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**MCKNIGHT MUSICIAN FELLOWSHIP GRANTS FOUR
OF OUR STATE'S TOP MUSICIANS WITH \$25,000 AWARD**

MINNEAPOLIS—May 23, 2022—MacPhail Center for Music is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2022-23 McKnight Fellowship for Musicians: Jaye Sinkfield aka DIVAJ, Rebecca Merblum, Paula Gudmundson, Lewis McCaleb aka Lewiee Blaze.

The journey for these artists began in January, when a pool of 82 solo and ensemble musicians applied for the McKnight Fellowship with recordings, artist statements and resumes. Nine finalists were selected by a national panel of judges, and the finals were held virtually on Friday, May 13. Of those nine artists, the aforementioned four were selected to receive the \$25,000 McKnight Fellowship for Musicians.

MacPhail Center for Music administered the McKnight Fellowship for Musicians, a component of the McKnight Artists Fellowships Program, for the 26th year. Founded on the belief that Minnesota thrives when its artists 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 has been a cornerstone of the program since it began in 1982. The McKnight Artist Fellowships Program provides annual, unrestricted cash awards to outstanding mid-career Minnesota artists in 14 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.

The 2022-23 McKnight Musician Fellows



Jaye Sinkfield, aka DIVAJ—Rapper, Hip-Hop, Saint Paul:

DIVAJ is a Minnesota Twin Cities based live performer, writer, and recording artist. They are Black Femme Queer hip-hop artist with the talent and skill to rise to the top of the entertainment industry, a business mindset to impact the culture of both consumer and community, while intentionally healing black wounds, protecting feminine bodies, and valuing queer authenticity through their art. They stand tall in their blackness, bloom effortlessly in their femininity, and embrace their authentic queerness.



Rebecca Merblum, Cello—Classical, Minneapolis:

Rebecca Merblum is a cellist based in Minneapolis, originally from Connecticut, who has woven her musical life around chamber music, collaboration, and teaching. She plays as a frequent guest with the St Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Minnesota Bach Society, among many. During the pandemic Rebecca crafted collaborations with the James Sewell Ballet and composer, Chad Hughes exploring the evolution of dance forms from the 18th century to the present. Driven by the interwoven nature of the artistic process Rebecca also held a Target Center Residency at the Weisman Museum entitled Cello Conversations. The final panel ‘What Do You Hear’ inspired the project to continue into its second phase and it is now supported under the umbrella of Springboard for the Arts Fiscal Incubator Program. Early in 2020 she was awarded a grant for her initiative ‘Your

Dance’ by Springboard for the Arts as they addressed Artists Combating Isolation. Rebecca is also very much involved in mentoring and working with students in Nairobi as a part of the Art of Music Foundation. She is the Co-Artistic Director of the Kenya International Cello Festival coming in May 2022 along with her newly launched Chamber Music Series in partnership with the Fueled Collective - ‘Sound Dialogue.’ Most recently Rebecca was awarded an Artist in Residence Grant in connection with the Global Music Initiative at MacPhail. Her chosen project is entitled Threads and speaks to the invisible nature of connection as represented in sound, language, and visual art.



Paula Gudmundson, Flute—Classical, Duluth:

Paula Gudmundson focuses on centering her work around collaboration, community engagement and bringing voice to the absent narratives in the arts. This includes creating recordings, editions, commissions, and collaborations which push our field beyond the concert stage. Gudmundson has performed at numerous music festivals and events, including regional, national, and international

conferences of the College Music Society, National Flute Association conventions, Minnesota Public Radio's Class Notes Artist, International Flute Festival of Costa Rica, and La Côte Flûte Festival. Recordings include La Flauta of Buenos Aires (2012), Breaking Waves (2019) and Melodies of the Forest (2022). Gudmundson is Associate Professor of Flute and Music Department Head at the University of Minnesota Duluth.



Lewis McCaleb aka Lewiee Blaze, Voice & Piano, Hip-Hop, Minneapolis:

Lewis McCaleb aka Lewiee Blaze is a Universal Artist & Visionary. He co-founded N4 Collective, an Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation cooperative that provides personal, professional, and economic opportunities to artists and entrepreneurs. N4 represents New Mindsets, New Media, New Leaders, and New Narratives, a philosophy created to promote self-care, self-expression, self-confidence, and self-worth. Born and raised in the Twin Cities of

Minnesota, Lewiee has overcome life's challenges and aspires to inspire others by providing content about truth, love, peace, freedom, and justice.

Additionally, five solo artists were named finalists and will receive \$1,000: Sara Abdelaal aka RRA of Minneapolis (keyboard, bass guitar, vox - Synth Punk), El Karnwie-Tuah aka Tarli of St. Paul (vocal - Hip-Hop/Rap), Chadwick Phillips aka Niles of Minneapolis (vocal - Hip-Hop/Rap), Allalaghatta (A.) Pavan of Minneapolis (tabla - Hindustani (North Indian) Classical), and Sahar Hassan of St. Paul (voice, mezzo-soprano, – Classical).

About the McKnight Foundation

The McKnight Foundation, a Minnesota-based family foundation, advances a more just,

creative, and abundant future where people and planet thrive. Established in 1953, the McKnight Foundation is deeply committed to advancing climate solutions in the Midwest; building an equitable and inclusive Minnesota; and supporting the arts in Minnesota, neuroscience, and international crop research.

About MacPhail Center for Music

MacPhail Center for Music is committed to transforming lives and strengthening communities through music learning experiences that inspire. Each year, MacPhail offers programming to 16,000 students of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities, at locations in Minneapolis, White Bear Lake, Chanhassen, Apple Valley, and Austin, as well as 104 community partnerships across the Twin Cities. An industry leader in online music education, MacPhail’s Live Online and Online School Partnerships programs have reached students for the past ten years. MacPhail has a 113-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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