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MOAB MUSIC FESTIVAL NAMES WINNERS OF COLORADO RIVER COMMISSIONING PROJECT

New Works by Composers with Utah Ties – Maya Miro Johnson and Roydon Tse
– To Be Premiered During 32nd Annual Season



photo Nisha Sondhe

Moab, UT – The Moab Music Festival has made music in dialogue with the mighty Colorado River for 31 seasons. Last season and next, the acclaimed annual festival is paying special homage to its fluid collaborator with themed programs, talks, and screenings, and now, a commissioning project. MMF and its recently-formed Commissioning Club are pleased to announce that two talented young composers with ties to Utah, **Maya Miro Johnson** and **Roydon Tse**, have been selected from a pool of gifted applicants to create new works for chamber ensemble inspired by the Colorado River. Their pieces will be premiered during the 32nd annual festival in September 2024 near, or possibly even *on*, the Colorado.

As the area's lifeblood, the Colorado River is a creative wellspring and spiritual inspiration to all those who visit its banks. It's also an economic powerhouse, providing the foundation for all other aspects of life in the region. Before starting work on their commissions, Johnson and Tse met with MMF's River Consultant **John Weisheit**, Co-Founder of Colorado River Keeper and Living Rivers, who helped

contextualize the River, it's importance, and the challenges it faces. Many MMF concerts take place in red sandstone concert halls carved by the water itself, and honoring the River at this critical juncture is of the utmost importance to the Festival.

Composer, conductor, artist, interrogator, survivor, and activist **Mayo Miro Johnson** grew up in Salt Lake City, and went on to attend the renowned Curtis Institute of Music to study composition, where she is in her fifth year. She has received commissions from the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Copland House, the Sarasota Festival, Ensemble Intercontemporain and more. In 2020 she won both the William Schuman and Carlos Surinach Prizes from the BMI Student Composer Awards in a historical first for institution. She is also the youngest female conducting fellow at Aspen's American Conducting Academy, and served as a cover conductor for the Minnesota Orchestra. A survivor of both a traumatic brain injury and vascular compression syndromes, her experiences with systems of care have led her to reexamine interactions between society and the body, and her work increasingly deals with trauma, alienation, exorcism, and healing. In pain-free moments, Johnson studies Gaga, a movement language developed by Israeli choreographer Ohad Naharin defined by connection to the body and awareness of physical sensation.

Award-winning composer **Roydon Tse** blends artistic traditions from both East and West with a love for the natural world to create lush post-romantic soundscapes. He was born in Hong Kong, studied in the UK and British Columbia, and is now based in Toronto. His wife is a Salt Lake City native, where her family still lives, and the region has become his second home. Named one of the "30 Under 30" hot classical musicians by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), he is currently an artist in residence with the Colorado Wind Ensemble. He has been commissioned by the Philadelphia Orchestra, Toronto Symphony, members of the Paris Opera and La Scala Orchestras, and Hong Kong Philharmonic. Recent works include a composition based on Tang Dynasty poetry that illuminates the natural world, and a chamber opera premiered by the Atlanta Opera in 2022. A dedicated teacher, he works with young composers as a Lead Teaching Artist for the Canadian Opera Company, and with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Community Music Schools of Toronto, and British Columbia's Health Arts Society to expand youth access to music education; he has also taught composition at the University of Toronto and Lunenburg Academy of Music Performance.



The Moab Music Festival has an enviable history of presenting new American music each year, anchored by a Composer-in-Residence. Previously commissioned and featured composers have included Lou Harrison, Lukas Foss, Peter Lieberson, Maratha Redbone, Paul Moravec, Aaron Jay Kernis, Laura

Ortman, Chen Yi, Bright Sheng, John Musto, Dawn Avery, Lowell Liebermann, Clarice Assad, Kenji Bunch, and Timo Andres, among others. To further its commitment to living composers, the Festival formed its Commissioning Club, which in 2024 will commission and premiere four works; learn more about previous commissions [on our website](#).

Help support the creation and presentation of these new works by joining the 2024 Commissioning Club, [learn more here](#).

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