



PHOTO CREDIT: CHRIS LEE

American Composers Forum

# Our work has just begun



“Simply having the chance to exist outside of survival mode for a little while is absolutely HUGE and transformative. So far the fellowship has allowed me a much needed chance to take a breath and a step back for some self-assessment and reimagining of future pathways.”

Troy Rogers

**ACF envisions a world where living music creators are celebrated as essential to human culture. We are leading catalysts in an ecosystem that invites generations of composers, artists, advocates, and audiences to pursue this vision with us.**

**Our Mission is to support and advocate for individuals and groups creating music today by demonstrating the vitality and relevance of their art.**

- **We connect artists with collaborators, organizations, audiences, and resources.**
- **Through storytelling, publications, recordings, hosted gatherings, and industry leadership, we activate equitable opportunities for artists.**
- **We provide direct funding and mentorship to a broad and diverse field of music creators, highlighting those who have been historically excluded from participation.**

**Our Core Values are Leadership, Anti-Racism, Courage, Support, and Curiosity.**

**We frame our work with a focus on racial equity and include within that scope, but do not limit it to, diverse gender identities, musical approaches and perspectives, religions, ages, (dis)abilities, cultures, backgrounds, sexual orientations, and broad definitions of “American.”**

**ACF’s commitment to racial equity is outlined on our website with clear action steps and annual report cards reviewing our progress. Visit our website for the most updated information.**



**A letter from the Executive Director**  
Vanessa Rose

20  
23

**Dear ACF Community,**

**Over the course of our 2022-23 fiscal year, we sought to highlight composers as storytellers as we moved back to in-person activity while utilizing the digital connections strengthened during the pandemic. Deepening our commitment to racial equity, we were grateful to collaborate with a number of partners in realizing this shared goal, amplifying the impact of collaborating with living composers who reflect our world today. And we celebrated 40 years of our longtime record label, innova Recordings. Below are some highlights of our work over the year – which we hope will serve as examples and catalysts for a much longer journey of embracing living American composers as vital to our society.**

#### **Immigration, Identity, and the Arts: Platforming Artists and Their Stories**

In alignment with our commitment to fostering dialogue through art, we were excited to host a compelling series of events and conversations on the theme Immigration, Identity, and the Arts. Collaborating with the East Side Freedom Library, and inspired by Thi Bui’s poignant graphic memoir, *The Best We Could Do*, we engaged with and platformed the lived experiences of individuals wrestling with this theme, including perspectives from the diverse immigrant populations in Minnesota. East Side Freedom Library – whose mission is to inspire solidarity, advocate for justice, and work toward equity for all – were wonderful partners in this collaborative effort. (We loved having Thi Bui join us, too!)

Through a combination of cultural events and conversations, both in-person and virtual, we created spaces that brought artists and community leaders together in dialogue, music, and literature. This initiative – supported by the NEA’s Big Read, a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest – engaged with the intersections of immigration and identity through the arts, cultivating a deeper understanding and connection within our community.

#### **Composing Inclusion: Collaborative Commissions for Multiple Generations**

In the spirit of serving as a catalyst for new opportunities to center living composers, we launched a partnership with The Juilliard School’s Preparatory Division and the New York Philharmonic for a new program, Composing Inclusion. Powered by the Sphinx Venture Fund, this program is unique because composers who identify as Black and/or Latina/e/o develop new work with middle and high school age students over the course of a year, and design the music to be “flexible” for intergenerational ensembles. All works are being premiered over the course of two seasons by the Juilliard students and Philharmonic musicians in side-by-side concerts, and published by ACF for more performances elsewhere. The selected composers are: Jasmine Barnes, Nicolás Lell Benavides, Jordyn Davis, James Díaz, Thomas Flippin, Lauren McCall, Patricia Martínez, Andrés Soto, and Elijah J. Thomas. Trevor Weston was also commissioned – supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts – and serves as advisor on the program. Our particular role has been to ensure that the composer’s perspective is always at the “table,” and that the composers themselves feel supported and involved throughout the program.

#### **Our Racial Equity Framework: Defining the Path Forward**

As outlined in our commitment to racial equity statement and annual “report cards”, we continue to work toward our goal to be a more equitable organization at all levels. This work includes ensuring meaningful participation from the artists we seek to support as well as our influence on the ecosystem that presents, performs, and receives their music. When space is created for more people to belong, it not only benefits artists and their networks, but also the world. Actions such as removing membership fees, inviting conversations, and being intentional about who is making funding decisions on our panels are all easy changes compared to the continued work to question assumptions, challenge the status quo, and try things that may feel uncomfortable. We are grateful for the engagement and trust from so many people who have been part of this journey with us. We will not stop.

On behalf of ACF’s Board, staff, and artists, I express heartfelt thanks for being such an integral part of ACF.

Vanessa Rose  
Executive Director



## ACF Programs

### Funding and Mentorship

#### About McKnight Composer Fellowship:

The intent of the McKnight Artist and Culture Bearers Fellowship is to recognize and support artists and culture bearers who are beyond emerging and have sustained experience in their area of practice. Fellows demonstrate achievement, commitment, and high level proficiency in artistic and/or culture bearer practice that contributes to their field and impacts and benefits people in Minnesota.

#### About McKnight Visiting Composer Residency:

The intent of the McKnight Visiting Composer Residency is to recognize and support artists and culture bearers who are beyond emerging and have sustained experience in their area of practice. Visiting Composers demonstrate achievement, commitment, and high level proficiency in artistic and/or culture bearer practice. This program invites artists to respond to, or reflect on, the unique qualities of people and communities in Minnesota.

#### About ACF | create:

American Composers Forum (ACF) champions composers and other creative music makers, and boosts their careers with professional opportunities. ACF | create is an evolution of the Jerome Fund for New Music (JFund), which started in 1979. Through this program, ACF has made hundreds of awards and has helped launch many careers. ACF | create supports the creation, presentation, and subsequent life of a new work. Five grants are available: up to \$8,000 for the composer or primary artist's time to create the work, and up to \$3,000 to help with production and promotion support. This program is for early career artists that reside in Minnesota or the five boroughs of New York City.

#### About ACF | connect:

Launched in 2017, ACF | connect provides opportunities for composers to build relationships with leading American ensembles to create new work, reach new audiences, and engage with new communities. Past partnerships include the Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble (PNME), Roomful of Teeth, and The Great Black Music Ensemble: An Ensemble of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians™ (AACM). Through this program, composers are offered competitive commission fees, and have significant time to both work with performers and participate in learning/networking opportunities with industry professionals. Ensembles are able to connect to a broader composer community and invite applicants from a national call. Consistent with the mission of American Composers Forum, the program supports meaningful, long-lasting connections between composers, performers, audiences, and the local community where the ensemble is based. The program intentionally supports a diversity of voices and music to advance creative musical expression as a core value of a global society. ACF | connect ensures a vibrant future for composers and their work by supporting their vision and creativity, and by pairing them with performers and audiences in traditional and innovative spaces and media.

#### About Composing Inclusion:

Composing Inclusion brings together multiple generations, musical levels, perspectives, and community members in the creation and performance of new music. Powered by the Sphinx Venture Fund, American Composers Forum (ACF), in partnership with The Juilliard School's Preparatory Division and the New York Philharmonic, co-commissioned nine music creators who identify as Black and/or Latina/e/o to create "flexible," adaptive scores for players of varied musical ability. The nine commissioned works (five works for orchestra, four for chamber ensembles) are developed in collaboration with Juilliard students and Philharmonic artists over the course of several months with premieres in New York City by Juilliard Preparatory Division students performing side-by-side with members of the New York Philharmonic. ACF is publishing the works and distributing them through Hal Leonard to engage more intergenerational ensembles with the music.



## Awardees

### Funding and Mentorship

#### McKnight Composer Fellowship

deVon Russell Gray  
LaAerial  
Mychal "MMYYKK" Fisher  
Troy Rogers (aka Robot Rickshaw)

#### McKnight Visiting Composer Residency

Steve Parker  
Yoon-Ji Lee

#### ACF | create

Nava Dunkelman  
Eliana Fishbeyn  
Clae Lu  
Cleo Reed  
Phong Tran

#### ACF | connect

*This year, ACF partnered with GLFCAM to host four of their fellows for a residency and workshop in Minnesota*

Erin Busch  
Ivette Herryman Rodríguez  
Liza Sobel Crane  
Sakari Vanderveer

#### Composing Inclusion

##### Cycle 1

*Works premiered Spring 2023*

James Díaz  
Jordyn Davis  
Trevor Weston  
Thomas Flippin

##### Cycle 2

*Works will premiere Spring 2024*

Andrés Soto  
Nicolás Lell Benavides  
Lauren McCall  
Elijah J. Thomas  
Jasmine Barnes

##### Other

Patricia Martínez  
*(Passed away before completing her piece)*

20  
23

*"This opportunity has helped me to create deeper bonds with international communities along with Minneapolis-based fellows as a community."*

LaAerial

# ACF Programs Recordings

## Awardees

- Cecilia Smith
- Dawn Avery
- Goldfeather
- Goussy Célestin
- Haiqiong Deng
- Jessie Cox
- Joshua Henderson
- Kinan Abou-afach and a group consisting of Nathan Hanson, Davu Seru, and deVon Russell Gray
- Mary Ellen Childs
- Sidiki Conde
- Daniel Corral
- Duo Noire (Thomas Flippin Christopher Mallett)
- Humay Gasimzade
- Gina Izzo
- Samn Johnson and Tis Kaoru Zamler-Cahart
- Asuka Kakitani
- Leilehua Lanzilotti
- The Linking Legacies Collective
- Neera
- Noice
- Jess Rowland
- The Vex Collection
- 1200 & Chance Designs



**Kukuruz Quartet**  
*Breathing, Remembering, Dissolving*



**Goldfeather**  
*Changes*



**South Dakota Symphony Orchestra**  
*Lakota Music Project*



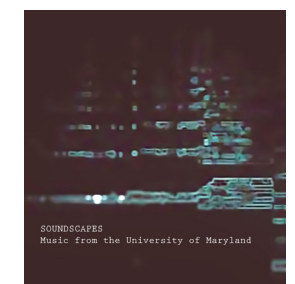
**Cecilia Smith**  
*Mary Lou Williams Resurgence Project*



**thingNY**  
*Passover*



**ununu**  
*ununu*



**University of Maryland**  
*Soundscapes*



**J.E. Hernández**  
*Voces Fantomas*



**Gray, Hanson, Seru**  
*We Sick*



innova is supported by an endowment from the McKnight Foundation and by the Sorel Charitable Organization.



# ACF Programs

## Storytelling & Advocacy

### I CARE IF YOU LISTEN

I CARE IF YOU LISTEN (ICIYL) is an award-winning multimedia hub for living music creators powered by American Composers Forum). Founded in December 2010 by Thomas Deneuville, ICIYL was born from a desire to create a dedicated space for talking about contemporary classical music. Through a unique blend of music criticism, promotional features, and multimedia content, ICIYL strives to be a leading advocate for artists who have been historically underrepresented or marginalized in Western classical music by highlighting equitable programming, facilitating challenging conversations, cultivating a safe platform, and creating educational resources.

#### Top Five Articles of FY23

- 1 **“We Need to Talk About Money: Musicians Without Financial Privilege are Being Pushed Out”**  
by Juhi Bansal - 24,665 pageviews
- 2 **“I Don’t Want The Badge – Addressing Classical Music’s Burnout Addiction”**  
by Michelle Hromin - 7,743 page views
- 3 **“Out of Context #4: The Muddy Ownership of Dreadlocks”**  
by Chevall Pryce - 7,007 page views
- 4 **“What Classical Musicians Can Learn from HBCU Marching Bands”**  
by Katie Brown - 4,967 page views
- 5 **“Out of Context #6: The Whitewashing of Prince”**  
by Aisha Staggers - 3,883 page views

### PaviElle French: Artist Equity Summit 2022

#### Liberation! Lifting Up our Youth

#### About the Residency:

Liberation! Lifting up our Youth, was a multi-part residency led by artist and St. Paul native PaviElle French, in collaboration with six St. Paul-based arts organizations. Developed from a desire to empower the young people of the community, French pursued activities over nine months that included workshops, commissions, and performances. The focus of the residency was on “lifting up our youth” to connect, express themselves, and share their thoughts through music. The six participating organizations included The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Walker | West Academy, Schubert Club, Purple Playground, TruArtSpeaks, and American Composers Forum.

#### About the Summit:

Annually, ACF organizes an Artist Equity Summit, a focal point for music creators exploring themes of equity in and beyond their fields. The 2022 theme, “Lifting Up our Youth,” showcased young artists unveiling their methods for collaboration in creating music, sparking conversations on achieving racial equity across generations. This summit marked the culmination of artist PaviElle French’s residency Liberation! Lifting Up our Youth, which arose from our collective commitment to empowering young individuals. Performances by Purple Playground and TruArtSpeaks students showcased original works developed in workshops with PaviElle and the student collaborators of each organization respectively. Additionally, we highlighted our new intergenerational commissioning partnership with The Juilliard School’s Pre-College and the New York Philharmonic, known as “Composing Inclusion.”

### Immigration, Identity, and the Arts

#### About the Program:

American Composers Forum believes that music is a medium that can help us connect as humans, tell stories, and share experiences. East Side Freedom Library has long hosted study groups, partnerships, and community events that lift up the stories of its neighborhood in the name of justice. Together, we hosted several cultural events and conversations that examined the theme of “Immigration, Identity, and the Arts,” aiming to amplify the voices, stories, and music of immigrant artists and community members grappling with this theme. Included in our events was a discussion of, and inspiration from, Thi Bui’s graphic memoir, *The Best We Could Do*. Supported by the NEA’s Big Read project, this book aligned greatly with our theme and resonated with numerous members of our community.



*“Let the world see me for who I am; see us for who we are.”*

*“And I don’t care whether you agree or disagree. It is your deeper understanding that I’m looking for. It is the pulse of your humanity that I am looking to feel...”*

**Kao Kalia Yang (11/12/22)**

*“I really enjoyed working with PaviElle. For me, the whole process felt heart affirming and throughout the whole thing we were cared for and part of PaviElle’s team”.*

**Taiwana Shambley of TruArtSpeaks**

*“As I get older...I am thinking about my future eldership so that I don’t get older and lose my connection with the youth that are a couple of generations apart from me.”*

**PaviElle French**

*“Music is my video games.”*

**Kimora Collins of PurplePlayground**

*“These weavers that are, you know, older than me...They don’t want to give up. They want our weaving process to be alive, they don’t want our culture to disappear. So even though they are old...they still come and teach the youth...[They] influence and inspire me to not give up and learn so that I can be a teacher for the next generation.”*

**Hta Thi**

# Balance Sheet

Statement of Position as of June 30, 2023

	Current Year	Prior Year End	Net Change
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Checking and Cash Equivalents	206,759	222,089	(15,330)
CD and Money Market Accounts	785,755	761,543	24,211
Grants and Contributions Receivable	618,769	157,569	461,200
Accounts Receivable	17,244	18,969	(1,725)
Recording Loans Receivable	318	4,145	(3,827)
Prepaid Expense	1,417	16,494	(15,077)
Inventory	60,685	59,395	1,289
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>1,690,946</b>	<b>1,240,205</b>	<b>450,741</b>
<b>Long-Term Assets</b>			
Investments and Endowment	7,874,408	7,781,349	93,059
Property and Equipment - Net	2,339	2,662	(323)
<b>Total Long-Term Assets</b>	<b>7,876,747</b>	<b>7,784,011</b>	<b>92,735</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>9,567,693</b>	<b>9,024,216</b>	<b>543,477</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>			
<b>Current Liabilities</b>			
Accounts Payable	39,338	11,362	27,976
Funds Held for Others (Fiscal Sponsorship)	243,025	232,378	10,648
Recording Program Payable	149,146	160,584	(11,438)
Composer Grants Payable	215,853	271,515	(55,662)
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>647,362</b>	<b>675,839</b>	<b>(28,477)</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>			
Unrestricted			
Current Operations	286,333	348,701	(62,368)
Board-Designated Fund	943,383	891,232	52,151
Total Unrestricted	1,229,716	1,239,933	(10,217)
Temporarily Restricted	4,125,390	3,546,220	579,170
Permanently Restricted	3,565,225	3,562,225	3,000
Total Net Assets	8,920,331	8,348,378	571,953
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>9,567,693</b>	<b>9,024,216</b>	<b>543,477</b>

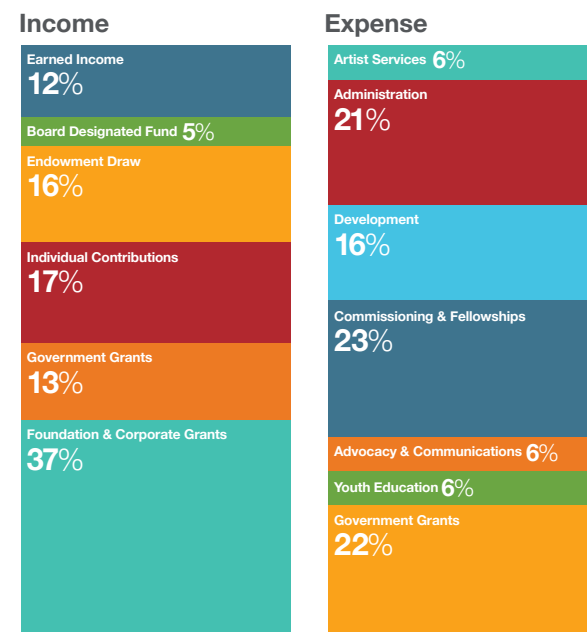
# Board

- Nirmala Rajasekar**, Chair
- Stanford Thompson**, Vice Chair
- Carol Ann Cheung**, Secretary
- Stephen Usery**, Treasurer
- Stephen Miles**, Past Chair
- Vanessa Rose**, Ex-Officio
- Lee Bynum**
- Patrick Castillo**
- Nina Sun Eidsheim**
- Kathrine Handford**
- Gao Hong**
- Nancy Huart**
- Loki Karuna**
- Douglas Kearney**
- Janis Lane-Ewart**
- Scott LeGere**
- Andrew Paulus**
- Luther Ranheim**
- Tomeka Reid**
- Diana Schutter**
- Derrick Skye**
- Koven Smith**
- Isaac Thompson**
- Mateusz Troicki**
- Srinivasan V**
- Sarah Williams**

# Income Statement

Statement of Financial Activity for the year ending June 30, 2023

<b>Income</b>	
Foundation and Corporate Grants	634,007
Government Grants	220,313
Individual Contributions	302,407
Endowment Draw	264,658
Board-Designated Fund	90,000
Earned Income	212,507
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>1,723,892</b>
<b>Expense</b>	
Commissioning and Fellowships	419,357
Advocacy & Communications	109,128
Youth Education	102,186
Recordings & Digital Strategy	386,865
Artist Services	103,087
Administration	372,349
Development	292,78
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>1,785,759</b>
<b>Net Change in Current Operations</b>	<b>(61,867)</b>



# Staff

- Chris Campbell**, Director of Recordings – innova recordings/ACF
- Amanda Cook**, Director of Publications
- Paul Hanson**, Director of Finance and Administration
- Carolina Heredia**, Director of Artist Support
- Oswald Huynh**, Artist Support Associate
- Tim Igel**, Manager of Recordings and Advertising
- Esteban Meneses**, Assistant Editor
- Xavier Muzik**, Executive Assistant
- Dell Paulsen**, Development and Operations Associate
- Elise Peterson**, Director of Development and Operations
- Vanessa Rose**, Executive Director
- Eika Tokunaga**, Systems and Technology Manager
- Jeffrey Yelverton**, Director of Digital Media

## Funders

To the hundreds of individuals who supported American Composers Forum during our 2023 fiscal year, thank you! None of this would have been possible without you.

We would also like to thank the following government agencies, private foundations, and corporations for significant contributions in general operating and/or project funds during our 2023 fiscal year.



- Amphion Foundation
- Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation
- Athwin Foundation
- BMI Foundation
- The Aaron Copland Fund for Music
- Alice M. Ditson Fund
- The Dorsey & Whitney Foundation
- Dr. Fred Noah Gordon Charitable Fund of The Minneapolis Foundation
- Hardenbergh Foundation
- The Helgeson Foundation
- Jerome Foundation
- Eastman's Institute for Music Leadership's funds from the Paul R. Judy Center for Innovation and Research
- Art and Martha Kaemmer Fund of HRK Foundation
- John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
- Margaret Rivers Fund
- McKnight Foundation
- Minnesota State Arts Board
- National Endowment for the Arts
- The Rubin Institute for Music Criticism
- Saint Paul Cultural STAR Program
- San Francisco Conservatory of Music
- The Sorel Organization
- Walder Foundation

## Program Credits

### About McKnight Composer Foundation: McKnight Composer Fellowship, McKnight Visiting Composer Residency

*This program is made possible by the generous support of The McKnight Foundation.*

Founded on the belief that Minnesota thrives when its artists and culture bearers thrive, the McKnight Foundation's arts and culture program is one of the oldest and largest of its kind in the country. Support for individual working Minnesota artists and culture bearers has been a cornerstone of the program since it began in 1982. The McKnight Artist & Culture Bearer Fellowships Program provides annual, unrestricted cash awards to outstanding mid-career Minnesota artists in 15 different creative disciplines. Program partner organizations administer the fellowships and structure them to respond to the unique challenges of different disciplines. Currently, the foundation contributes about \$2.8 million per year to its statewide fellowships. For more information, visit [mcknight.org/artistfellowships](http://mcknight.org/artistfellowships).



### ACF | create

American Composers Forum's ACF | create program is supported by a grant from the Jerome Foundation.

### ACF | connect

American Composers Forum's ACF | connect program is made possible with the outstanding generosity of the following individuals: Jane Anfinson, Thomas Arneson, Suzanne Asher, Carol Barnett, Pearl and Bob Bergad, Margee and Will Bracken, Karen Brooks, Richard Cisek and Kay Fredericks, Dee Ann and Kent Crossley, Julia W. Dayton, C. Lee Essrig, Rosemary & David Good Family Foundation, Katherine Goodale, Jeff and Hyun Mee Graves, Carol Heen, Steve Heitzeg and Gwen Pappas, Kathleen Henschel and John Dewes, Linda and Jack Hoeschler, Leaetta Hough and Bob Muschewske, Sam Hsu and Sally Cheng, Hella Mears Hueg Estate Gift, Thelma Hunter Estate Gift, John and Ruth Huss, George Frederick Jewett Foundation East, Art and Martha Kaemmer, Jon Lewis and Lisa Merklin, Mike and Kay McCarthy, Greg McNeely, Alfred and Ann Moore, Louis and Gloria Nuechterlein, John Nuechterlein and Dan Monson, John and Debbie Orenstein, I.A. O'Shaughnessy Foundation in memory of Thelma Hunter, David and Judy Ranheim, Denice Rippentrop, Vanessa Rose, Bill and Susan Sands, Gale Sharpe, Doug and Kathy Skor, Dan and Ellie Thomas, Stephen and Jayne Usery, Kathleen van Bergen, Janika Vandervelde, Jim Waffler, and Margaret and Angus Wurtele.

### Composing Inclusion

A partnership between The Juilliard Preparatory Division, the New York Philharmonic, and American Composers Forum. Powered by the Sphinx Venture Fund.

### Pavielle French Residency: Liberation! Lifting Up our Youth

Pavielle French's residency Liberation! Lifting Up our Youth is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund. Generous support has also been provided by Bill and Susan Sands, the I.A. O'Shaughnessy Foundation, and Lillian Wright and C. Emil Berglund Foundation.



### Immigration Identity and the Arts

NEA Big Read is a program of the National Endowment for the Arts in partnership with Arts Midwest. This program is designed to broaden our understanding of our world, our communities, and ourselves through the joy of sharing a good book. American Composers Forum is one of 60+ nonprofit organizations to receive a grant to host an NEA Big Read project in FY2023.



# American Composers Forum



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[composersforum.org](http://composersforum.org)

American Composers Forum is a fiscal year 2023 recipient of an Operating Support grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board. This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support grant, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

