

For Immediate Release,  
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## COPLAND HOUSE NAMES CULTIVATE 2024 FELLOWS

6 COMPOSERS FROM 6 STATES SELECTED FOR  
ACCLAIMED EMERGING COMPOSERS' INSTITUTE

June Concert in New York City to Feature World Premiere of 6 New Works



Cortlandt Manor, NY, February 10, 2024 – Copland House is excited to announce the six Fellows invited to participate in its acclaimed CULTIVATE 2024 emerging composers institute. The selected composers are (*clockwise from upper left*): **JaRon Brown**, 33 (Hollywood, SC); **Claire Hu**, 37 (Princeton, NJ); **Kevin Kay**, 28 (Berlin, Germany); **Celka Ojakangas**, 31 (Pasadena, CA); **Sofia Rocha**, 27 (Providence, RI); and **Connor Elias Way**, 32 (Brooklyn, NY). Rocha is returning to Copland House after her 2022 Residency.

These stellar artists were chosen from nearly 150 applicants from 30 states and three countries by this year's jury, comprised of Copland House Residents or former CULTIVATE Fellows **Derek Bermel** (CULTIVATE Director), **Flannery Cunningham**, **Bobby Ge**, and **Reinaldo Moya**. As Bermel noted, "Once again, we were bowled over by the boundless creativity in this upcoming generation of artists. We're eager to bring to life the music of these six bold voices during a week of intensive sharing and growth this June at Copland House."

Since 2012, CULTIVATE has been an important destination for highly-gifted composers of all backgrounds and identities on the threshold of their professional careers. An annual, weeklong all-scholarship, intensive creative workshop and mentoring program, CULTIVATE 2024 will take place from June 3 through 11 at Aaron Copland's National Historic Landmark home in northern Westchester County, NY. Each year, Copland House commissions six Fellows to each create a new small-ensemble composition that serves as the focus of an eventful week of collective and individual daily rehearsals and workshops with Bermel and artists from Music from Copland House, "one of the leading champions of contemporary music" (*Louisville Weekly*). Evening discussion sessions on practical career matters feature forward-looking arts leaders and thinkers. CULTIVATE 2024 will conclude with a public concert on Tuesday evening, June 11 at 6:30pm by Music from Copland House, on the ensemble's mainstage performance series at Elebash Recital Hall at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York; the concert features the World Premieres of the six new works created for CULTIVATE, performed by clarinetist **Moran Katz**, violinist **Pala Garcia**, cellist **Alexis Pia Gerlach**, and pianist **Margaret Kampmeier**; their premiere performances will also be filmed for streaming. Composers selected for CULTIVATE also become eligible for future performance, recording, commissioning, and other career advancement opportunities.

Reflecting on her own experience, 2023 Fellow **Maya Miro Johnson** wrote, "CULTIVATE – its work ethic, values, and people – was a privilege to experience, and I'm so in awe of all these wonderful, kind, interesting, and exceptionally talented individuals who invited me into a warm and welcome space of extremely passionate, dedicated music-making and -refining. The environment was so overwhelmingly positive, and I couldn't have asked for a better experience!"

Copland House gratefully acknowledges the support for CULTIVATE from the Amphion Foundation, ArtsWestchester, ASCAP Foundation, BMI Foundation, Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Alice M. Ditson Fund, Friends of Copland House, David and Ezlbieta Grove Foundation, Jandon Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, NewMusic USA, and New York State Council on the Arts.



### **CULTIVATE 2024: Fellows' bios**

South Carolina-born **JaRon Brown** has always been heavily influenced by pop culture, and calls himself "an avid anime fanatic and 16-bit video game ghou." He is grounded in creating soundscapes that authentically reflect his deep passion for fostering memorable musical and sonic experiences. Two of his earliest works, *Fragmented Shards of Crystallized Water* and *Giant Woman*, were premiered by the University of South Carolina's New Voices composition studio, and his original incidental music for *Growing Up Alice*, an original play produced by the Blythewood High School Drama Department. His first percussion quartet, *Gutterflys*, was premiered by the Grammy Award-winning Third Coast Percussion at its annual Family Dinner Concert, and his *The Underside of Make Believe* was commissioned by Grammy-nominated Sandbox Percussion for its inaugural creator mentorship program. A University of South Carolina graduate, he is also an artist and part-owner of the startup Wildlight Publications.

An electroacoustic composer and multimedia artist, **Claire Hu** explores the narrative and communicative power of music, and synthesizes surreal worlds with fantastical juxtapositions of cultures, imagery, and characters. She enjoys collaborations with visual artists, engineers, architects, dancers, and sculptors, as she imagines sounds rooted in connectedness and viscerality. Winner of the Vienna International and Mayflower Composer Competitions, she also writes and produces electronic, indie pop, and dance music. Her works have been featured at the highSCORE and Mise-En Festivals, SoundSCAPE, Suncoast Composers Fellowship Program, Sō Percussion Summer Institute, New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival, Clyde Built Radio, and Classical WSMR's Modern Notebook.

**Kevin Kay** is interested in the physicality of sound, and in expressing the physical nature of our reality abstractly through music. Working in just (or pure) intonation, his music is concerned with the structuring and understanding of rational tonal structures through a framework based on the physical, mathematical, and psychoacoustic properties of sound. His music has been performed by Ensemble Linea, the Spektral Quartet, Imani Winds, soloists from Ensemble Intercontemporain, Brouwer Trio, Density512, and the Divertimento, PinkNoise, Ghost, and MotoContrario Ensembles, and at the Cortona Sessions for New Music, International Workshop for Young Composers, Les Ecoles d'Art Américaines de Fontainebleau, New Music on the Point, and the impuls, CIEL, and IRCAM ManiFeste Academies. He twice won the Cortona Prize, and is currently residing in Berlin, with support from the Respekt & Wertschätzung Scholarship by the DAAD-Stiftung to pursue composition and artistic research at the Universität der Künste Berlin. A Doctoral candidate at Stony Brook University, he is a graduate of the University of Chicago (in humanities) and the College of William and Mary (physics and music).

Los Angeles-based composer, violist, and teacher **Celka Ojakangas** gleans her musical ideas from her collaborative work as an instrumentalist in symphony orchestras, new music ensembles, jazz bands, and rock bands – always with the intention of bringing creativity and play to the forefront of the listener's and performer's experiences. Her music plays with hybridism and recontextualization, exploring and blurring the boundaries between culturally-defined genres resulting in an eclectic palette of textures, rhythms, and grooves. Her compositions have been premiered and commissioned by Alarm Will Sound, Hocket, the Kaufman School of Dance, Raleigh Symphony, Portland State University Opera, New Opera West, Bantam Winds, and Thornton Symphony Orchestra. Her recent distinctions include the Bang on a Can Summer Festival Composer's Fellowship, Mizzou International Festival Composer Residency, ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer's Award, Opera America's Discovery Grant for Female Composers, and American Prize for Wind Band. A graduate of the University of Southern California, she teaches at Occidental College, Glendale Community College, and the Los Angeles-area Neighborhood Music School.

2022 Copland House Resident **Sofía Rocha** writes emotionally intense music that explores cognition, randomness, movement, and counterpoint through an eclectic set of frameworks. Winner of the Aspen Music Festival's Hermitage Prize, her recent and upcoming projects include a collaboration with clarinetist-composer Gleb Kanasevich on a new large-scale work for clarinet with live electronics, a newly commissioned work for the International Contemporary Ensemble in collaboration with the New World Symphony, and a reading of *Collage d'hommages* with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra through the American Composers Orchestra EarShot program. She has worked with the Arditti, JACK, and Brentano Quartets, Fifth House Ensemble, Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, New York Youth Symphony, loadbang, Hub New Music, Castle of our Skins, Hypercube, and Duo Entre-Nous. A Doctoral candidate at Brown University, she is a graduate of the University of Missouri-Kansas City Conservatory and Gettysburg College, and has had residencies at MacDowell, the Hermitage Artist Retreat, and Kimmel Harding Nelson Center. She is also an avid trombonist and conductor, having performed with numerous orchestras, wind ensembles, and jazz groups.

The music of Brooklyn-based **Connor Elias Way** explores resonance through carefully wrought networks of imitative counterpoint and a spectrally-informed approach to sonority and timbre. His works have been performed by the Minnesota Orchestra, Alarm Will Sound, the JACK, Aizuri, and Bergamot Quartets, Contemporaneous, Sō Percussion, Arx Duo, and Aspen Contemporary Ensemble. Current projects include a forthcoming solo marimba work for Jisu Jung and an album-length project for the Irish singer Iarla Ó Lionáird and harpist Parker Ramsey to premiere in Dublin this fall, commissioned by the Arts Council of Ireland. A Doctoral candidate at Princeton, he is a graduate of Georgia State University (*summa cum laude*) and Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University.

## **Copland House bios**

CULTIVATE Director **DEREK BERMEL** has been commissioned by the Pittsburgh, National, Saint Louis, New Jersey, and Pacific Symphonies, Los Angeles and Westchester Philharmonics, New York Youth Symphony, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, WNYC Radio, Eighth Blackbird, Guarneri Quartet, Music from Copland House, Music from China, De Ereprijs (Netherlands), Jazz Xchange (U.K.), Figura (Denmark), Koussevitzky and Fromm Foundations, and violinist Midori, among others. His many honors include the Alpert Award in the Arts, Rome Prize, Guggenheim and Fulbright Fellowships, American Music Center's Trailblazer Award, and Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters; and residencies at Yaddo, Tanglewood, Aspen, Banff, Bellagio, Copland House, Sacatar, and Civitella Ranieri. He has served as Artistic Director of the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, Artist-in-Residence at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and Composer-in-Residence of the Seattle Symphony and Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra.

**COPLAND HOUSE** has long welcomed past and present musical dreamers, explorers, and game-changing innovators of all backgrounds and identities, who – like Aaron Copland – have changed the way we engage with the world. An award-winning creative center for American music based at Rock Hill, Copland's longtime residence and a National Historic Landmark in New York's Lower Hudson Valley, Copland House is the only composer's home in the U.S. devoted to nurturing America's vibrant, diverse cultural legacy through a broad range programs that uniquely embrace the entire artistic process, from creation and development to study, performance, and presentation. Hailed by *The New York Times* for "all the richness of its offerings," Copland House's activities resonate far beyond its walls, nationally and globally, and are built upon three primary programmatic areas: multi-faceted composer support, live and recorded performances, and in-school and on-site educational activities. Among its honors are the Yale Distinguished Music Educator Award, American Music Center's Letter of Distinction, *Westchester* magazine's "Best of the Decade" recognition and "Top 52 Reasons to Love Westchester," and ArtsWestchester's Arts Organization of the Year Award.

The internationally-acclaimed **MUSIC FROM COPLAND HOUSE** ensemble (MCH) has been hailed as "bold," "adventurous," and "excellent" (*The New Yorker*), and for "illuminating essential truths about the music" (*The New York Times*). Offering ear-opening, mind-expanding experiences gathered from its journeys across 150 years of America's vast musical landscape, the ensemble champions classic and forgotten voices from the nation's past, and celebrates established and rising artists from the present. MCH has been featured on *CBS Sunday Morning*, NPR, and the European Broadcasting Union; engaged by Tanglewood, the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, Smithsonian Institution's Freer Gallery of Art, Library of Congress, Universities of Chicago and Virginia, and the Caramoor, Bard, Ecstatic, Bowdoin, and SONiC Festivals; and been heard on CDs on the Arabesque, Koch International, and the COPLAND HOUSE BLEND labels. The ensemble has commissioned nearly 100 works, and is regularly featured on its mainstage concert series in Westchester County, NY, and at Elebash Hall at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Inspired by Copland's peerless, lifelong advocacy of American composers, MCH also presents a wide variety of educational and community outreach activities. Launched in 1999 by flutist **Paul Lustig Dunkel**, clarinetist **Derek Bermel**, violinist **Nicholas Kitchen**, cellist **Wilhelmina Smith**, and pianist **Michael Boriskin**, MCH boasts a stellar roster of Founding, Principal, and Guest Artists, of whom, *The Chicago Tribune* raved, "Copland would have been proud of all of them."

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