

Performing Arts - Osnat Netzer

The process of exploring several applications and getting to know so many new (to me) artists was sheer joy. Many applications were superb, and the talent in Utah is undeniable. I chose five artists from different cultural and musical backgrounds, focusing on two criteria in particular: Technical Excellence, and Originality or Artistic Impact. Technical Excellence pertains to instrumental or vocal abilities, fluency and proficiency in the artist's field, or high quality of players and overall production. For Originality or Artistic Impact, I looked for two possible things: Is the artist innovating within their own chosen genre? Or are they able to create music on such a level that the genre itself is at its highest expression level? In addition, I was most impressed with artists who perform well with others, hire many collaborators, commission new works from living composers, excel in community outreach, mentor others or actively elevate others.

Nathan Royal is a guitarist, banjoist, arranger, singer and band leader. He leads the fourteen-piece ensemble "The Hot House West Swing Orchestra." The group, established as a non-profit, plays music inspired by swing-era big band and Django Reinhardt style jazz. This was a great example of a group that plays the genre at its highest expression level. Each piece is meticulously arranged for the specific musicians, often by Royal himself.

Megan Simper is a vocalist, composer, and multi-instrumentalist. I found her music rhythmically and harmonically enticing, and she is not afraid to test the boundaries of various folk genres and infuse them with many diverse influences. Simper creates music alongside excellent musicians in her various ensembles; Mama LongLegs, Hoodoo and more. She is also working on a collaboration with ceramic artist Antra Sinha.

Miriam Padilla shined as a collaborator, and as someone who truly elevates her near and greater communities. She is the director of Bomba Marilé, an Afro Puerto Rican Bomba Music & Dance Group. The non-profit organizes workshops, social events, educational activities and performances throughout Utah, while maintaining strong ties with Puerto Rican communities outside of Utah, bringing elders to teach the traditions of Bomba. In addition to being an organizer of such diverse events, Dr. Padilla herself practices Bomba as an accomplished musician and dancer.

Ian Camp is an instrumentalist/vocalist/songwriter/composer. I found the quality of each of these "slashes" to be staggering. Camp is an original. His own compositions swell with wonder and imagination, and he is a voracious practitioner of numerous musical genres. As a collaborator, Camp regularly hires Utah musicians through his own company ArtSound Live Music. The company provides live musicians for venues and events.

Lauren Hunt is a horn player and Assistant Professor of Horn at Utah State University. Whether she is performing as a soloist, chamber musician, or orchestral musician, she does so at the highest level. Dr. Hunt champions music by living composers, mainly women, often commissioning new pieces. She is working towards completing an album with her duo and touring the east coast with a chamber recital.