



Sparks & Wiry Cries songSLAM NYC 2024

Team 1: Dreamers

Clint Borzoni, composer & pianist

Michelle Trovato, soprano

Dreamers

Soldiers are citizens of death's grey land,
Drawing no dividend from time's to-morrows.
In the great hour of destiny they stand,
Each with his feuds, and jealousies, and sorrows.
Soldiers are sworn to action; they must win
Some flaming, fatal climax with their lives.
Soldiers are dreamers; when the guns begin
They think of firelit homes, clean beds and wives.

I see them in foul dug-outs, gnawed by rats,
And in the ruined trenches, lashed with rain,
Dreaming of things they did with balls and bats,
And mocked by hopeless longing to regain
Bank-holidays, and picture shows, and spats,
And going to the office in the train.

– Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967)

Team 1 Bios:

Soprano **Michelle Trovato** has garnered praise from *Opera News*, *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *OperaWire*, and *Musical America* for her dynamic interpretations and “silvery... fine-spun sound” (*Musical*

America). She enjoys bringing new works to the forefront, and premiered works by such composers as Felix Jarrar, Benjamin Yarmolinsky, Paul Vasile, Sophia Serghi, Stephen Variames, and Clint Borzoni.

Clint Borzoni is an award-winning composer of Ecuadorian and Italian descent. His “highly original yet lyrical music...[and] natural gift for melody and harmonic structure” (*The Huffington Post*) and “sweeping melodies and emotional and dramatic range” (*Opera News*) has resulted in international performances and premieres.

Team 2: We Will Never Be Brothers

Marie Herrington, composer & soprano

Timothy Krippner, pianist

We Will Never Be Brothers

We will never be brothers!
Not by our motherlands, nor our mothers,
You are a multitude but sadly faceless
You're vast, but we are great.
You press us, you toil
You will choke yourself on your envy.
Liberty is a word you do not know,
You from childhood are chained in shackles.
At home you say "silence is golden,"
But in our hands burn Molotov cocktails,
In our hearts flow burning blood
What sort of "blind" family are you to us?
We have no fear in our eyes,
Even without weapons we are a menace
We grew up and became brave,
While we are targeted by snipers.
The executioners pushed us to our knees;
We rose up and corrected that.
Pointlessly the rats hide and pray
They'll be washed in their own blood
You're getting new orders,
But here we burn the fire of revolt.
You have the Czar, we have our Democracy.
You and I will never be brothers.

– Anastasia Dmitruk (b. 1991); English translation from the Ukrainian by Eugene Volokh with edits by Marie Herrington

Team 2 Bios:

Marie Herrington is a half-Ukrainian composer and soprano who also directs choirs in the Baltimore area. Marie's most recent endeavors include publication of her work with North Star Music and premiering a new Ukrainian art song for Source Song Festival (Minneapolis). To find out more about Marie, [visit her website](#).

Lauded as "a true artist" by the late Aldo Ciccolini, **Timothy Krippner** has won top prizes in the Seattle International and Chicago International Piano Competitions. He has performed with artists such as Midori, participated in masterclasses with Emmanuel Ax and Richard Goode, and was a two year fellow at Da Camera of Houston.

Team 3: Schlessler

Devorah Belin, composer

Elisheva Pront, soprano

Jialiang Li, pianist

Schlessler

Meine Schlessler—
gevoyt fun farlangen,
Tegleche zuchenisch, nachtleche bangen,
Regungen, zungen,
shtreibungem, vuntschen;
Geflachten, geshfunen
fun veiyte lavnus un veiytere zunen,
Fun harhtsnus-bahgern,
vus hern
nit oyf fun dem hartsen zu scharalen:

Meine schlessler kahlen kein mahl
nit fahlen, nit fahlen, nit fahlen.

– Excerpted from the poem by Aaron Glanz-Leyeles (1889-1966); Yiddish romanization by Devorah Belin and Elisheva Pront

Castles

My castles—
built of longing,
daily searching, nightly yearning,
sensations, visions,
aspirations, wishes;
Braided, spun
of distant moons and distant suns,
Of heart-craving,
which do not stop
the heart from shining:

My castles can never
fall, fall, fall.

– Trans. Devorah Belin and Elisheva Pront

Team 3 Bios:

Devorah Belin is a composer, performer, and ethnomusicologist. She uses her diverse musical practices to investigate, craft, and share musical experience. Devorah's music often touches on themes of identity and representation. Currently, Devorah is based in NYC, where she is a PhD candidate in ethnomusicology at the Graduate Center, CUNY.

Soprano and stage director **Elisheva Pront** regularly collaborates with living composers to create, perform, stage, and direct new music in order to cultivate a compassionate understanding of our humanity. She is currently based in Baltimore, where she earned a Master of Music in Voice at the Peabody Institute.

Jialiang Li has studied piano since age 4, mentored by teachers including He Han and Nikolai Kraynov. He graduated from Xinghai Conservatory of Music and later pursued a Master's under Prof. Huang Tiandong. He continued studies at the Peabody Institute with Benjamin Pasternack. He is an experienced performer in concerts and recordings.

Team 4: IV. Third Letter from Moshe

Quinn Gutman, composer

Jessica Bloch, soprano

Rafe Schaberg, pianist

IV. Third Letter from Moshe

My dear children, you should live and be well.

First, I would like to write you that we find ourselves in good health.

As is usual in later years:

We cough a little,

We have a little sleeplessness,

We try to spare ourselves unnecessary exertion.

There is of course, little worries.

Things don't always go one's way.

I know you understand.

I was burnt out, I had no insurance.

And have, baruch Hashem,

I have built a house and we are living in it.

To do it right, I need one-thousand more zlotas for the loan I took,

And this doesn't amount to much,

Whatever I had besides that house.

If only Hashem would grant me life,

I'll be able to replenish.

I saw in your letter that you didn't receive any mail since the High Holy Days.

That surprises us.

You should have heard from us three or four times.

I beg you to write us back immediately:

What are you doing, and how our dear grandchildren are.

Regards to you and your husband,

Regards to my brother Isaac,

And his wife Leitzl,

And his son Israel and his wife Molly.

Write to me what Moshe Shaper is doing with his wife and children,

About Dodi Shaper and his family.

Are they alive?

For G-d's sake answer immediately!

— Original Yiddish by Moshe Zeider (exact date unknown, ~ late 1920's)

Translated English text by Hannah Baer (exact date unknown, ~ late 1960's/ early 1970's)

Team 4 Bios:

Quinn Gutman is a Jewish nonbinary singer and composer striving to share stories and experiences through their music. They are most known for their versatility, writing scores for opera, art song, chamber ensemble, and other experimental music. They are most known for their work, *Wanting: 3 Mini Operas about Queer Dating and Relationships*.

Praised for her "sparkling tone," **Jessica Arielle Bloch** is a versatile soprano performing repertoire from the Baroque period to the twenty-first century. Recent accomplishments include performing Bach's *Coffee Cantata* as Liesgen (West End Lyric) and performing as a Concert Artist at Broadway & Beyond (Club Cafe Boston). In 2022 she made her New York festival debut as Young Juana from *Juana* and Yniold from *Pelleas et Mélisande* (Dell'Arte Opera Ensemble).

Rafe Schaberg is a pianist currently pursuing his Master of Music degree at the New England Conservatory of Music under the direction of Vivian Hornik Weilerstein and Cameron Stowe. This past summer he was a piano fellow at Aspen Music Festival, playing for a number of recitals and masterclasses including those lead by Renée Fleming.

Team 5: Tavern

Joshua Burel, composer

Amalia Osuga, soprano

Jillian Gardner, pianist

Tavern

I'll keep a little tavern

Below the high hill's crest,

Wherein all grey-eyed people

May set them down and rest.

There shall be plates a-plenty,

And mugs to melt the chill

Of all the grey-eyed people

Who happen up the hill.

There sound will sleep the traveller,

And dream his journey's end,

But I will rouse at midnight

The falling fire to tend.

Aye, 'tis a curious fancy—

But all the good I know

Was taught me out of two grey eyes

A long time ago.

— Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)

Team 5 Bios:

Joshua Burel, an award-winning composer and Associate Professor at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, is recognized for his impactful work with human rights and social justice issues. His compositions have garnered accolades, including the Theodore Presser Award. His extensive ensemble collaborations are recorded by Centaur and Blue Griffin Records.

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Amalia Osuga is an award-winning singer and Assistant Professor at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. She has appeared in recital throughout the US and Great Britain and is the founder of Her Art in Song, a grant-funded project highlighting the musical and poetic voices of women in art song.

Jillian Gardner is an award-winning organist with an international touring schedule. She is the Director of Music at First United Methodist Church (Huntsville, AL) and teaches at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Gardner advocates for wellness, believing that a healthy mind and body contribute to artistic quality.

Team 6: Ravenous

Kristen Baum, composer
Shari *Eve* Feldman, soprano
Mackenzie *Lyn* Marr, pianist
Sally Rosen Kindred, poet

Ravenous

To be

this hungry.
To be ravened
with regret. To wear
a black bird's thirst, the kind
of ribbon you'd press against

your throat.
To have a
nest trapped in that
place where your vow needs
to break: be a casket
on the river, a breath-shell

wet with
folded wings.
To swing ajar
for the blooms to fly
out. To shriek on open-
ing with a call, a caw, a

carcass
song. And to
remember you
were wing and tree, to
seal that memory. Long,
starved for loss, this unkindness

your last.

— Sally Rosen Kindred

Team 6 Bios:

Kristen Baum is devoted to storytelling as a composer, poet and writer. She is compelled to tell women's stories through a female lens. Her concert works have premiered in Hollywood, Nashville, Michigan, Baltimore and Berlin. Kristen is in development for her first opera, with a chosen story and librettist.

Shari *Eve* Feldman and Mackenzie *Lyn* Marr, of Evelyn Duo, bonded over their shared passions for authentic storytelling, avant-garde soundscapes, and curly hair conditioners. They enthusiastically celebrate women's voices through art song commission, education, and performance, and beyond music are united by eclectic inclinations to dance in the rain and drink copious cups of tea.

Team 7: The Shipbuilder

Jonathan Wyatt, composer

Devony Smith, mezzo-soprano (recording)

Temple Hammen, soprano (live performance)

Danny Zelibor, pianist

James Danner, poet

The Shipbuilder

I let

I let that ship

they built for me
set sail

proud bowsprit
gliding out to sea
sure as i was of its sunder

and so I watch the sunset glow
refract a course
a blinding promise
dread and known

and now i
carpenter anew
climb past the hills
and to a forest go

my search for better timber
to craft a vessel
marrow-made
and mine

through clinging dank and must
i grope by whispering starlight

full flattened palms
which touch on barks
and link with joy
the limbs of future journey

it is a chancing summons
to build without a teacher

so sure was i of shipwreck
I saw the jagged wilds
as fit for gather

in looping murmurs
trees and skeins
I brook my self
a cut
and from the fissure
sweet sap—

in solitude
so dense with others
my turn to breed
a smell

breathe out a hull
to carry courage

the work is slow
but i am safe
and when from harbor
i embark
i shall not sink
nor fall nor sunder

— James Danner (b. 1991)

Team 7 Bios:

Jonathan Wyatt (b. 1997) is a composer whose works often explore conceptualism and storytelling. He holds a Bachelor's in Music from Shenandoah Conservatory and a Master's in Music from the Mannes School of Music. Jonathan is currently living in New York City and developing a new musical to be workshopped in fall 2024.

Temple Hammen, lyric soprano, will be a vocal fellow at the Tanglewood Music Festival through the Boston Symphony Orchestra this summer. Last season, Temple sang Annina in *La Traviata* and Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* with the South Bend Lyric Opera. She also was a Stern Fellow at SongFest. Temple received her M.M in Vocal Performance from Mannes School of Music and B.M in Vocal Performance from Westminster Choir College.

Pianist **Danny Zelibor**, praised for his sensitive and colorful playing, is a sought-after collaborator. He made his Carnegie Hall debut with baritone Jarrett Ott and has performed with soprano Harolyn Blackwell and cellists Robert DeMaine, Brant Taylor, and Amanda Forsyth. An ardent lover of art song, he has recorded world premieres of songs by Jake Heggie and Jennifer Higdon and recently, sponsored by the U.S. State Department, performed in The Republic of Chad with Sidney Outlaw.

James Danner

I am a musician - a trained singer - a stage creature, most comfortable under the lights.

I want what I make to be a smell; to craft atmosphere.

I operate from the position that Play is the fundament of all making, and that all creation is an attempt to arrive at, or to fabricate the conditions for Joy.

Team 8: Trust Exercise No. 42

Nisha Caiozzi, co-composer, singer, & poet
Michael Yang-Wierenga, co-composer & pianist

Trust Exercise No. 42

"That's part of the problem. With your whole life ahead of you, you can't even begin to imagine passing away in the middle of a Swiss lake."

But

Do not be afraid of that deep pool
sitting still in your center.
You will not drown
if you sink slow
Find solace In your soft darkness.

I feel the pull of the string.
All these notes,
will find their places

I feel the pull of the string.
Lighting the corners of my
Cornerless body
not like somebody else's

Unwind the threads from your finely woven tapestry
See how they curl into the expanse
Threads from separate tapestries
Weave untrodden paths

Unwind the threads from your finely woven tapestry
And I'll drift over the waves you're making

— Nisha Caiozzi (b. 2000)

Team 8 Bios:

Nisha Caiozzi is a singer and multimedia artist. She received her BM in Voice Performance with a minor in Ethnomusicology and a concentration in Pedagogy, Advocacy and Community Engagement from Oberlin Conservatory. She is currently in her first year at Bard studying for her MM in Vocal Arts. She received The Ruth Cogan Memorial Scholarship in Voice Performers in 2023 and attended SongFest in 2022 as a Colburn Foundation Fellow.

Michael Yang-Wierenga is an improviser and pianist currently studying at New England Conservatory for an MM in Contemporary Musical Arts. He received a BM in Piano Performance with a minor in improvisation from Oberlin Conservatory. He previously studied at the Tanglewood Music Center and San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He has performed across Poland in the Krakow Piano Summer festival and in jazz combos in Taiwan. He seeks to cultivate a personal style informed by his training in classical, jazz, and other world musics.

Team 9: So Summer Leaves...?

Liam Frager, composer & poet

Victoria Popritkin, soprano

Jason Handy, pianist

So Summer Leaves...?

The summer trees with glowing leaves,

The blue jays singing their song.

With the buzz of bees, and despicable fleas

When the days get long.

Their glowing leaves turn red and bright,

Then fall to the earth below

Where they hide the ground from the sun light

When the plants cease to grow.

Frozen rain falls from the sky

Laying down a blanket of snow.

Coming down from way up high

When everything sparkles below

The vegetation all around

Thaws out and drips its dew

Again the blue jays sing their sound.

When the cycle starts anew.

11.1.12

— Liam Frager (b. 2000)

Team 9 Bios:

Award-winning composer **Liam Frager** is currently earning his Master's in Music Composition from Binghamton University. From expansive orchestral textures to intimate chamber pieces and evocative solo works,

Fragger adores writing music that is engaging, dichotomous, and occasionally zany. In addition to concert music, Frager loves adding depth and emotion to visual narratives through his film scores.

Victoria Popritkin, soprano, is currently pursuing her Master's in Opera Performance at Binghamton University, where she will perform Suor Angelica in Puccini's *Suor Angelica*. Victoria previously sang Cupid in Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* and Papagena in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* at the Cincinnati-College Conservatory of Music. An ardent interpreter of art song, Victoria has sung as a Young Artist at SongFest and participated in Cincinnati Song Initiative's 2023 songSLAM.

Jason Handy is a collaborative pianist based in New York City. Enthusiastic about new music, he has premiered numerous works with ensembles including the Momenta Quartet and Hub New Music. In 2022 and 2023, he was the Assistant Pianist at the Breno Italy International Music Academy. Jason completed his Master's Degree in Collaborative Piano at Binghamton University under Dr. Joel Harder.

Team 10: The City is Peopled

John Secunde, composer

Ciera Cope, soprano

Jacob Hiser, pianist

The City is Peopled

The city is peopled with spirits, not ghosts, O my love:

*Though they crowded between and usurped the kiss of my
mouth their breath was your gift, their beauty, your life.*

— H.D (1886 –1961)

Team 10 Bios:

John Secunde is a musician and visual artist from Limerick, Maine. Drawing inspiration from words, numbers, nature, sights, and sounds, he makes and writes music that combines finely-crafted transparency with playful seriousness.

Ciera Cope is a New York City-based soprano with a passion for new and early music. She holds an MM in Vocal Performance and has premiered new works and performed with ensembles in England and across the US. She currently sings with Downtown Voices at Trinity Wall Street.

Jacob Hiser is a versatile pianist/violinist who has performed with groups all over the U.S. and around the world. He studied jazz piano at Missouri State University and Contemporary Improvisation at New England Conservatory. Currently, he is collaborative piano staff at Phillips Exeter Academy and Boston Children's Chorus.

Team 11: III. What This Voice Can Do

Hannah Cai Sobel, composer

Francesca Lionetta, soprano

Amber Scherer, pianist

What This Voice Can Do

This is not a small voice.

This voice is crisp,

sharp,

This voice stands alone,

speaks its mind.

It is the voice heard from

the back of auditoriums,

that turns heads

with what it has to say.

This voice holds power.

This voice will

not be muted.

It will stand at the head

of the protest line.

This voice will not be

silenced.

It will not be drowned

like those

of its ancestors.

— Thandiwe McMillan (b. 1996)

Team 11 Bios:

Hannah Cai Sobel (they/them) is a NYC-based vocalist and composer, inspired wholeheartedly by the human experience. They draw on the modes and textures of early chant and polyphony in their own writing, forcing age-old techniques to “crash headfirst” into contemporary practices and harmonies. Hannah is a lover of all cats and most hyperbolic triangle groups.

Francesca Lionetta is a soprano and arts educator based in Brooklyn, NY. As a performer, she seeks opportunities in operatic, oratorio, and concert work, which capture her love for singing in different styles from Baroque to contemporary to cabaret. Highlights of her 2023-2024 season include the Oxford Song Mastercourse and Phyllis in *Iolanthe* with Bronx Opera.

Amber Ginmi Scherer is a pianist, educator, and community organizer who currently resides in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn. Since moving to New York, Amber has taught outreach courses as well as private students through the Americorps/ArtistYear program as well as the Brooklyn School of Music. She is pursuing a graduate degree at The Juilliard School and holds degrees in Piano Performance and Psychology from Oberlin College and Conservatory.

Team 12: From the Taiwan Cypress in Alishan

Angela Yam, composer

Nathan Halbur, baritone

Leona Cheung, pianist

From the Taiwan Cypress in Alishan

it's true half of us have disappeared
they say our fragrance is that of god
we can't help we wail for the lost
family axed down for profit
their knives scratch our surface
sometimes they walk beneath our shadows
after dusk searching for something we
in fear dissipate and become

— Jennifer Huang (b. 1994)

Team 12 Bios:

Hailed as "radiant" by *The Boston Globe*, composer and soprano **Angela Yam** produced, composed for, and directed the award-winning choral opera *ADRIFT* (2023). She frequently composes for Nightingale Vocal Ensemble. Her self-directed Visual Recital was awarded 3rd place in the American Prize Competition. Find out more at angelayamsoprano.com!

Baritone **Nathan Halbur** is a frequent soloist with the Boston Pops and Emmanuel Music; regularly sings with Boston Baroque, Skylark, and Ensemble Altera; and performed with Esperanza Spalding in the world premiere of Wayne Shorter's opera ...(*Iphigenia*). He has led pioneering work in the domain of vocal ensemble improvisation, producing Nightingale Vocal Ensemble's album *Composition Sped Up*.

Leona Cheung is a collaborative pianist especially known for her musical leadership and responsiveness. Cheung's deep devotion to vocal repertoire has brought her to perform in many international festivals, including Aspen Music Festival, Oxford Lieder Festival, Leeds Lieder Festival, Toronto Summer Music Festival, Franz Schubert Institut and SongFest.

Team 13: I Can

Max Johnson, composer

Kristin Gornstein, mezzo-soprano

Jeremy Chan, pianist

First Poem

And then
just like that
the city seems
to have a luster
the void is prohibited
by law, the shine
is, in fact, satisfaction.
Contentment is real in a
vague sense - still, stillness
and the breath that stays
that way. All aflutter.
Scooting into now.
I can't wait -
I can.

— Todd Colby (b. 1962)

Team 13 Bios:

Composer/bassist **Max Johnson** creates complex worlds of sound crafted with love, care, and clarity. With over a dozen albums and more than two thousand concerts internationally with artists like Anthony Braxton, Mary Halvorson, Tyshawn Sorey, John Zorn, and Mivos Quartet, Johnson brings a wild energy and excitement to his compositions and performances. Johnson teaches music theory at Brooklyn College.

Mezzo-soprano **Kristin Gornstein** mainly sings Baroque and contemporary music, two genres of classical music that prize artistic interpretation and collaboration. Last season she made her Lincoln Center debut in Hao Weiya's opera *Painted Skin*. Recent performances include Dido in *Dido and Aeneas* with Opera Fort Collins and Tonia Ko's "Smoke and Distance" with the Brooklyn Art Song Society.

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Jeremy Chan is an Australian pianist and vocal coach based in New York City. He is on staff at Juilliard and the Manhattan School of Music, and serves as Director of Music at Advent Lutheran Church. Recent engagements include *Ariadne auf Naxos* at the Lakes Area Music Festival, and performances at Wigmore Hall, Lincoln Center, and Carnegie Hall.

Team 14: V. (Acceptance) My Dear Child (from *Letters from the Anthropocene*)

Jessica Rudman, composer

Jennifer Sgroe, soprano

Eric Sedgwick, pianist

(Acceptance) My Dear Child

My dear child,
The world needs leaders
I'm sorry to ask you to be one.
Will you care, will you love, will you tend
A weary planet?
Will you wonder
What we should have left you?
I wanted you to wonder
At how a world could be so magical
To ask why the sky is blue
How the chubby bumblebee can fly
And where the birds go in the winter.
I wanted you to wonder
At worms in the dirt
At morning dew, sparkling like diamonds
At crystal snowflakes
And how they melt on your tongue.
I wanted you to wonder
At a lifetime of sunsets
At the touch of a loved one
At the warmth of their laughter, melting the sky to starry twilight
And how a single planet could sustain so much joy and life
I didn't want you to wonder
How this planet can sustain your single life!
I didn't want jungles and coral and placid lakes
To belong only in your make-believe!
I didn't want to see
That I was playing make-believe.
I have no answers.

Only more questions to add to yours.
Is wondering together
The best thing I can hope to do for you?
The world needs leaders.
I'm sorry I couldn't be one.

— Laurana Wheeler Roderer (b. 1999)

Team 14 Bios:

Composer **Jessica Rudman**'s "starkly effective music" (*Opera News*) inspires empathy for contemporary social issues through stories of myth, magic, and the modern world. When she isn't working on her opera about Medusa, she teaches at the University of Utah and is a member of an adult cheerleading team.

Soprano **Jennifer Sgroe** has performed across the US, Finland, England, and Austria in venues such as Jordan Hall, Radio City Music Hall, Carnegie Hall, Mechanics Hall, Dartington Hall, The Society for Ethical Culture, and the United Nations. She is a proponent of new vocal works, especially by underrepresented composers.

Eric Sedgwick has performed with many of music's top talents including Leona Mitchell, Sanford Sylvan, Marni Nixon, Nicholas Phan, Laquita Mitchell, and English hornist Thomas Stacy. He is a staff vocal coach at the Manhattan School of Music and a faculty coach at the Tanglewood Music Center.