Four Composers Selected for The New Music Composition Concert

Kansas City, MO, April 19, 2023: Charlotte Street is pleased to announce the selected composers for the New Music Compositions Competition Concert, supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts. The open call for compositions by queer artists exploring queer themes was open to the public throughout March 2023. The submissions were juried by a group of queer performers. Four composers were selected and will be awarded $250 and the opportunity to work directly in the collaborative process with an ensemble. The selected composers are Giuseppe Gallo-Balma, Unique Hughley, Wesley Unruh, and M Joseph Willette.

The composed work will be performed by a queer ensemble that focuses on contemporary approaches to acoustic-electronic chamber music. Audiences are invited to join us for the premiere of the compositions on May 6, 2023 from 7:30 PM to 9:30 PM for a free concert in the Charlotte Street Stern Theater at 3333 Wyoming, KCMO 64111.

ABOUT THE COMPOSERS

Giuseppe Gallo-Balma

Giuseppe Gallo-Balma (b.1994) is a native of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic and a Kansas City based composer. He began his musical studies at age eleven on flute. His private teacher motivated him to audition for the National Conservatory, where he enrolled in 2008 and studied with Andrés Guzmán. After his studies in the Dominican Republic, Gallo-Balma studied in the U.S. at the Schwob School of Music at Columbus State University where he earned a Bachelor of Music in Flute Performance under the tutelage of Dr. Andrée Martín, and a Composition Certificate under the tutelage of Dr. James Ogburn. He also earned a Master in Music Composition at the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory where he studied with Chen Yi, Zhou Long, Paul Rudy and Yotam Haber.

He has served as principal flute for the Juan Pablo Duarte Youth Orchestra and piccolo player for the National Symphony Orchestra of Santo Domingo. As a composer, Gallo-Balma’s music has been performed by JACK Quartet, Transient Canvas, Re(a)d trio, NewEar, and has been featured on the radio show Sound Currents (KCUR/NPR). In 2023, he was selected as a Featured Artist for the EarShot Readings with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra for his piece “The Bones of Yayael”. Gallo-Balma has also been invited to participate in several national and international music festivals.

As the son of Haitian and Italian immigrants raised in the Dominican Republic, Gallo-Balma's music seeks to bring an amalgamation of these three distinct cultures to the foreground, with special interest in the musical aspects of Indigenous and Afro-Caribbean communities.

Unique Hughley

Unique Hughley is the author of *Monkey in the Grass*, published by Spartan Press. He is an award-winning Kansas City poet, writer, songwriter, musician, and activist. Unique has spent his adult life traveling the country performing spoken word poetry and hosting his own Unique workshops for all ages. Unique has hosted workshops and Colleges, Churches, Buddhist Temples, and grade schools. Unique has also been featured in museums throughout the country for his poems dedicated to Michael Brown.
Wesley Unruh

D. “Wesley” Unruh (b. 2000, he/they) is a composer and cellist based in Kansas. He is inspired by the nature of humankind, our environment, and the modern world. He holds a Bachelor’s of Music Composition from the University of Kansas.

Unruh is fascinated with interdisciplinary aspirations combining visual art, poetry, electronics and music. He is a founding member of the Amorphous Collective in collaboration with the Spencer Art Museum at the University of Kansas, an interdisciplinary group that combines art, music, poetry and dance through improvisation in public installation performances.

Unruh enjoys collaborating with colleagues to promote their unique skills. In 2020, cellist and visual artist Arabella Schwerin commissioned a flexible instrumentation, multi-media work titled, Parallel Play. Schwerin and Unruh are recipients of the Broussseau Award for Diverse Media, 2021 from the Spencer Art Museum of the University of Kansas for their collaboration. Unruh is also the winner of the Matilla Award for Music Composition in Electronic Music, 2022.

Unruh was recently accepted in the Breno Italy International Music Academy for the summer of 2023, a two-week, Italian-immersed creative music workshop led by composer Margaret Maria and founded by soprano Maghan McPhee.

M Joseph Willette

M Joseph Willette (b. 1997) is a composer and educator currently living in the bustling city of Lincoln, Nebraska. Joey (they/them) often draws inspiration from queer spaces, culture, and experiences. Queer love, sex, kink, community, family, and loneliness are all explored in their music.

Through the use of delicate timbres, rich sonorities, and driving club beats, Joey’s music teleports performers and audiences into these spaces. The pulsing beats heard in the bar, the quick sniff of poppers, and the notification sounds from hookup apps allow for glimpses into this world.

Their music for solo instruments, chamber ensembles, wind band, choir, and film have been performed around the world, with recent projects including collaborations with the Wichita State University Dance Department, Music Department, and Audio Production programs on the dance film She Moved the Prairie, for which they wrote the score.
Joey is currently pursuing a Doctorate of Musical Arts in Composition with cognates in music theory and musicology, studying with Dr. Greg Simon. Joey holds a Bachelor’s degree in Instrumental Music Education from Troy University, and a Master’s degree in Music Composition from Wichita State University, where they studied with Dr. Traci Mendel and Dr. David MacDonald, respectively.

ABOUT THE ENSEMBLE
The New Music Compositions ensemble is made up of two queer duos, two saxophonists and two percussionists, who specialize in contemporary approaches to acoustic-electronic chamber music. Their performance practice explores new music and traditionally notated music with the addition of a vocalist or spoken word. The ensemble aims to expand the repertoire for this instrumentation while championing queer narratives & stories.

- Kyle Blake Jones - Saxophone
- Nathan Mertens - Saxophone
- Jaime - Percussion
- SA - Percussion
- Kelli Van Meter – Soprano

ABOUT CHARLOTTE STREET
Charlotte Street centers Kansas City’s most forward-thinking visual artists, writers, and performers—acting as the primary incubator, provocateur, and connector for the region’s contemporary arts community, and its leading advocate on the national stage. Since 1997, Charlotte Street has distributed over $2 million in awards and grants to artists and their innovative projects, and connected individual artists to each other and to the greater Kansas City community. For more information about Charlotte Street, its awards, programs, and initiatives, visit www.charlottestreet.org.