



*Sparks & Wiry Cries*  
*2025 NYC songSLAM Teams*

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Songs of the Prince: Commission Prize

**Team 1**

*Corporate Life* • Zachary Sloan

Team Members: Sarah Strezewski, soprano, Neill Campbell, piano & Zacahary Sloan,  
composer & poet



## Corporate Life (2024)

My face has gone pale  
From the harsh sterile glow  
Of the flat panel LED  
shining on me

I feel cold and out of place  
In this air conditioned space  
I can hardly take pride  
In a job that leaves me dead inside

Monotony and misery are rife  
When you're living the corporate life

'Cause I've  
Never met so many who have given up their dreams  
Wasting hours of their lives away on Microsoft Teams  
'Trading passion for a pension in the hopes that they'll be mentioned when their manager gets the  
notion that it's time for a promotion

Spoken: And maybe they'll avoid the layoffs.

And I've  
Never met so many who complain about their lives  
As much as married older white men love complaining about their wives  
While my colleagues are all working, I am on the toilet shirking  
All my emails that need typing as I  
Act like I am wiping

But I'm really on Tinder  
Swiping

Forty hour work week  
Company retreats  
Mandatory bonding  
Everyday repeats

Water cooler gossip  
Shitty beans and rice



Sheryl always saying another day in paradise  
Spoken: It's neither funny nor original, Sheryl. Get some new material.

And I've  
Never gotten paid so much for napping at my desk  
And so if this is what success is like then why am I depressed?  
If we all don't burn in fire I just maybe could retire  
But the cost of living's higher and the housing market's dire

Thank God I lived the corporate life  
Corporate Life  
Corporate Life

Spoken from elsewhere: We're letting you go.

Spoken: Shit.

— Zachary Sloan

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### Team 1 Bios:

Zachary Sloan is a multi-instrumentalist and composer who recently debuted his first musical, *The Time the Axeman Came to Town*. His music incorporates older aesthetics while focusing on contemporary issues. He primarily writes for musical theater, though he loves writing for chamber ensembles like the Momenta Quartet or Hub New Music.

Sarah Strezewski studies as a Classical Voice student at Manhattan School of Music. This soprano has played several roles including Poppea, Cupid, Susanna, and Alcina. With a background in many styles of music, Sarah has also had the pleasure of collaborating with a jazz trio and a baroque ensemble..

Neill Campbell is a New York City-based pianist acclaimed for his work in contemporary American opera. Recent highlights include *Eurydice* with Opera Grand Rapids and the world premiere of *Touch* with Opera Birmingham. A versatile pianist and music director, Neill is equally at home in musical theater and as a recitalist.

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### Team 2

*Shift* • Joshua Bornfield



Team Members: Michael Manganiello, baritone, Stephanie Baird, piano, Joshua Bornfield, composer & Tom Haviv, poet

## Shift

from “If it were to shift in me” and “Debris of language/sense”

If it  
were  
to shift  
in me.  
(the sea  
in me  
parts)  
if only for a moment  
to reveal the drowned  
armies. The drowned  
histories. Loved  
ones lost. Before  
it collapses back  
into the shield  
of ocean  
protecting  
their secrets from  
the sun

Debris of language/sense  
feeling hierarchy's shape  
without creating  
hierarchy

— Tom Haviv

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## Team 2 Bios:

**Joshua Bornfield** is a composer, performer, educator, and arts advocate. They have had works commissioned by Washington National Opera, Lorelei Ensemble, Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus, wildUp, and more. He directs the War Memorial Arts Initiative, an arts equity & advocacy program supported by Baltimore City's Department of General Services.



Vocalist **Michael Manganiello** is a doctoral candidate and faculty member at the Peabody Institute, where they teach voice and professional studies. Michael specializes in vocal pedagogy, early music, and contemporary classical and commercial music. Their recital programs explore identity and phenomenology, examining themes at the core of human experience.

**Stephanie Baird** is a Baltimore-based pianist and teacher who is passionate about collaboration. She performs regularly with soloists, ensembles, and theater companies throughout the Baltimore/D.C. area. She graduated with a Master of Music Degree in Collaborative Piano from the Peabody Conservatory in 2021.

**Tom Haviv** is the cofounder and publisher of Ayin Press. His debut book of poetry, *A Flag of No Nation*, was published in 2019 by Jewish Currents Press and reissued by Ayin Press in 2024. He is also author of two children's books, *Woven* and *The Porcupine Prince*, and the creator of The Hamsa Flag Project.

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### Team 3

*The First Bluebird* • Braden Allison with text by James Whitcomb Riley

Team Members: Ann McDonald Weible, soprano & Braden Allison, composer & piano

#### The First Bluebird

Just rain and snow! And rain again!  
And dribble! drip! and blow!  
'Then snow! and thaw! and slush! and then –  
Some more rain and snow!

'This morning I was 'most afeard  
'To wake up – when, I jing!  
I seen the sun shine out and heerd  
'The first bluebird of Spring! –  
Mother she'd raised the winder some; -  
And in acrost the orchurd come,  
Soft as a' angel's wing,  
A breezy, treesy, beesy hum,  
'Too sweet for anything!

'The winter's shroud was rent apart –



The sun bu'st forth in glee, -  
And when the bluebird sung, my hart  
Hopped out o' bed with me!

— James Whitcomb Riley (1849-1916)

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### Team 3 Bios:

**Braden Allison** (they/them) is a young theatrical composer and pianist whose passion is in marrying contemporary and avant-garde storytelling with classical music traditions. They graduated from Ball State University this past spring and have been studying composition with Adam Guettel since the summer of 2023. Please say hi if you see them!

Soprano **Ann McDonald Weible** is a 2023 graduate of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where she majored in voice performance and minored in women's, gender, and sexuality studies. At CCM: Nella in *Gianni Schicchi*, Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte*. At Derby Dinner: Star-to-Be in *Annie*, Urleen in *Footloose*. At Pandora: Emma in *The Prom*, Maureen in *Rent*.

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### Team 4

***Laundry Day* • Meg Huskin**

Team Members: Elisheva Pront, soprano, Jialiang Li, piano, Meg Huskin, composer & poet

### LAUNDRY DAY

I WANNA TAKE THE WORLD BY THE SCRUFF OF ITS BLOODSTAINED COLLAR. I  
WANNA BALL IT IN MY FAT FIST AND DRAG IT DOWN 'TIL WE'RE NOSE TO NOSE. I  
WANNA TELL THE WORLD TO CLEAN UP ITS ACT. I WON'T BE MADE A FOOL. I  
WILL NOT BE SCRAPED INTO AN OCEAN OF MUNDANITY, LIKE A BARNACLE OFF  
THE SIDE OF A BOAT. I WILL NOT CALCIFY. I WILL NOT HIDE MY SOFT  
UNDERBELLY. I WILL NOT SAND DOWN MY KNIVES FOR THE WEIGHT OF THE  
WORLD'S DISPLEASURE. SO FIX YOUR FACE, AND PUT ON A CLEAN SHIRT.  
I WANNA WATCH THE WORLD'S HANDS TREMBLE AS IT UNFASTENS A ROW OF  
BUTTONS. I WANNA SEE IT DRESSED DOWN. I WANNA WASH THE WORLD'S  
LAUNDRY AND BURY IT ON THE BEACH. WATCH IT SLIP THROUGH MY FINGERS  
LIKE SAND.



I WANNA FIND SOMETHING NEW - SOMETHING SOLID, SOMETHING SOFT -  
WAITING FOR ME AT HOME, WITH JAW FRESHLY TRIMMED. I WANT TO SEE MY  
CLAW MARKS ON ITS EXPOSED THROAT. I WANT TO CLOSE MY TEETH ROUND  
THAT INFIRM PEACE AND SWALLOW IT.

— Meg Huskin

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### Team 4 Bios:

**Meg Huskin** creates music of characteristic voice, embracing theatricality, genre-blending, and intertextuality. Recently, she premiered two operatic works: *My Dearest Jane*, with libretto curated from Jane Austen texts, and *Rabbit Season*, an original story about sisterhood. Meg co-founded TellTale Opera Theatre, a nonprofit dedicated to development of opera in Baltimore.

**Jialiang Li** began piano at age four, instructed by Mr. He Han and Nikolai Kryranov. He studied at Xinghai Conservatory and the Liszt Conservatory in Germany. After obtaining his graduate degree, he attended the Peabody Institute. Currently, he is a first-year DMA student at the University of Arizona.

**Elisheva Pront** is a vocalist and stage director who collaborates with composers to perform and direct new music. Co-founder of TellTale Opera Theatre in Baltimore, she focuses on expanding the bounds of opera. Elisheva was recently an Assistant Director at Opera North and finalist in the Colorado Bach Ensemble's competition.

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### Team 5

***Glass Delusion* • Elizabeth Gartman**

Team Members: Laura Whittenberger, soprano, Austin Philemon, piano, Elizabeth Gartman, composer & Susan Bywaters, poet

### Glass Delusion

I am see through  
Can you see through me?

Are you real  
How do you know



How do you know what is real  
how do you know if you are  
real how do you see can you see me can you  
see through see through through me can you see  
Can you see me through Am I not myself Are you Not Are you myself Am I not you myself

You are my ghost  
I am your shining  
silver  
I am empty  
Are you me too?

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Foot em uoy era  
I am empty  
silver  
I am your ghost  
You are my shining

I know  
what is real what is meaning full filled with life filled with me meaning everything and  
nothing without me I am with you  
should not be without without me within you  
you how do you know how do  
How do you know I am you  
How do you know  
Are you real

Do you see me too?  
I can see you

— Susan Bywaters (b. 1994)

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### Team 5 Bios:

**Elizabeth Gartman** is a composer, soprano, and educator based in New York City. Her work explores performer physicality, vocalism, and autonomous process in performance. Elizabeth has recently composed for Washington National Opera, Beth Morrison Projects, New Chamber Ballet, Guerilla Opera, InfraSound Ensemble, Ensemble Chemie, the Why Collective, and Pax Duo.



**Laura Whittenberger** performs theatre and concert works across the US. Off-Broadway: *KHLAN!!! The Musical!* (Saavik). Regional: *The Pirates of Penzance* (Mabel), *Sweeney Todd* (Johanna), *She Loves Me* (Amalia). In concert: *Messiah*, *Carmina Burana*. Montpelier Arts competition winner. Recordings: *Words that Sing in the Night*. A “Must-see Musician” ( *Baltimore Style* magazine).

**Austin Philemon** is an organist, pianist, conductor, and composer based in New York City. He has performed everywhere from Norway to North Carolina, been finalist in several international competitions, and premiered over 40 solo organ works. He currently serves as Director of Music at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church.

**Susan Bywaters** is a poet, librettist, and writer based in New York City. Her recent works, including the operas *An ending* with Samuel Beebe and *Daughter of God* with Christopher Bell, center around morality, absurdity, and the victim/perpetrator paradigm, and have been performed across Europe and the US.

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## Team 6

***Sea Song* • Leigha Amick with text by Katherine Mansfield**

Team Members: Katie Trigg, mezzo soprano, Reese Revak, piano, Leigha Amick, composer

Text excerpted from

### **Sea Song**

I will think no more of the sea!  
Of the big green waves  
And the hollowed shore,  
Of the brown rock caves  
No more, no more  
Of the swell and the weed  
And the bubbling foam.

Memory dwells in my far away home,  
She has nothing to do with me.

And every day  
While there's light on the shore  
She searches for something;  
Her withered claw  
Tumbles the seaweed;  
She pokes in each shell  
Groping and mumbling



Until the night  
Deepens and darkens,  
And covers her quite,  
And bids her be silent,  
And bids her be still.

The ghostly feet  
Of the whispery waves  
Tiptoe beside her.

She hugs her hands,  
She sobs, she shrills,  
And the echoes shriek  
In the rocky hills.

"It is lost!  
Let it be! Let it be!  
I am old.  
I am frightened . . . the sea  
Is too loud . . . it is lost,  
It is gone . . . Memory  
Wails in my far away home.

— Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923)

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### Team 6 Bios:

Composer **Leigha Amick** writes music to spark intellectual curiosity and express human experience. Her compositions have been performed by ensembles including the Curtis Symphony Orchestra, New Jersey Symphony, Ars Nova Singers, and Aspen Contemporary Ensemble. Leigha received her Master of Music in composition from the Curtis Institute of Music.

Mezzo-soprano **Katie Trigg** hails from Ngāhinapōuri, Aotearoa New Zealand. She is a graduate of the University of Waikato, and is completing her MM at the Curtis Institute of Music studying under Julia Faulkner. Katie recently won the 2024 Lexus Song Quest. Outside of music, she enjoys baking, longboarding, and hiking.

**Reese Revak** is a classical voice coach and collaborative pianist in Philadelphia. A graduate of Temple University (composition, collaborative piano), they have worked as a pianist and coach at Curtis Institute of Music since 2011. Revak has also worked with Opera Philadelphia and the Boston University Tanglewood Institute.

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## Team 7

### *Kitsune* • Kristen Baum

Team Members: Alexandria McNeely, soprano, Chun-Hsin (Cynthia) Liu, piano, Kristen Baum, composer, & Sarah Ann Winn, poet

## Kitsune

### Fox spirit

Any woman walking alone at dusk or full dark could be a fox spirit. Any woman looking at the moon.

Any woman wants a chance to be a fox, wants to tilt her pointed chin up, and scream sometimes about equity and inequity.

Any woman in the night or dusk or light of day in her den, any woman — when she speaks  
she cries, when she goes into the night and joins crowds to pray —  
any woman the fox.

— Sarah Ann Winn

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## Team 7 Bios:

**Kristen Baum** is a composer, poet and writer. She enjoys telling women's stories through a female lens. She earned degrees in piano performance from Northern Michigan University and a M.M. in theory and composition from Youngstown State University. Her music has premiered in Hollywood, NYC, Nashville, Michigan, Baltimore, and Berlin.

**Alexandria McNeely**, a versatile soprano from Hickory, NC, excels in opera, art song, musical theater, and jazz. Notable roles include Carly Speranza in *Madame Buttermilk* and Fairy Godmother in *Cinderella*. A Resident Artist with Opera Carolina, she holds a Master's from Eastman and won the Metropolitan Opera's NC District Encouragement Award.

**Chun-Hsin (Cynthia) Liu**, originally from Kaohsiung, Taiwan, is currently pursuing her DMA degree in Piano Accompanying and Chamber Music at the Eastman School of Music. Liu has appeared in festivals and workshops such as SongFest (2022 SF and 24 LA), Source Song (2023 MN) and Song Studio (2022 Carnegie Hall).



**Sarah Ann Winn's** first full length collection, *Alma Almanac*, won the Barrow Street Book Prize. She is also the author of five chapbooks, most recently *Ever After the End Matter*. She leads classes and retreats at Poet Camp, an online community that she founded, which turns 10 next year.

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## Team 8

### *My Brick House* • Laura Nevitt

Team Members: Juan Suarez, baritone & poet, Jacob LyteHaven, piano & Laura Nevitt, composer

## My Brick House

We moved away  
to find our place  
And built ourselves a house of straw.  
We braved small storms and the heat of day  
Until the typhoon.  
I looked into your eyes  
A glance which said  
our house would fall.  
And so we ran away

From our house.  
To higher ground.  
To safety.  
From us.  
The skies cleared  
I came back down  
Looking.  
Our house was gone.  
You never looked back.  
And my heart blew away like the pieces of straw.  
I slept on sidewalks  
and cried under bridges  
and mourned  
Our sweet little house.  
Until the day I found a brick.



And another.  
And yet another.  
I've slowly started building a new house  
One that will be strong, beautiful, mine.  
Each brick a reminder  
of how I weathered the storm  
and survived  
and learned  
and rebuilt  
and will reopen the door  
and invite another in.  
My own, beautiful, brick house.

— Juan Suarez (b.1996)

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### Team 8 Bios:

**Laura Nevitt** is a conductor, composer, and educator based in Boston. As a fierce advocate for new music, they love working with composers, and have conducted over 30 premieres of new works. She is also especially passionate about giving voice and space to gender marginalized musicians and poets through vocal music.

Baritone **Juan Suarez** is an active performer in the Boston area, having sung with organizations such as MassOpera, Opera Del West, Boston Opera & Zarzuela, and the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestras. He frequently performs new music and world premieres with groups like Nightingale Vocal Ensemble, Carduus Choir and Odyssey Opera. Most notably, he was recently selected to premiere *The Descent*, in collaboration with poet Todd Hearon and composer Jonathan Mitchell, with Catalyst New Music in May 2024. Under the auspices of FUSE: Collaborations in Song, it was performed at Longy School of Music's Pickman Hall. Juan holds degrees from the New England Conservatory of Music and Stetson University.

**Jacob LyteHaven** holds a Bachelor of Music from Stetson University with concentrations in Piano Performance and Vocal Performance, and a Master of Music in Collaborative Piano from Boston University. He has studied under Michael Rickman, Sean Kennard, and Sheila Kibbe, and has participated in masterclasses under Martin Katz, Vyacheslav Gryaznov, Jorge Parodi, Francine Kay, Valerie Trujillo, and Ana Maria Otamendi. He has performed in concerts across the United States, Europe, and Central America. Jacob has worked as a collaborative pianist at Stetson University, and is currently an active collaborative pianist, teacher, and coach in the Greater Boston area.



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## Team 9

### *The Banned-Book Tango* • Jordan Rutter-Covatto

Team Members: Sydney Anderson, soprano Mila Henry, piano, Jordan Rutter-Covatto, composer & Fred Sauter, poet

## The Banned-Book Tango

### Verse 1

There is a list that exists- / it fluctuates each year  
from talking pigs to mockingbirds to stories Black and queer  
The current list is focused / on the latter mentioned two  
It's what we call "the Banned Book List." / I've read them all, have you?

### Chorus 1

What once was banned  
becomes the rage  
Books that enrapture  
page after page

The things they outlaw  
you want it more  
Human progress can't be stopped  
human nature wins the war

### Verse 2

There is a book that is full / of vi-o-lence and lust  
There's suicide and genocide and slaves and whores that thrust  
There's incest, rape, and hu-man sacrif-ice, you get the gist  
I think it's called The Bible. Wonder why that's on the list

### Chorus 2

What once was banned  
its classic now  
Required reading  
if you know how

Make it illegal  
You want it more



Human progress can't be stopped  
human nature wins the war

#### B section

When they tried prohibition, the gin went underground  
For weed you'd be arrested, now we smoke it on the town  
What people ban today will be tomorrow's family fun  
What if we just ban banning? No, the banning's just begun:

#### Verse 3

There is a dance that is full / of sexuality  
A fusion of the cultures made while in captivity  
They tried to stop the rhythm, but it spread both near and far  
They named the dance the Tango, now it's on "Dancing with the Stars"

#### Chorus 3

What once was banned  
Becomes desired  
When there is passion  
We get inspired

You can't prohibit  
The birds that soar  
Human progress can't be stopped  
human nature wins the war

#### C section

You can't kiss your spouse on Sundays in Hartford , C.T.  
Text and walk at the same time in Hawaii or Fort Lee  
In Vermont you can't eat apple pie alone without ice cream  
No same-sex sex in Texas -oh they fixed that one I see  
Now, they've tried to stop the drag shows  
and the gender non-conforming clothes  
For now, for now! We can still paint our nails!  
While the federal court ruling prevails!

#### Chorus 4

What once was banned  
Becomes the norm  
We dance this tango



In perfect form

Our First Amendment

That's what it's for!

Human progress can't be stopped

human nature wins the war.

— Fred Sauter

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### Team 9 Bios:

**Jordan Rutter-Covatto** (they/them) is a countertenor, actor, composer, and producer. As a performer, Rutter-Covatto is a highly sought-after collaborator in the field of new work. Rutter-Covatto is the artistic director and co-founder of counter codex, a performing arts collective serving the LGBTQIA+ and leather/kink communities.

Soprano **Sydney Anderson** has been praised for her “stunning vocal fireworks,” and is quickly gaining recognition as an accomplished stage performer and concert soloist. A contemporary music enthusiast, Sydney has participated in numerous world premieres as well as workshops of new compositions at various stages of the creation process.

**Mila Henry** is a conductor, pianist and music director who maintains a versatile career, leading works spanning folk operas to rock musicals to reimagined classics. She is based in New York, and was nicknamed a “Jill of all trades” (*Sullivan County Democrat*) for her multi-instrumentalist work with The Opera Cowgirls.

**Fred Sauter** is a NYC-based musical theater lyricist/ librettist/ composer, a performer, a drag artist, designer and producer. With each project, Fred seeks to discover new ways to combine elements of modern song styles with theatre and storytelling to convey personal and universal truths.

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### Team 10

**Horror Movie • Marcus DeLoach with text by Howard Moss**

Team Members: Marcus DeLoach, baritone & composer & Grant Loehnig, piano

### Horror Movie



Dr. Unlikely, we love you so,  
You who made the double-headed rabbits grow  
From a single hare. Mutation's friend,  
Who could have prophesied the end  
When the Spider Woman deftly snared the fly  
And the monsters strangled in a monstrous kiss  
And somebody hissed, "You'll hang for this!"?

Dear Dracula, sleeping on your native soil,  
(Any other kind makes him spoil),  
How we clapped when you broke the French door down  
And surprised the bride in the overwrought bed.  
Perfectly dressed for lunar research,  
Your evening cape added much,  
Though the bride, inexplicably dressed in furs,  
Was a study in jaded jugulars.

Poor, tortured Leopard Man, you changed your spots  
In the debauched village of the Pin-Head Tots;  
How we wrung our hands, how we wept  
When the eighteenth murder proved inept,  
And, caught in the Phosphorous Cave of Sea,  
Dangling the last of synthetic flesh,  
You said, "There's something wrong with me."

The Wolf Man knew when he prowled at dawn,  
Beginnings spin a web where endings spawn.  
The bat who lived on shaving cream,  
A household pet of Dr. Dream,  
Unfortunately, maddened by the bedlam,  
Turned on the Doc, bit the hand that fed him.

And you, Dr. X, who killed by moonlight,  
We loved your scream in the laboratory  
When the panel slid and the night was starry  
And you threw the inventor in the crocodile pit  
(An obscure point: Did he deserve it?)  
And you took the gold to Transylvania  
Where no one guessed how insane you were.



We thank you for the moral and the mood,  
Dear Dr. Cliché, Nurse Platitude.  
When we meet again by the Overturned Grave,  
Near the Sunken City of the Twisted Mind,  
(In The Son of the Son of Frankenstein),  
Make the blood flow, make the motive muddy:  
There's a little death in every body.

— Howard Moss (1922-1987)

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### Team 10 Bios:

**Marcus DeLoach**'s opera *Mooch the Messy* has been produced by the Boston Conservatory and Tulsa Opera. His anthem, "The Lord is My Shepherd," is featured in Opera Philadelphia's film *Organ Stops* and his songs have been sung by Keith Phares and Andrew Garland among others. He teaches voice at Temple University.

Pianist **Grant Loehnig** serves as Head of Music Staff at Opera Philadelphia and Master Opera Coach at Curtis Institute of Music. He has worked at Wolf Trap Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Aspen Opera Theater, and Festival Napa Valley. He has premiered pieces by David Hertzberg, Karim Al-Zand, and Tyshawn Sorey.

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### Team 11

遂光而飛 "*Soaring into the light*" • Justin (YukWing) Cheung

Team Members: Hana Yiu, contralto, Leona Cheung, piano, Justin (YukWing) Cheung, composer & Olivia Lai, poet

### 遂光而飛 "*Soaring into the light*"

誠然信 可遠飛  
(如) 蒙眼 再窺見真理  
浩瀚萬千蒼生的卦象  
絕嶺光照赤地呼應有誰迴響  
期盼像鷹飛過千里  
無瑕翠綠遍地  
喚醒山川的壯麗  
忘掉痴瞋苦痛讓風沙吞噬



任山崩 濤浪也不怕  
極力保存自我  
流轉於 意念消逝 如幻似夢 思考堡壘 尋覓我  
塵散落 處處見不幸  
人無從叩問  
在抽身的瞬間  
凝視半生盡赤裸  
用我心聲呼應自身 覺悟新的悸動  
劃破天際 通透內心  
療癒昨日也撐起今世而圓滿  
誰帶領 振翅再高飛  
悠長晨曦  
俗世不需抱守  
我邁向自由

Truly believing, one can soar.  
(As if) Blindfolded, yet truth is glimpsed once more.  
The infinite signs of countless lives unfold,  
As light from distant peaks illuminates the barren—who will heed the call?  
Longing like eagles soaring a thousand miles,  
Pristine green stretches across the earth.  
Awakening the splendor of mountains and streams,  
Letting the winds devour grief, anger, and pain.  
Let mountains crumble, the waves roar—I stand unshaken,  
Fiercely preserving my essence.  
Flowing through vanishing thoughts, dreams, illusions,  
I seek myself within the palace of reflection.  
Dust scatters, misfortune unfolds everywhere,  
Humanity's plight, its questions unanswered.  
In the fleeting instant of stepping away,  
I gaze upon half a life, utterly laid bare.  
With my voice, I resonate and awaken  
A tremor from within,  
Piercing the sky, illuminating the heart,  
Healing the past while upholding the present—achieving wholeness.  
Who leads me to flip my wings and soar?  
Through the endless dawn,  
No longer clinging to the mundane,  
I soar toward freedom.



### Team 11 Bios:

**Justin (YukWing) Cheung** is an a capella singer, beatboxer, arranger, operatic baritone, and composer. His song "Robin Hood" appears on the Cantonese jazz fusion album *Gather*. He has performed in Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, and South Korea, and his choral arrangement "黑房" was recently commissioned by Hong Kong's LGBTQ+ choir, Moderati. An operatic baritone graduate of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, he is currently studying at Berklee College of Music.

**Hana Yiu** is a contralto from Hong Kong who is currently based in New York. This season, she sang the role of Mercedes in Lighthouse Opera's *Carmen*. She also covered Mrs. Atkins in Teatro Grattacielo's world premiere production of *Beyond the Horizon* by Nicolas Flagello, based on the Pulitzer Prize winning play by Eugene O'Neill.

**Leona Cheung** is a Boston-based collaborative pianist who has performed at the Aspen Music Festival, Oxford Song, Leeds Lieder Festival, Toronto Summer Music Festival, Franz Schubert Institute, and SongFest. Recent highlights include a recital performance curated and narrated by Graham Johnson. She is the founder of @listentolieder on Instagram, a platform dedicated to promoting and deepening appreciation for Art Song.

**Olivia Lai** is a Cantonese lyrics enthusiast and a bedroom songwriter. She currently plays the keyboard for Hong Kong's underground pop-rock band Sustain. She is grateful for the opportunity to share the tonal beauty of her mother tongue through her lyrics. She was a member of the executive committee at the Hong Kong University Students' Union Choir.

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### Team 12

*Mother of Earth and Sky* from *MOTHERS OF RAGNARÖK* • Erik Franklin

Team Members: Claire Galloway, soprano, John Henderson, piano & Erik Franklin, composer and poet

### Mother of Earth and Sky

Hush, little child, don't you cry!  
The birds have flown to the mountainside  
To whisper to the ancient towers,



Standing silent, steadfast, strong as bones.  
And ask their crags, and cliffs, and boulders  
To guard you with their shields of stone.

Hush, little child, don't you cry!  
The birds have flown to the riverside  
To tell the waters deep and wide:  
Their currents, waves, and gloaming tides  
Must guide you through their winding paths  
And softly bring you safely back.

Fly, birds!  
Flutter to the sky, birds,  
Chase away the storms  
And scatter all the clouds.  
Bottle all the lightning.  
Make the thunder vow  
To keep silent through the night!

Now, birds,  
It doesn't matter how, birds:  
Prevail upon the winds  
To curtail their raging gales.  
They must keep this child safe.  
You must keep this child safe.  
We must keep this child alive!

Everything must yield, birds,  
His fate cannot be sealed, birds.  
They must all become his shield,  
They must all lend him their swords.  
They must all give me their word.  
They must all keep him alive.

Fly, birds, fly!  
If they falter or defy...  
If they cross me and he dies,  
I will tear the stars out of the sky!  
Swear to me  
The light will never leave



This child's eyes.

Hush, little child, don't you cry!  
The birds have flown to your father's side,  
To bind him in an oath secure—  
There is no harm you shall endure.  
All nine realms protect you now,  
And woe to those who break their vow!

— Erik Franklin (b. 1989)

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### Team 12 Bios:

Composer/clarinetist and poet **Erik Franklin** brings a unique, fresh perspective to the genre of American art song. A former member of the United States Army Field Band, Franklin is a consummate instrumentalist and performer. He infuses his award-winning compositions with lyrical depth and expressive melodies that captivate vocalists and audiences alike.

An avid champion of art song, Scottish-American soprano **Claire Galloway** treats each piece as an opera in miniature. A featured artist with Baltimore Musicales, Nordic Song Festival, and Emmanuel Episcopal Church's Tuesdays at Six series, her theatricality runs the gamut from "palpable pain" to "splendid, funny moments" (B.I.T.R.).

**John Henderson** is an organist, collaborative pianist, and composer based in Washington, DC. While maintaining a busy performance schedule and private studio, John serves as organist and music director at Saint Bernadette Catholic Church in Silver Spring, MD, and on the musical theatre faculty of The Catholic University of America.

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### Team 13

*Changing is Existing* • Anthony Gatto with text by Gertrude Stein

Team Members: Gelsey Bell, voice, David Friend, piano & Anthony Gatto, composer

**Changing is Existing from *The Making of Americans* (1925)**

Soon now will be a description of David Hersland.

Changing is existing.



She says go, go and I go,  
she says come, come and I come,  
she says go, go and I go.

Some were very pleased to be with him often.  
Some were very pleased to be with him but not very often.  
Some were pleased not to be with him.  
Some were not pleased when they were with him.  
Some certainly were very pleased to be with him often.

This is now a description of David Hersland.

I, of being, and being liked, and not being liked,  
and listening and talking, and being remembered and forgotten  
and dying and being a dead one.

Some were very pleased to be with him often.  
Some were very pleased to be with him but not very often.  
Some were pleased not to be with him.  
Some were not pleased when they were with him.  
Some certainly were very pleased to be with him often.

This is now to be a complete description of David Hersland.

If any one is sad enough  
then that one is certainly one wanting to be a sad one,  
is certainly one not wanting to be a sad one.

— Gertrude Stein (1874–1946)

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### Team 13 Bios:

Informed by literary and visual arts, **Anthony Gatto's** stage works include *Wise Blood* (Flannery O'Connor), produced by Walker Art Center. He studied with Ornette Coleman and at Yale (DMA 2001). His awards include a Fulbright (Berlin), NEA, NYFA, Meet the Composer, Bush, McKnight, and Jerome Foundations, Yaddo, Millay, Copland House, VCCA and Willapa Bay.

**Gelsey Bell** is a singer, songwriter, and scholar – a composer-performer, teacher, and sound artist. She has been described by *The New York Times* as “one of New York’s most adventurous musicians”



and the “future of experimental vocalism.” She performs regularly as a vocalist and multi-instrumentalist, culling from a wide range of techniques and styles to create her own performance works, to literally voice those of contemporary composers, and to explore improvisation.

As chamber musician, soloist, and collaborator, **David Friend** is dedicated to projects that explore new ideas about what music can be and the piano can do. A fearless performer, critics have described his playing as "astonishingly compelling" ( *Washington Post*), and *The New York Times* calls him one "of the finest, busiest pianists active in New York's contemporary-classical scene."

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## Team 14

### *Poems of Catullus* • Deborah Mason

Team Members: Paul Max Tipton, bass-baritone, Molly Morkoski, piano, Deborah Mason composer, Catullus, poet & Robert Scotto, poet & translator

### **Poems of Catullus from Catullus V, VIII, LXXXV and LXXXV**

Come, let us live and love, my Lesbia.  
Who cares if old men gossip with delight?  
Suns will rise and set, but, when our light goes out,  
We will sleep forever.  
So, give me a thousand kisses, then two hundred.  
Another thousand, another hundred - until we kiss  
More often than jealous, evil people curse us -  
Uncountable, untouched.

Poor Catullus, no woman was ever loved  
The way you loved your Lesbia,  
Most faithful, most indulgent,  
Most careful to be kind.  
Yet she has shunned you and your fancy gifts  
That once she willingly enjoyed ...  
Don't be a fool and chase what runs away.  
Now I will be a real man, as hard as stone.  
But you'll be sorry when you're all alone, you wretch!  
Who will be kissing you? ...  
Whose lips will you nibble? ...



Catullus, get a grip!

I hate and love her.

Why, you ask? I do not know,

But tortured, only feel that it is so.

— Gaius Valerius Catullus (84-52 BC); adapted from translations by Robert Scotto, October, 2024

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### Team 14 Bios:

**Deborah Mason** has written opera, art songs, and chamber music, and enjoys setting obscure texts such as Alexander Pope's "The Rape of the Lock." Praised by *The New York Times* after The NYCO's Opera Reading Program, it subsequently was produced at Roulette in Brooklyn in 2016, aided by several grants.

Described as a dignified and beautiful singer by the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, bass-baritone **Paul Max Tipton** performs to acclaim in repertoire from Bach and Bruhns to Barber and Bolcom. He recently debuted in Tokyo singing Beethoven 9 with Masato Suzuki and can be heard on the BIS & Avie labels.

Pianist **Molly Morkoski** had her Carnegie Hall debut in 2007. She has performed in many other prestigious venues, and collaborated with many of today's top artists. Molly is a huge supporter of contemporary music and has worked with living composers John Adams, John Corigliano, Gabriela Lena Frank, and many more.

**Robert Scotto** was a professor of literature at CUNY until his retirement. His publications include studies of writers as diverse as Pater, Joyce, Heller and Pynchon. His biography of Moondog won several awards and is presently being made into a documentary. His collections of poems include Latin and Chinese translations.

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### Team 15

*Alone* • Patrick Michael Wickham with text by Edgar Allen Poe (P.M.W. alt.)

Team Members: Hilary Baboukis, mezzo soprano, Mark Wagner, piano, Patrick Michael Wickham, composer & co-poet

**Alone**



FROM THE TORRENT, OR THE FOUNTAIN—  
FROM THE RED CLIFF OF THE MOUNTAIN—  
FROM THE SUN THAT 'ROUND ME ROLL'D  
IN ITS AUTUMN TINT OF GOLD—

FROM THE LIGHTNING IN THE SKY  
AS IT PASS'D ME FLYING BY—  
FROM THE THUNDER AND THE STORM...  
AND ALL I LOV'D—I LOV'D ALONE.

IN MY CHILDHOOD—IN THE DAWN  
OF A STORMY LIFE—WAS DRAWN  
FROM THE SUN THAT 'ROUND ME ROLLED  
NAUGHT BUT ITS AUTUMN TINT OF GOLD

FROM THE LIGHTNING IN THE SKY  
AS IT PASS'D ME FLYING BY—  
FROM THE THUNDER AND THE STORM...  
AND ALL I LOV'D—I LOV'D ALONE.

— From “Alone” by Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), adapted by Patrick Michael Wickham

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### Team 15 Bios:

Composer **Patrick Michael Wickham** is a BMI and three-time NATS Competition finalist, composer/lyricist Mr. Wickham is honored to return to songSLAM. Technical director, European American Musical Alliance; founding Executive Director, West Village Musical Theatre Festival; also a medically-trained Voice Physiologist, professional actor and vocalist (Broadway, operatic and concert credits). [www.performerscareercenter.com](http://www.performerscareercenter.com)

**Hilary Baboukis:** mezzo-soprano, conductor, orchestrator, teacher; denizen of Jersey City, NYC, and Cairo. Recent roles: Carmen (title role), Orlofsky (Die Fledermaus), Phoebe (Yeomen of the Guard); alto soloist in Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Handel's Messiah, Mendelssohn's Elijah, Mozart's Requiem, and the Saint-Saëns Christmas Oratorio. Choral mercenary across the tri-state area. [hilarybaboukis.com](http://hilarybaboukis.com) for more!

**Mark Wagner,** pianist, has worked extensively as pianist, music director, and arranger for various productions throughout New York City. Favorite theater credits include Exit Music (ASCAP Award, Best New Musical) and Fauntleroy (David Merrick Arts Foundation). Mark was pianist and vocal/dance arranger for the Manhattan School of Music's Professional Musical Theatre Workshops and pianist/arranger for the Donnell Library New Composer Songbook series. Mark is Repertoire



Coach at Wickham Vocal Studios; freelances on multiple projects, including coachings, recitals, and studio recordings; and has served as Minister of Music at New Hope Lutheran Church since July 2015.

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## **Commission Prize – Songs of the Prince**

**James Danner, poetry**

**I.**

Do you take

—and yes I have taken

On the floor of a sticky nightclub—  
gooseflesh, the champagne Quickenings—  
And from its rich chaos pulled taut

From first lips  
such sweet sips  
of a barely believed oasis  
a shimmering glimpse of our yet to be

Do you take

—this risk to become other  
than what you dreamed to be  
so to anneal into this unknown

Do you take

—the Smooth skins of sunny days  
Green paws—leviathan!  
stain the lake  
Emerald  
under the pewter blue clouds of creation

Courage  
ardently shared  
[from glance] through shattering infinity



I do; I do; I do

## II.

How absolutely nothing  
Alights  
Becomes

The End

And I freefall  
Breath unfound

Air bulges  
Fisheye horizon

As if the the sky were  
fattening Everything  
Merciless

Under the weight  
Of a life now molten  
dripping away—

And now is it now  
from one look to  
The next word  
Vanished?

[Dread seared]  
I hardly dare  
To touch  
my puckering view,  
Allow a photon /moment

Better to suffocate  
[than claim]  
Fade out

## III.



Sometime at night

Out of a dream  
with iron filings (blood chimes)  
Sex me  
And the  
Trilling ache  
Of touch

You, unknown Bedmate  
Still as I swim up  
From dream into  
Dreaming  
Only knowing  
Cockache sure  
Of your want,  
My smug Delight  
You Stranger  
Me an Earthworm  
Of pleasure  
    self waits on the porch  
    with pain and time and  
    all names of things  
Pulse with surety  
How deserved this warmth  
(Entangled)

Grateful gratified impulse

None but that, ours

Before eyes open  
geolocated anxiety  
reduces to horny  
Cosseted in pillows  
As the waves break  
    (—My Husband!)

At night

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