



Photos by Peter Jamus

The Tenth Annual Showase of Brave New  
Work by Emerging Minnesota Artists  
Commissioned by The Cedar Cultural Center  
With Funding From The Jerome Foundation

**MARCH 5, 6, 7. 2021**

[WWW.THECEDAR.ORG](http://WWW.THECEDAR.ORG)



## AJ Isaacson-Zvidzwa (She/Her) Angels Sang to Me

### Collaborators:

Maria Jette - Soprano  
Leslie Shank - Violin  
Brenda Mickens - Violin  
Sifei Cheng - Viola  
Laura Sewell - Cello

### Songs Performed:

Prelude  
While I was fearing it, it came (Emily Dickinson)  
What I suffered (Hector Berlioz)  
I felt a Cleaving in my Mind (Emily Dickinson)  
Interlude 1 (AJ Isaacson-Zvidzwa)  
I'm Nobody! Who are you? (Emily Dickinson)  
Mad Genius (Ian Hamilton)  
The Fly (William Blake)  
God (AJ Isaacson-Zvidzwa)  
Alone, I cannot be- (Emily Dickinson)  
Interlude 2  
Pathological enthusiasm (Robert Lowell)  
Interlude 3  
Spirit's House (Sara Teasdale)  
In the night (Clara Schumann)  
Hymn (Edgar Allan Poe)  
Expansive force (Hector Berlioz)  
Interlude 4  
If I can stop one Heart from breaking (Emily Dickinson)

**Special Thanks:** Isaacson-Zvidzwa would like to thank The Cedar Cultural Center and the Jerome Foundation for commissioning this work, her mom for her unwavering support, Randall Davidson for his guidance and expertise, and Maria, Leslie, Brenda, Sifei, and Laura for their commitment to this work and bringing Angels to life.

[www.ajmnmusic.com](http://www.ajmnmusic.com)

*Angels Sang to Me* is a 19-movement song cycle for soprano and string quartet using texts by Emily Dickinson, Hector Berlioz, Ian Hamilton on Robert Lowell, William Blake, Robert Lowell, Sara Teasdale, Clara Schumann on Robert Schumann, and Edgar Allan Poe. The idea for *Angels Sang to Me* came to AJ as she read a poem by Emily Dickinson that struck her as a description of how she experienced hallucinations (Alone I cannot be-, movement 10).

(Continued on page 8.)



## Farrington Llewellyn (They/He) Empathy Room

### Collaborators:

Jesse Banks - Producer on "Real Safe Space"  
Skyler Nowinski - Guitar, synthesizer, bass on  
"Suicide Prevention," "Therapy X Capitalism," and  
"Mental Health X Productivity"  
Katrah-Quey - Producer on "Gaslight"  
Oscar Un - Co-producer on "Mental Health X  
Productivity"  
Farrington Llewellyn - Producer on all other tracks  
Intton Godelg - Side-projected video animations

### Songs Performed:

Real Safe Space  
Daily Route  
Eeyore  
Pandemic Lows  
Suicide Prevention  
Therapy X Capitalism  
Gaslight  
Still Healing  
Mental Health X Productivity

Diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 2018, Farrington has been using their story to open the door for conversations around mental health and trauma. *Empathy Room* uses the elements of Hip hop, digital art and performance to give audiences an intimate look into the experiences of those living with mental health challenges. The installation explores a range of topics that include safe space, gender norms, mental illness, depression, suicide, healing, shame, therapy, systemic racism, capitalism, productivity, and ableism.

**Special Thanks:** To my collaborators Jesse Banks, Skyler Nowinski, Katrah-Quey and Oscar Un. To Ben Severns for tech support and guidance with projection technology. To Ifrah Mansour for pushing and helping me to apply for this grant when I was in crisis mode. And to the beautiful community of people who've supported me through my struggles with Bipolar Disorder over the years. You've given me the hope, strength and courage to continue this work.

[www.farrwell.com](http://www.farrwell.com)



**Tearra Oso (She/Her)**  
**Griot del Rio**

**Collaborators:**

Aiyana Machado - vocals, barriles, dancer  
Kimani Beard - bass, dancer  
Mo McNichols - drum kit  
Rosa Alexander - vocals, barriles, dancer  
Tearra Oso - lead vocals, barriles, guitar, maraca, SP, dancer  
Truely Squires - vocals, barriles, cua  
Yajaira Fleming - vocals, maraca, dancer

**Songs Performed:**

Hum Affirmations - Yuba  
Ancestros Cerca - Holandes  
These Barriles - Sica  
No Sabían Poem/Ahora Yo Lo Sé - Yuba  
Don't Run Up - Seis Corrido  
Bomba explanation/Philando - Sica  
Drum Peace - Yuba  
Seed - Yuba  
Destinies - Sica  
Griot Del Rio - Sica

Tearra Oso is a musician, dancer, healer, and storyteller of many forms. From a young age, Tearra has performed Bomba, a traditional Afro Puerto Rican style of music. In this 16th century art form, African rhythms were originally played on drums made from washed up rum barrels on the shores of Puerto Rico, and enslaved African people sang stories of what was happening on the sugar cane plantations over these rhythms, in the colonizer's language of Spanish. Intense emotions and movements from their homeland of West African countries influenced the dance aspect of the music. Practicing this art form that has transcended generations, helped Tearra understand her Afro-Latinx identity and learn about the resilience of her incredible ancestors. *(continued on page 11.)*

**Special thanks:**

To Mila Llaugher for teaching me the foundations of Bomba and for all the advice she gave me over the years. Thank you to the Jerome Foundation and The Cedar Cultural Center for providing this inspirational grant. Thank you to my friends, family, and IGF community for always being there for me and my son physically and mentally. Thank you to my resilient ancestors who created Bomba to work on their healing, and to my Donaciano for motivating me to be my best self.

Instagram: tearraoso  
Facebook: TearraOso



## Hassan Shahid (Shahidi) (He/His) Songs For My Ummah: A Black Muslim Father's Exploration in Vulnerability

### Collaborators:

DeTrell Melodies - Singer-songwriter, vocalist, guitarist (Chicago Love, Humanize Me)  
Debbie Moore - Violinist (Chicago Love)  
Lance Brunious - Trumpet player (Cycle Of Life, Sour Fruit, Focus on the prize)  
Sonewph - Songwriter, vocalist (Right and Wrong)  
Elijah Kendrick - Producer (Disbelief)  
Hassan Shahid - Singer-songwriter, musician, composer

### Songs performed:

Live out Your Dreams  
Chicago Love  
How It Makes Me Feel  
Right and Wrong  
Sour Fruit  
Cycle of Life  
Burning Around Me  
Humanize Me  
Disbelief  
Focus on The Prize

Hassan Shahid is a Black American Muslim father originally from Minneapolis. A singer, songwriter, and acoustic guitarist, Shahidi's music is informed by his culture and experiences as an African American man in Minnesota and by the songs and traditions he grew up with in his midwestern Sunni Muslim, Sufi household. *Songs For My Ummah: A Black Muslim Father's Exploration in Vulnerability* draws upon the therapeutic and spiritual qualities of music, and this project vocalizes raw emotions and deep reflections surrounding the lived experiences of Black men, Black youth, and Black fathers. Centering pain, love, grief, anger, and hard truths that are at times spoken about but not always heard, Shahidi's songwriting will elevate the vulnerabilities of Black men in the Twin Cities. This blend of soulful acoustic guitar melodies and collaborative, cross-diasporic storytelling will also musically map a journey toward unity across Black communities in the Twin Cities.

### Special thanks:

To my mother and grandmother for always being stern and true to their belief.  
To my sisters. All of them. They humble me through leading by example.  
My friends for accepting me with all my flaws and shortcomings.  
And my son for still being my biggest accomplishment in my life.

[www.shahidiacoustic.com](http://www.shahidiacoustic.com)





**S U N A H (She/Her, They/Them)**  
**No Word for Queer**

**Collaborators:**

Schoua Na Yang ( S U N A H ) - Composer, vocals, and beat producer

Bunny Lee - Guitar, vocals

Cheng Len Yang - Songwriter for track, "Beginning"

Lisa Khang - Co-writer for track, "Peb Txog Siab Muaj Nuqri"

**Songs performed:**

Beginning

People

Confidence

Shine Your Light

Don't Disappear

Anytime

Kuv Hlub Koj

I'm Sorry

Celebrate

Peb Txoj Siab Muaj Nuqri

Fresh to Death

*No Word for Queer*, is written by singer-songwriter, performer, and beat producer Schoua Na Yang, also known as S U N A H. They were born in France and immigrated to America at the age of 6 and have since lived in Saint Paul Minnesota. *No Word for Queer* is a journey searching for language to humanize Hmong LGBTQ+ folx. In the Hmong language there are no positive labels or descriptions to describe Hmong LGBTQ+ folx. The lack of inclusivity has a negative impact on how Queer and Trans folx are being viewed in the Hmong culture which contributes to the erasure of Hmong Queer and Trans experiences.

In their piece, S U N A H combines elements of hip-hop, electronic dance, groovy tones, and chill vibes to bring awareness and inspiration to start imagining positive language for Hmong LGBTQ+ identities.

**Special thanks:**

To The Hmong LGBTQ+ community, The Cedar Cultural Center, Jerome Foundation, Dynamic Duo Design, Cameron Yang as my photographer, Lisa Khang for your undying love and support, Ly Vangsoua Thao for the delicious foods, Bunny Lee for trusting me, and my family for always reminding me to protect my energy and peace.

Instagram: itz\_s.u.n.a.h

Facebook: SunahMusic



## Beatriz Lima (She/Her) Trebaruna

### Collaborators:

Joshua Koepp - Keyboard, co-composer for  
“Não te vás”, “American Nightmare”, “Flowers”,  
and “Oxalá, Trebaruna”  
Glory Yard - Drums  
Roderick Glasper - Bass  
Willow Waters - Guitar

### Songs performed:

O Parto (The Birth)  
Amor Ingrato (Ungrateful Love)  
Não Te Vás (Don't Go)  
À Rédea Solta (In Free Reign)  
American Nightmare  
Refúgios (Refuges)  
Lentamente (Slowly)  
Poetas (Poets)  
Galinheiro (Chicken Coop)  
Flowers  
Oxalá Trebaruna (Hopefully, Trebaruna)

Born and raised in Portugal and now based in Minneapolis, Beatriz Correia Lima is a multimedia artist fusing Portuguese folk, fado, jazz, indie-pop, hip-hop, and reggaeton, with story-telling. *Trebaruna* – named after a Lusitanian Deity protector of property, family, and home – is a collection of songs tied together through a single narrative. Beatriz was inspired by Sarah Beirão's book *A Luta*, which tells the story of one family through the lives of three generations of women and their struggle to pursue their ambitions while navigating obstacles in a world designed for the happiness and comfort of men. In *Trebaruna*, Beatriz tells the story of a Portuguese mother and daughter's relationship as the daughter leaves home after an economic crisis and a divorce devastates her family.

(continued on page 11.)

### Special thanks:

Beatriz Lima would like to thank The Cedar Cultural Center, Kelly Warner and the Department of Motion Design at Ringling College of Art and Design, Maria João Correia, Iana Prakheeva, Fátima Pais, and Sarah Beirão.

Instagram: [bealima.tv](https://www.instagram.com/bealima.tv)  
[www.bealima.com](http://www.bealima.com)



Continued from page 2:

(AJ)-

She then thought of a book called *Touched with Fire* by psychologist Kay Redfield Jamison that looks at the link between the manic depressive and the artistic temperament. The poem and book helped her begin to outline her project.

The title *Angels Sang to Me* comes from a quotation by Clara Schumann describing Robert's experience: "In the night, not long after we had gone to bed, Robert got up and wrote down a melody which, he said, the angels had sung to him."

The goals of *Angels Sang to Me* are to spread awareness about mental illness, destigmatize what it means to live with bipolar and schizophrenia, demonstrate that success with mental illness is possible and show that one can be creative while on psychiatric medication.

This unique work features the instrumentalists playing while whispering, speaking, and even shouting as they accompany the singer, while lyrics and texts draw the audience through illness towards health. Touching on fear, confusion, mania, hallucinations, and levity, this piece concludes with a balancing and accepting of one's illness.

About the artist:

AJ Isaacson-Zvidzwa, a violist, violinist, composer, and scholar, began composing at age 13. At 14, she wrote a piece for choir that premiered at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. In 2010, her String Quartet No. 1 placed second in the National Federation of Music Club collegiate division. Isaacson-Zvidzwa took a 10-year hiatus from composing to earn her Bachelor's degree in viola performance from Augsburg University, publish a paper in the Journal of the American Viola Society, and lecture at the 44th International Viola Congress. Since returning to composing, AJ has completed a chamber work for mezzo-soprano, clarinet in A, viola, and piano ("Alone"), a symphonic poem ("Ora"), and a concerto for viola and strings.

AJ's past composition teachers include Linda Tutas Haugen, and presently include Randall Davidson. Her viola teachers include Mary Budd Horozaniecki, Sally Chisholm, Richard Marshall, and Korey Konkol.

I.

### **Prelude**

Instrumental

II.

While I was fearing it, it came,  
But came with less of fear,  
Because that fearing it so long  
Had almost made it dear.

There is a fitting a dismay,  
A fitting a despair.

'T is harder knowing it is due,  
Than knowing it is here.

The trying on the utmost,  
The morning it is new,  
Is terribler than wearing it  
A whole existence through.

-- Emily Dickinson

III.

### **What I suffered**

"It is difficult to put into words what I suffered—the longing that seemed to be tearing my heart out by the roots, the dreadful sense of being alone in an empty universe, the agonies that thrilled through me as if the blood were running ice-cold in my veins, the disgust with living, the impossibility of dying... I had stopped composing; my mind seemed to become feebler as my feelings grew more intense. I did nothing. One power was left to me—to suffer."

-- Hector Berlioz\*

IV.

I felt a Cleaving in my Mind –  
As if my Brain had split –  
I tried to match it – Seam by Seam –  
But could not make them fit.

The thought behind, I strove to join  
Unto the thought before –  
But Sequence ravelled out of Sound  
Like Balls – upon a Floor.

-- Emily Dickinson



V.  
Interlude 1

Intoxicating  
Confusing  
Unnerving  
Fear Mania  
Terrifying  
Nobody Elating  
Demon  
Euphoria  
Depression Scary Spiritual  
Chaos  
Heavenly

-- AJ Isaacson-Zvidzwa

VI.  
I'm nobody! Who are you?  
Are you nobody, too?  
Then there's a pair of us – don't tell!  
They 'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!  
How public, like a frog  
To tell your name the livelong day  
To an admiring bog!  
-- Emily Dickinson

VII.  
**Mad Genius**  
on poet Robert Lowell  
"Some... found him excitable and talkative during  
this period, but since the talk was always brilliant  
and very often flattering to them, they could see  
no reason to think of Lowell as "ill," indeed, he was  
behaving just as some of them hoped a famous  
poet would behave...when [Lowell's wife] became  
convinced that Lowell was indeed sick... Her version  
of Lowell was not theirs, even when they were  
discussing the same symptoms; what to her was  
"mad" was to them another mark of Lowell's genius."  
-- Ian Hamilton\*

VIII.  
**The Fly**  
Little Fly  
Thy summers play,  
My thoughtless hand  
Has brush'd away.

Am not I  
A fly like thee?  
Or art not thou  
A man like me?

For I dance  
And drink & sing:  
Till some blind hand  
Shall brush my wing.

If thought is life  
And strength & breath:  
And the want  
Of thought is death;

Then am I  
A happy fly,  
If I live,  
Or if I die.

-- William Blake

IX.  
**God**  
Damn fly.  
What fly?  
Don't you hear it?  
"Dear Diary, I've been having hallucinations  
and am feeling really scared and alone..."  
BE STILL

God, is that you?  
YES, MY CHILD

I need help.  
Excuse me, who are you talking to?  
BE STILL MY CHILD  
Don't you hear that?  
I don't hear anything.  
Don't you hear God's voice?  
God is speaking to me!!  
I HEAR GOD!!!

die die die die DIE DIE...

What? God, is that you?  
God, where are you? Make this stop!  
LEAVE ME ALONE!

-- AJ Isaacson-Zvidzwa



X.

Alone, I cannot be –  
For Hosts – do visit me –  
Recordless Company –  
Who baffle Key –

They have no Robes, nor Names –  
No Almanacs – nor Climes –  
But gen'ral Homes, Like Gnomes –

Their Coming, may be known  
By Couriers within –  
Their going – is not –  
For they've Never gone –  
-- Emily Dickinson

XI.

**Interlude 2**  
Instrumental

XII.

**Pathological Enthusiasm**

"...I had an attack of pathological enthusiasm. The night before... I ran about the streets... crying out against devils... I believed I could stop cars and paralyse their forces by merely standing in the middle of the highway with my arms spread... I suspected I was a reincarnation of the Holy Ghost, and had become homicidally hallucinated."  
-- Robert Lowell\*

XIII.

**Interlude 3**  
Instrumental

XIV.

**Spirit's House**

From naked stones of agony  
I will build a house for me;  
As a mason all alone  
I will raise it, stone by stone,  
And every stone where I have bled  
Will show a sign of dusky red.  
I have not gone the way in vain,  
For I have good of all my pain;  
My spirit's quiet house will be  
Built on naked stones I trod  
On roads where I lost sight of God.  
-- Sara Teasdale

XV.

**In the Night**

on composer Robert Schumann

"In the night, not long after we had gone to bed, Robert got up and wrote down a melody which, he said, the angels had sung to him. Then he lay down again and talked deliriously the whole night, staring at the ceiling all the time. When morning came, the angel's transformed themselves into devils and sang horrible music, telling him he was a sinner and that they were going to cast him into hell. He became hysterical, screaming in agony that they were pouncing on him like tigers and hyenas, and seizing him in their claws."

-- Clara Schumann\*

XVI.

**Hymn**

At morn—at noon—at twilight dim—  
Maria! thou hast heard my hymn!  
In joy and wo—in good and ill—  
Mother of God, be with me still!

When the Hours flew brightly by  
And not a cloud obscured the sky,  
My soul, lest it should truant be,  
Thy grace did guide to thine and thee;  
Now, when storms of Fate o'ercast  
Darkly my Present and my Past,  
Let my Future radiant shine  
With sweet hopes of thee and thine!  
-- Edgar Allan Poe

XVII.

**Expansive Force**

"I could well believe there is a violent 'expansive force' within me. I see that wide horizon and the sun, and I suffer so much, so much, that if I did not take a grip of myself I should shout and roll on the ground. I have found only one way of completely satisfying this immense appetite for emotion, and that is music. Without it I am certain I could not go on living."  
-- Hector Berlioz\*

XVIII.

**Interlude 4**  
Instrumental



XIX.

If I can stop one Heart from breaking,  
I shall not live in vain  
If I can ease one Life the Aching,  
Or cool one Pain,

Or help one fainting Robin  
Unto his Nest again,  
I shall not live in vain  
-- Emily Dickinson

\*Quoted in *Touched with Fire* by Kay Redfield  
Jamison

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Continued from page 4:

(Tearra)-

In her newest project *Griot Del Rio*, Tearra Oso brings her cultural traditions into this new era of music, channeling the power of her ancestors while educating the world about the importance of understanding history as well as yourself to manifest your empowerment. As violence against Black and brown bodies persists today, Tearra has combined her ancestral genre of music with the R&B, funk, hip hop, and pop music that she grew up with to present an insightful and healing experience, in English and Spanish, for social justice activists and anyone interested in personal and communal transformation.

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Continued from page 7:

(Bea)-

With her mother unemployed, her father forced to seek work outside the country, and no prospects for herself, the daughter now has to make her way in the world and leave her country. *Trebaruna* is not only an exploration of the social, political, and cultural shifts that happened in Portugal after the world crisis when thousands of highly skilled Portuguese migrants left due to high unemployment rates; it's a reflection on "machismo," love, professional ambition, migration, tradition, and cultural identity in an ever-changing, globalized world.



# WELCOME TO THE CEDAR COMMISSIONS

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The Cedar Commissions is a flagship program for emerging Minnesotan composers and musicians made possible with a grant from the Jerome Foundation. Since the program began in 2011, the Commissions have showcased new work by over 60 emerging artists in Minnesota. Artists receive \$4,000 plus a \$500 production stipend to create and premiere 30 minutes of new music at The Cedar Cultural Center.

For the 2021 Cedar Commissions, these artists have been composing, exploring new ideas, and assembling teams of musicians to bring their work to fruition. Over the three nights of The Cedar Commissions, audience members will hear music inspired by the process of finding beauty in mental illness, stories of the Portuguese diaspora, evolution of the Hmong language, Black Muslim American fatherhood, addressing personal traumas, healing through Bomba, and so much more.

Are you a musician or composer interested in applying for a Cedar Commission? Application guidelines for the 2021-22 round will be posted on our website, ([www.thecedar.org/cedar-commissions](http://www.thecedar.org/cedar-commissions)) on Monday, May 3rd.

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