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Gerbode Foundation Awards Eight \$50,000 Commissions for new Music Projects

Berkeley, Calif.—The 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 music creators: composers, folk & traditional artists, songwriters, producers, and sound designers. The [2023 Music Awards](#) are the third and final round of the Special Awards in the Arts program, a three-year, \$900,000 initiative to support the commissioning of individual artists creating new works in dance (2021), theater (2022), and music/sound design (2023). Because of the limited funding opportunities for new music works in the region, the Gerbode Foundation's Board of Directors approved an additional \$100,000 for this round, resulting in grants to 8 recipients instead of 6. This is the third year the Foundation has increased the number of awards it has made in its Special Awards program.

The new music projects will be commissioned and produced by Bay Area nonprofit organizations between August 2024 and December 2026. Each organization will receive a grant of \$50,000; \$12,500 or more will represent a commissioning fee to a California artist, and the remaining funds will be used by the presenting organization for expenses related to the creation and production of the new music project.

The recipients of the 2023 Music Awards are listed in alphabetical order by organization:

Alphabet Rockers/Kaitlin McGaw and Tommy Shepherd

Alphabet Rockers (AR) will develop "Shades" (working title), a global hip hop commission, focused on colonialism and colorism, reflecting on themes such as the American vs. global experience, personal community impact, and the value of restorative justice. Since 2007, Alphabet Rockers have been visionary thought leaders and GRAMMY-winners, creating brave spaces to shape a more equitable world through hip hop. AR curates content with the community that centers youth voices. Through this project, AR will work with collaborators, conduct research, and interview at least 25 international artists. AR will also collaborate with many other organizations, both in the U.S. and internationally, that share similar values to AR and are interested in exploring ideas around colonialism and colorism and working towards challenging broken systems.

Audium/Tossie Long

Red Clay Sound Haus (RCSH) is a multi-site immersive sound project focusing on the land, love, labor, and legacy of Black San Francisco composed by San Francisco native, Tossie Long. The commissioned project will include recordings of physical places within San Francisco that are threatened by gentrification. Tossie will take recordings and produce new sounds on top of them using Audium's sound spatialization system. Tossie will create visual projections of the locations that will be seen in the lobby of the theater and perform a series of shows of the commissioned artwork.

Blood Moon Orchestra/Van-Anh Vo

Road To A Hidden Home shares the experiences of Vietnamese refugees as they establish a new life in America. Displaced by the Vietnam War, they faced the challenge of assimilation while preserving their identity. Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the war's end, the project explores the resilience found in discovering a hidden home. The composition integrates traditional Vietnamese instruments with Western instruments, spoken word, and refugee literature. Authentic refugee voices from interviews will be integrated into the music, revealing their emotions, struggles, and triumphs. Through this project, the stories of Vietnamese refugees will be told, honoring their journey and resilience.

Flyaway Productions/Xoa Asa

Flyaway Productions and composer Xoa Asa are collaborating on a sound score for Flyaway Productions' site-specific dance, *ODE TO JANE*. Inspired by the Janes, a network of Chicago activists in the pre-Roe v. Wade era, *ODE TO JANE* connects resistance strategies of the 20th century to women in the SF Tenderloin navigating addiction crises, threats to women's bodies, racial reckoning, and the complex intersection of these realities. Xoa's score will incorporate recorded interviews with women on the front lines of this struggle and elements of Beethoven's Ode to Joy, transformed to address 21st-century feminist resistance.

Māheua Uchiyama Center for International Dance/Māhealani Uchiyama

Pōpolohiwa Songs of Resilience & Joy is a song-creation project that will celebrate the untold stories of people of African descent who came to Hawai'i as a direct result of colonization and enslavement. Much of the history of African-descended people in Hawai'i from the time of King Kamehameha Paiea onward is unknown. This commission will shine a light on the Black experience in the context of the difficult histories of colonization and the missionary presence in the Pacific. The intended audience for this commission is the communities of the Bay Area, Hawai'i, and beyond, especially those who have a supportive and respectful relationship with indigenous people of the Pacific Islands and the African American community.

Manilatown Heritage Foundation/Caroline Cabading

The *Sugilanon* project will be a Filipino-American epic poem patterned in the aesthetic style of pre-colonial Philippine epic poetry and featuring a suite of original spoken word and jazz music compositions informed by pre-colonial Philippine melodic and polyrhythmic motifs and instrumentation. The suite will tell the story of three generations of lead artist Caroline Cabading's San Francisco family covering the years 1904-2005. The CD/vinyl/digital release will include a live performance of the *Sugilanon* suite.

Oaklash/OBSIDIENNE OBSURD & Paul Wiancko

Oaklash will commission a staged concert by Drag artist and violist OBSIDIENNE OBSURD with original compositions by Paul Wiancko of the Kronos Quartet and accompaniment by the One Found Sound quartet. This new work will make use of a wide variety of experimental sonic techniques as well as visual and performance art components including costuming, video, lip-sync performance, technology, and set design by OBSIDIENNE OBSURD. This project will transform the classical concert into one with a queer sensibility and will raise Drag performance out of the realm of nightlife and onto a large-scale symphonic stage.

Women's Audio Mission/Diana Gamos

Diana Gamos amplifies the stories of people who dream of better futures, the stories of people who migrate, stories of hardship but also stories of love and hope. *Festejo* reunites musician and composer Diana Gamos with Women's Audio Mission to arrange, compose, record, and perform an album collection of heavily reimagined Mexican classics and new music. Following the success of her debut award-winning album, *Arrullo* (2017), *Festejo* is bolder, brassier, and features a much larger ensemble of musicians and global collaborators that is celebratory and festive.

"This year we are thrilled to support such a diverse group of artists to create and innovate within the field of composition and sound design," said Aimee Sueko Eng, the executive director of the Gerbode Foundation. "This year's artists uplift unique perspectives and important stories that deserve to be told."

The Gerbode Foundation was assisted in making these grants by an advisory panel composed of the following award-winning composers, artists, and cultural curators and thought partners:

Amrita “Ami” Kaur Dang is a South Asian-American, Sikh composer, vocalist, sitarist and multimedia artist from Baltimore. Combining ideas from Hindustani classical music with synthesizers, MIDI controllers, lighting design and gestural movement, her work invites the audience to reframe their assumptions about the colonial history of music, the arts, technology, and performance and its place in the contemporary musical landscape. Dang studied voice and sitar in New Delhi and Maryland from a young age, and she also holds a bachelor’s degree in Technology in Music & Related Arts from Oberlin Conservatory of Music. She has performed in North America, Asia, and Europe and has released five solo albums. She has received two Individual Artist Awards from the Maryland State Arts Council, and she is a 2020 Baker Artist Award winner. Her work has received accolades from *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, *Spin*, and *Pitchfork*, to name a few. An active proponent for the arts (and music in particular), she is currently Director of Development at New Music USA.

Born and raised in the City of Angeles, **Lupe De Los Angeles** grew up performing in front of audiences from a very young age and spent many summers shooting her travels to grandmother's house in Mexico where her passion for documentary storytelling began. Lupe’s love of media transformed into an entertainment career spanning over 15 years, where she has written, directed, edited and produced long and short form content in television and film. She has worked on creative projects for Disney, Telemundo, Univision, and used her business acumen to consult on independent projects and work for Sony Pictures Entertainment. Her last documentary short *Nichelle Nichols: Reflecting on Images*, won the Media Visionary Award, the highest accolades at B-STEM Project’s Hall of Fame Films competition highlighting women in technology. Prior to becoming a filmmaker, Lupe spent 10 years in the urban and economic development field in the SF/Bay Area, where she worked as a consultant for several non-profits and local businesses. Lupe attended undergrad at UC Santa Cruz and currently lives in LA with her dog Goji, aptly named after screen legend, Gojira (Godzilla).

Aimee Espiritu, M. Ed. launched Espiritu Consulting in October 2017 rooted in her satiable quality to connect things. This process has been a lifelong pursuit of insight to bring people closer to something: to each other, to a place, a history, to the future, and to purpose. Raised academically in Industrial Design, she gained the means to solve problems with a product design lens. During her years in public education, she began grasping the principle of bringing people into the center of inquiry. Ultimately, her drive to use creativity as a tool for re-imagining how organizations and people can enhance their social impact has fortified her design acumen of human-centered interaction. This experience has ignited her over 2 decades - committing herself to the work as a strategist / organizational designer / creative consultant. She brings 15 years of management experience in nonprofits, school districts, museums, foundations, and government institutions. Aimee's consulting practice lives at the intersection of arts and culture organizations, racial equity, strategy and thought partnership.

Jerome Jennings is a drummer, activist, bandleader, sideman, and Emmy Award winning composer. His debut recording ‘The Beast’ is a reflection of the everyday joys and traumas of black life in the U.S. It was named one of the top three Jazz releases by NPR, received a four star rating in Downbeat Magazine, and was nominated for the prestigious French ‘Grand Prix du Disque’ award for Album of the Year in 2016. Jerome’s sophomore recording, ‘Solidarity’, released November 2019 was recognized by NPR as best music that spoke truth to power of 2019. Jerome earned a MM from the prestigious Juilliard School in Manhattan NY. In 2014, he passed Jazz at Lincoln Centers Swing University 301 history course: The

most comprehensive study of jazz from a nonperformance perspective, available. Jazz At Lincoln Center has Jerome Jennings on file as an accredited jazz scholar. He was the Resident Director of The Juilliard Jazz Orchestra from fall 2017 to 2021. Jerome is a professor of jazz history at Montclair State University.

About the Gerbode Foundation

[The 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 program areas include advancing truth, justice, the environment, the arts, and special initiatives which include strengthening the philanthropic process and the nonprofit sector.

About the Special Awards Program

Founded in 1987, the [Special Awards in the Arts Program](#) supports the creation of new works in dance, theater production, and music composition. These nationally respected awards have helped underwrite acclaimed new works that are culturally and aesthetically diverse, by prominent and emerging artists. 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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