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**MACPHAIL CENTER FOR MUSIC AWARDS \$25,000 MCKNIGHT FELLOWSHIP TO
FOUR OF MINNESOTA’S TOP MUSICIANS**

MINNEAPOLIS—MAY 10, 2017—MacPhail Center for Music is pleased to announce the four recipients of the 2017-18 McKnight Fellowships for Musicians: Tonia Hughes, Aida Shahghasemi, Carrie Henneman Shaw and Tim Sparks.

The process began with 86 ensembles and soloists who applied for the fellowship with recordings, artist statements and resumes. From this pool, nine finalists were selected by a panel of national judges to audition live on May 5. Following the audition, four musicians were each awarded the \$25,000 fellowship.

For the 21st year, MacPhail Center for Music administered the McKnight Fellowships for Musicians, which are a component of the McKnight Artist Fellowships Program. Established in 1981, the program is one of the oldest and largest of its kind in the country, providing annual, unrestricted cash awards to outstanding mid-career Minnesota artists in 10 different creative disciplines. The foundation contributes about \$2 million per year to its statewide fellowships.

2017-2018 McKnight Fellowship for Musicians recipients:



Tonia Hughes, voice, Minneapolis: Hughes is a singer, songwriter, recording and theater artist with a passion for a broad array of music and often engages in culturally diverse

collaborations alongside some of Minnesota's most accomplished musicians. She has performed with the Minnesota Orchestra at Orchestra Hall, at the acclaimed Lincoln Center in New York and throughout the Twin Cities at hundreds of culturally diverse churches, theaters, colleges and university events. Tonia resides in Minneapolis with her husband Brian Kendrick and their children.



Aida Shahghasemi, voice and composition, Minneapolis: Shahghasemi is an Iranian vocalist and composer. She studied western music theory alongside the Persian classical repertoire, and her work often merges different music forms. Her passion for Persian classical music stems from the cultural identity she craved after immigrating to the United States in the summer of 2000, and the women she met during her years of study. Her senior project at University of Minnesota's Anthropology Department centered around restrictions on the voices of female classical vocalists in Iran. She received her Master's degree from New York University (NYU) in Art and Public Policy with a focus on the arts as a vessel for addressing topics in social justice and humanities. While residing in New York City, Shahghasemi worked with non-profit organizations as a teaching artist promoting the arts as a tool for social justice. She created and taught a class called Iran's Arts Activism centered around the effects of society on art and vice versa, at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. She released her debut album, *Wind Between the Horse's Ears*, in 2015. She currently works with a social justice theatre troupe called Making Waves housed at Hamline University.



Carrie Henneman Shaw, voice, Saint Paul: Henneman Shaw is a soprano who specializes in Renaissance, Baroque and contemporary classical music. Her wide-ranging work includes several live-music-for-dance projects with such Minnesota composers as Jocelyn Hagen (Test Pilot, Slippery Fish) and Abbie Betinis, with whom she created the Schubert Club-commissioned Rib Cage, a collaboration with James Sewell Ballet. She tours internationally with Quince Contemporary Vocal Ensemble, a women’s quartet dedicated to the cultivation of new repertoire for treble voices, and Ensemble Dal Niente, a Chicago-based collective which can be heard on New Amsterdam Records’ 2016 release “Balter / Saunier”, a collaboration with rock band Deerhoof. As an early music specialist, Henneman Shaw has sung operatic roles with Boston Early Music Festival and regularly self-produces programs of 17th- and early 18th-century music in Minnesota, as well as collaborating with groups such as Mirandola Ensemble and Flying Forms. She is adjunct faculty at Bethel University and Winona State University.



Tim Sparks, guitar, Burnsville: Sparks has been redefining the acoustic guitar repertoire since he won the National Fingerpicking Championship in 1993 with a groundbreaking arrangement of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite. Sparks continues to surprise, challenge and thrill audiences with his diverse repertoire and stunning technique. Equally at home with Country Blues, Jazz or World Music, his extraordinary ability has earned him an international reputation as one of the most innovative guitarists working today.

Additionally, five McKnight finalists will receive \$1000: Noah Hoehn of Minnetonka (harmonica, marimba, voice, dhol drum and percussion), Adam Meckler of Minneapolis (trumpet), Greg Byers of Minneapolis (cello), Scotty Horey of Minneapolis (marimba and percussion) and Donald Livingston of Minneapolis (harpsichord).

The McKnight Foundation seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. The foundation uses all resources to attend, unite, and empower those served. Founded in 1953 and independently endowed by William and Maude McKnight, the Minnesota-based family foundation had assets of approximately \$2.2 billion and granted about \$87 million in 2016. Learn more at mcknight.org, and follow on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

MacPhail Center for Music is a non-profit organization committed to transforming lives and enriching the community through exceptional music learning experiences. Each year, MacPhail opens its doors to more than 13,000 students offering programming for all ages, backgrounds and abilities, at locations in Minneapolis, White Bear Lake, Chanhassen, Golden Valley and Apple Valley, as well as 100 community partnerships across the Twin Cities and online at MacPhail Online. MacPhail has a 108-year history of excellence, promoting life-long learning and building long-term relationships between students and teachers. For more information, visit macphail.org.

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