses everyday experiences from the artist point of view as a starting point. Often these are framed instances that would go unnoticed in their original context. With a conceptual approach, her work references love, pain, and life's lessons. Queen Drea was a 2016 Catalyst artist at Intermedia Arts, where she created a 30 min film for which she scored and performed in tandem. Queen Drea composed the soundscape for the first two acts of "Horridra: Golden Healing", by Ananya Dance Theater, which premiered at The O'Shaughnessy at St. Catherine University September 2016 and has performed at the Dakota, Aster Cafe New York and in Ethiopia as an electronic musician and vocalist.

Holly Hansen <https://soundcloud.com/user-676644127>

In 2008 Holly Hansen formed the minimalist rock trio, Zoo Animal. She released 3 albums under that name, along with composing and performing a score for the silent film, "The Passion of Joan of Arc." She also composed three commissioned liturgies for Mercy Seat Lutheran Church in Minneapolis.

During her time with Zoo Animal, she received awards such as, "Best Live Artist" from City Pages, and "Best Singer-Songwriter under 30" from the Star Tribune. Scoring *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, along with her love of experimental and electronic music, pushed Holly into creating her moniker, Hall E-Hands Zen (aka "h.e.z.") in early 2017. With this new direction Holly creates meditative, forward-thinking sonic landscapes. She uses found sounds, samplers and sequencers to create pieces that both draw you into the music, and into yourself, with their pulsing and shifting melodic rhythms.

Hansen also hosts a weekly series at the 331 Club in Minneapolis on Tuesdays from 7-9p. She created the event in response to the lack of artistic events at reasonable time slots, hence the event's name, "Tuesday, Early Evening." It is a place for artists to try new collaborations or pieces in front of an engaged audience. She performs every first Tuesday of the month and curates an eclectic group of performers for the rest of the month.

Ian Vaver <https://ianvaver.bandcamp.com/>

Ian Vaver grew up in a musical family with a variety of styles being heard, learned and celebrated in the home. He began his musical education studying piano and later became a classically trained trumpet player, pursuing a career in music education. While learning guitar and mandolin on the side and transitioning into political science and international studies in his college years, Ian began performing regularly in the folk and bluegrass traditions in Madison, Wisconsin and throughout the Midwest. After composing a substantial number of songs in those musical traditions, he took an interest in instrumental compositions rooted in bluegrass, folk, and Americana, but often branching out into blending classical and jazz motifs that harken back to his earlier musical experiences. Ian remains active in politics and arts advocacy while keeping a consistent presence in the Twin Cities acoustic music scene as a performer and composer. Ian lives in Minneapolis with his partner Nicole and dog Maeby where he enjoys cooking, canoeing, and travel.

About the American Composers Forum

The American Composers Forum is committed to supporting composers and developing new markets for their music. Through granting, commissioning, and performance programs, ACF provides composers at all stages of their careers with valuable resources for professional and artistic development. By linking communities with composers and performers, ACF fosters a demand for new music, enriches communities, and helps develop the next generation of composers, musicians, and music patrons.

Founded in 1973 as the Minnesota Composers Forum, the organization has grown from an innovative regional initiative into one of the nation's premier composer service organizations. ACF programming reaches composers and communities in all 50 states and helps composers engage communities with music as a source of inspiration, self-reflection and delight. This engagement takes the form of groundbreaking composer residencies, designed to engage communities in the creative process and broaden the contexts in which new music is written, performed and heard. It means innovative approaches to teaching music while nurturing the next generation of composers, performers and audiences. ACF supports composers' artistic and professional growth through a rich variety of programs and services, including commissions, performances, readings, and fellowships. 2,000 members include composers and performers, presenters and organizations that share ACF's goals, and individuals and institutions with an interest in supporting new music. Members come from both urban and rural areas; they work in virtually every musical genre, including orchestral and chamber music, world music, opera and music theater, jazz and improvisational music, electronic and electro-acoustic music, and sound art.

Program Funding

The **Jerome Foundation**, created by artist and philanthropist Jerome Hill (1905-1972), seeks to contribute to a dynamic and evolving culture by supporting the creation, development, and production of new works by emerging artists. The Foundation makes grants to not-for-profit arts organizations and artists in Minnesota and New York City.

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