

THE WALLACE ALEXANDER GERBODE FOUNDATION

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Gerbode Foundation Awards Six \$50,000 Commissions for New Music Projects

Composers selected for Special Awards in the Arts in Music Composition

Berkeley, Calif.—The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, in partnership with The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, is pleased to announce the recipients of a \$300,000 initiative to support the creation and production of new music projects by California composers and music practitioners. These music awards are the third and final round of a three-year \$900,000 initiative funded by the Gerbode and Hewlett foundations to support the commissioning of individual artists and investing in their creative vision. In 2019, grants were made for new theater productions. In 2018, grants were made for new works in dance.

The new music projects will be commissioned and premiered by Bay Area nonprofit organizations between June 2021 and October 2023. Each organization will receive a grant of \$50,000: \$12,500 or more, will represent a commissioning fee to a California-based composer, sound designer, or music practitioner, and the remaining funds will be used by the presenting organization for expenses related to the creation and premiere of the new music production.

The recipients of the 2020 Music Awards are (in alphabetical order by organization):

East Bay Center for the Performing Arts/Howard Wiley

Jazz saxophonist, drummer and composer Howard Wiley will create and record a full suite for an original jazz theater work, "Mattie Mae's." Set in Richmond's massive WWII shipyards and a legendary African-American juke joint as the city leaps from 22,000 immigrant fishermen, railroad and refinery workers, to an industrial powerhouse of 100,000, Wiley's composition will embody and extend the church, blues and jazz traditions that anchored Richmond's Black workers and families then and today. As Richmond imagines a post-pandemic world so, too, we need to hold to our roots and journey. The full recording will be completed in Spring 2022 with the musical theater premiere in Fall 2023.

Gamelan Sekar Jaya/I Dewa Putu Berata

Dewa Berata's *Sudamala* is a musical prayer for healing. In this global age of sickness, Balinese traditional artists are faced with an existential challenge- to create, in isolation, music that has always depended on community and closeness. In the summer of 2021, Pak Dewa will begin working with multidisciplinary collaborators on this suite of nine musical vignettes to be premiered at a Bay Area outdoor venue in the Spring of 2022. Each vignette will focus on an aspect of the Balinese spiritual concept, *Tri Harta Karana* (divinity, humanity, nature), emphasizing the commonalities and discontinuities of creating and performing with local artists as a Balinese composer in the Bay Area.

Musical Traditions – Paul Drescher Ensemble/Lisa Mezzacappa

The Electronic Lover, an original opera by Berkeley composer Lisa Mezzacappa with a libretto by Beth Lisick. The work explores the naïve moment when we first invited computers into the most intimate

aspects of our lives. The digital opera, set in chatrooms in the early 1980s, features a versatile and diverse cast of Bay Area vocalists and instrumentalists. The work will be released as a serial podcast - a pilot episode plus eight season episodes - over the course of 2021.

SFJAZZ/Ambrose Akinmusire

PORTER explores the rich history of intergenerational mentorship and oral tradition in the Bay Area, through interviews and archival footage of jazz greats and local legends. Featuring the Ambrose Akinmusire Quartet backed by a 30-piece orchestra, *PORTER* will premiere a new jazz and orchestral composition, set to the voices, images, and stories of jazz mentors. This work will premiere in Spring 2022.

The Living Earth Show/Ellen Fullman

Ellen Fullman's composition *Heart Wire* for her installation, The Long String Instrument, will be performed with The Living Earth Show. Set in an enormous industrial-sized space filled with delicate shimmering thread-like music wires, *Heart Wire* will take the listener on a journey through intricately woven texture and spacious expanse, producing sounds like a chamber orchestra, at times phantom horns rising up, or reed organs and strummed guitars. Fullman's *Heart Wire* will synthesize components into a startling new form that might seem to have physical mass or to even be turning inside out. This work will premiere in Winter 2021.

Women's Audio Mission/Lalin St. Juste

This project supports the production/presentation of Lalin St. Juste's debut work, *Siren Song: From Silence to Resilience*, her first major solo project, which blends R&B, Haitian folkloric influences, experimental acoustic/electronic elements, dance/choreography, and video. St. Juste is best known as the frontwoman of the critically acclaimed Bay Area ensemble, The Seshen. *Siren Song* will tell St. Juste's story of growing up as a first-generation Haitian-American girl trapped by societal expectations of her race, gender, and sexuality, coming out as queer and coming into her blackness/identity, in a story of healing and growing into one's own power, authenticity, and truth. This work will premiere in Spring 2022.

"During a time of unprecedented crises, we are thrilled to be able to support these composers and arts organizations," said Stacie Ma'a, the president of the Gerbode Foundation. "These composers will inspire us with their artistry and creativity sparked during a very uncertain time in our history and I am excited that Bay Area audiences will have a first look at their incredible work."

The Gerbode Foundation was assisted in making these grants by an advisory panel composed of the following nationally respected music composition experts:

Juan Díes is an active musician and co-founder of Sones de México Ensemble, a two-time GRAMMY-nominated performing arts organization established in 1994 to perform, record, teach and promote Mexico's rich heritage of folk music and dance traditions. Active in the community, Juan has volunteered for the boards of NARAS, Folk Alliance and the CSO; has served in various municipal, state and national grant panels; and has done independent fieldwork research for the Smithsonian, NEA, Montgomery County Arts Council (MD), and Lowell Folk Festival (MA). Juan Díes holds an M.A. in folklore and ethnomusicology from Indiana University and is an Earlham College Distinguished Alumnus and a United States Artists 2019 Fellow.

Nathalie Joachim is a GRAMMY-nominated flutist, composer, and vocalist. The Haitian-American artist is hailed for being "a fresh and invigorating cross-cultural voice" (The Nation). She is co-founder of the critically acclaimed urban art pop duo, Flutronix. Joachim's debut solo album, *Fanm d' Ayiti* with Spektral Quartet, available on New Amsterdam Records, received a GRAMMY nomination for Best

World Music Album. She holds faculty positions at the Perlman Music Program, Bang On a Can Summer Festival and Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity; is a teaching artist for The Juilliard-Nord Anglia Performing Arts Programme; and is a 2020 United States Artist Fellow.

Kavita Shah is a GRAMMY-nominated vocalist, composer, polyglot, and lifelong New Yorker hailed by NPR for possessing an “amazing dexterity for musical languages.” Her projects blending modern jazz, folkloric traditions and new music include “Visions” (2014, co-produced by Lionel Loueke), the interdisciplinary work “Folk Songs of Naboréa” (premiered in 2017 at the Park Avenue Armory), and “Interplay” (2018) in duet with bassist François Moutin. She is currently working on an album of traditional Cape Verdean music based on her ongoing ethnographic research on the island of São Vicente. Kavita regularly performs her music at major concert halls, festivals, and clubs on six continents, and her work has been supported by Chamber Music America, Jerome Foundation, and Camargo Foundation. She holds a B.A. in Latin American Studies from Harvard and a Master’s in Jazz Voice from Manhattan School of Music.

Adam Theis is a multi-instrumentalist, producer, bandleader and composer based in Oakland, CA. Theis co-founded Jazz Mafia -- an eclectic artist collective of some of the most forward thinking and accomplished players in the fields of Electro, Hip-Hop, World, Classical and, of course, Jazz. As Jazz Mafia’s director, Adam has assembled over 100 different live projects over the past 20 years and led/co- led dozens of acclaimed bands. Theis has produced and co-written music for notable artists such as Lyrics Born, Zion-I, Rebelution, Latyrx, Galactic, Ledesi, Blackalicious and many more. Theis has collaborated with a wide range of top-level artists including Bobby McFerrin, Roy Ayers, Chali 2na, Booker T. Jones, Spearhead, Zigaboo Modeliste, Zap Mama, Eric Lindell, Dead Winter Carpenters, KRS One, Wax Tailor, The New Master Sounds, Peter Rowan, Coultrain, J Boogie’s Dubtronic Science, The Velvet Teen and dozens more.

About the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation

[The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation](#) is interested in programs and projects offering potential for significant impact. The primary geographical focus is on the San Francisco Bay Area and Hawaii. The Foundation’s interests generally fall under the categories of arts and culture, environment, reproductive rights and health, citizen participation, building communities, inclusiveness, strength of the philanthropic process and the nonprofit sector, and foundation-initiated special projects.

About the Special Awards Program

Since 1987, the Gerbode Foundation has made innovative grants through its Special Awards Program to Bay Area arts institutions to commission new works from choreographers, playwrights, and composers. The Special Awards Program has also supported visual artists, poets, and multimedia artists.

In a time of cultural shifts and fiscal insecurity in the arts, these coveted, nationally respected awards have helped underwrite culturally and aesthetically diverse, acclaimed new works by prominent artists and emerging ones. These grants have supported artists at critical junctures in their careers; enabled nonprofit local arts groups to develop and debut substantial, original works; and enriched Bay Area audiences, readers, and viewers by giving them first access to ambitious new creations.

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