

Utah Division of Arts and Museums 2020 Performing Arts Fellowships

To begin, I want to say thank you to the Utah Division of Arts and Museums for asking me to listen to and review the submissions for the 2020 Performing Arts Fellowship. It was an honor to be asked and has been humbling. The task of choosing awardees from this talented, accomplished and disparate group has been very difficult. There is no finding a “best” among these talented and dedicated artists. Each of them has put so much of themselves into developing their skill and music. Every one of these artists is deserving of acknowledgement and support for their creative contributions. That said, the task was to acknowledge and support an exceptional, established Utah performer at a pivotal moment in their career when this award could make a significant difference. Along with listening for a very high level of musical quality, the question of “why now” remained at the forefront of my decision-making process.

With regard to the “Now.” It is also important to recognize that world was changing during the time of my review in ways that I could not have imagined when I accepted the opportunity to review the Fellowships. Nor could the applicants have integrated these changes into their proposals. During the months of January and March the spread of COVID-19 throughout the world and the unfolding impact on our arts and culture community became more significant and “real” each day. Performance venue went dark day after day, production seasons were canceled, and orchestras dismissed their musicians. Even now, as I write this, people are grappling with the unknown and working to find ways to share the healing power of music in the face of these changes. These factors did bear some weight in my review. But I don’t have answers on what these changes will bring for the discipline. It is my hope that all of these fellowship applicant artists will find a way to continue their important work and have their creative voices positively shape our future after we settle in to life beyond the crisis. I thank them all for the work they contribute to the lives of those around them. And once again, I thank you for the opportunity to hear their music!