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

MINNEAPOLIS—May 11, 2021—MacPhail Center for Music is pleased to announce the four recipients of the 2021-22 McKnight Fellowship for Musicians: Fode Bangoura, Chastity Brown, Chad Heslup aka Longshot and Catherine Ramirez.

The journey for these artists began in January, when a pool of 72 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 May 7. 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 25th year. Founded on the belief that Minnesota thrives when its artists thrive, the McKnight Foundation's arts 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 2021-2022 McKnight Musician Fellows:



Fode Bangoura, Djembe—West African Percussion, Brooklyn Park: Born in Conakry, Guinea, Fode Bangoura has been recognized internationally for his work as the lead drummer with the acclaimed ensembles “Les Merveilles de Guinée.” A protege of the late, Mohamed Kemoko Sano, Fode is now one of the most respected and sought-after drummers of his generation.

Teaching and performing in Japan, China, Europe and across the U.S., Fode brings a unique energy and electricity to audiences around the world. He has toured with some of the biggest names in African music, such as Sekouba Bambino and Sekouba Kandia Kouyate. In 2007, Fode was honored to have a featured spot on MTV during the celebration of Black History Month and performed at the prestigious Apollo Theater in a tribute to Bob Marley.

In 2008, Fode co-founded Duniya Drum & Dance Company and began the Fakoly Dance and Drum Project, an annual drum and dance conference held in Minneapolis, MN giving students the opportunity to study and perform with the best of the best in Guinea drum and dance. Fode continues to search for new ways to share his unique art form with others and to bring his rich culture to the world.



Chastity Brown, Voice—Blues & Singer-Songwriter, Minneapolis: Chastity Brown is a storyteller in the blues tradition. The Minnesota-via-Tennessee songwriter and musician tells stories populated by marginalized characters to stake her own space as a queer black woman and to speak to other experiences oftentimes ignored. The daughter of a black blues musician and white Irish mother who was raised in Tennessee, she's made a home in Minneapolis for more than a decade. She was signed by Red house Records and released her acclaimed album *Silhouette of Sirens* in 2017 which was chosen as a "First Listen" by NPR. She's gone on to tour internationally and support the Indigo Girls, Jayhawks, Micheal Kiwanuka, The National, and Justin Vernon. She's also toured as backing vocalist and opening band for Ani Difranco on US, UK, and EU tours. In 2019, she was chosen to perform alongside the MN Orchestra directed by Osmo Vanska, where she presented an evening of her original songs.



Chad Heslup aka Longshot, Vocals—Hip Hop, Minneapolis:

Chad Heslup is a dedicated and experienced rapper, producer, writer, and actor with years of experience in working hard to bring his creative vision, and those of his clients to life. Known by his stage name, MC Longshot, Chad has quickly built a reputation as the hardest working MC, composer, vocalist, and producer in the industry.

Getting his start back in 2002, Chad's story begins in southside Chicago, where he was raised as the oldest of 6. After moving around the city frequently, Chad was eventually forced into the foster system. During those trying times and formative years, Chad consistently found himself turning to music. Carefully, he nurtured this interest and passion into raw talent, which went on to gain recognition as he was named a member of the Boys Hope Scholarship program at just 12 years old. Chad continued to pursue his education, graduate high school, and accept his enrollment into Drake University.

Embracing the name Longshot, Chad subtly referred to his upbringing while embracing his newfound popularity as a rapper and MC. After just two years at Drake University, Chad moved to the east coast to pursue his musical career. He went on to release his first single in 2002, along with his first full length album titled, "Open Mouth's Fed," just a year later with EV records. He even landed a spot on URB Magazine's "Next 100 List" in 2003.

During the mid-2000's, Longshot began collaborating with some of the biggest names in the Chicago scene. Titled, "Civil War pt.2," his 30-track LP went on to receive critical acclaim and only further helped Chad develop his reputation as a talented MC, a creative producer, and a musician with the mind of a visionary who had the foresight to see just what the Chicago hip hop scene needed to bring it all back together.

Chad has gone on to release two more full length albums under the name Longshot. And most recently, his song titled, "Hip Hop Is..." won the Jake One/RSE Song Writing Contest. After receiving more than 1,000 entries and over 7,000 votes, Longshot was chosen by fans as the winner of the competition. His next single is poised to be produced by Jake One and distributed by Rhymesayers Entertainment.



Catherine Ramirez, Flute—Classical, Northfield: Dr. Catherine Ramirez is an active solo, chamber, and orchestral musician and teacher who aims to bring hope, connection, and inspiration through music to others. Recognized for her “sensitive and artistic” (Flute Talk Magazine) performances as “a communicator through music” (American Record Guide), Catherine has captivated listeners from her humble roots along the U.S. Southern border to audiences around the world. A three-time international prize-winning flutist and Artist-in-Residence at St. Olaf College, she has concertized on four continents, served communities through outreach endeavors, and published her work on optimal musical communication in major print and online magazines.

In addition, one ensemble and four solo artists were named finalists and are set to receive \$1,000: Emmanuel Duncan and Sarah Lanier-Duncan, aka iLLism, of Minneapolis (Hip Hop and R&B), Nathan Hanson of St. Paul (soprano saxophone—jazz/improvise), Christopher “Kip” Jones of Minneapolis (violin—narrative), Allalaghatta Pavan aka A. Pavan of Minneapolis (Tabla-- Hindustani (North Indian) Classical) and Ginna Watson of Golden Valley (violin, vielle, rebec, harp-- Early/world/folk music).

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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