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KYLE RIVERA IS WINNER OF THE FIFTH ANNUAL EMERGING BLACK COMPOSERS PROJECT

As winner of the Michael Morgan Prize, Rivera will receive a \$15,000 commission and mentorship, and his piece will premiere with the San Francisco Symphony during the 2026–27 season

SAN FRANCISCO, CA—The San Francisco Symphony is pleased to announce composer **Kyle Rivera** as the winner of the fifth annual [Emerging Black Composers Project](#) (EBCP) prize. The San Francisco Symphony will give the world premiere of Rivera's commissioned work during the 2026–27 season.

As winner of the Michael Morgan Prize, which was renamed in 2023 in honor of the longtime Oakland Symphony music director, Rivera will receive a \$15,000 commissioning fee, mentorship from EBCP committee members, and resources to workshop his piece with San Francisco Conservatory of Music (SFCM), along with a premiere of the work by the San Francisco Symphony at Davies Symphony Hall.

The Emerging Black Composers Project is administered by the San Francisco Symphony; the San Francisco Conservatory of Music is a supporting partner to the program.

Rivera joins Tyler Taylor, Xavier Muzik, Jens Ibsen, and Trevor Weston as winners of the 10-year project. Additional past prizes have been awarded to Sumi Tonooka, Jonathan Bingham, Shawn Okpebholo, Quenton Xavier Blache, and Nathaniel Heyder.

"When I received the call, I was overcome by a wave of emotion," Rivera said. "Shock, disbelief, excitement, relief. In so many ways, the past year has been incredibly unforgiving. I had reached a low point and felt like all I could do was shout to the stars. These moments remind me how we can never take our voices as artists for granted, especially in the face of those who try to attack, repress, and silence us. Now, it is more important than ever that we are heard."

Born in 1996, Rivera is a Connecticut-based composer currently studying at the Yale School of Music towards a master's in music composition. His music has been performed across the United States and internationally in Russia, Thailand, and China. Past collaborations include the Houston Symphony and Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra. Rivera's interests in linguistics, spirituality, and media all influence the way he creates music.

Rivera was selected as the winner through an anonymous review process overseen by a selection committee led by Emerging Black Composers Project Chair Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser and including SFCM Music Director Edwin Outwater.

"Kyle's music speaks for itself, and I am thrilled that we are able to give him this boost at this point in his career," Bartholomew-Poyser said. "I am excited for what he will produce, and we are looking forward to the mentoring process, equipping Kyle with everything he needs to ensure that his musical voice is heard now and in the future. We were impressed with Kyle's flexibility of range, his evocative texturing, and the manner in which he seamlessly weaves extended techniques into his works. Here, no technique draws attention to itself; everything serves a bigger idea. This is so difficult to do, and he does it so well. His future is bright, and we are thrilled to be a part of it."

"As the project enters its fifth year, the range of compositional voices continues to grow and expand," Outwater said, "Kyle's musical language is confident and unflinching, tackling the big issues in a way that only orchestral music can. His music brings the

listener deep under the surface and face to face with the most important matters of the soul and society. I'm excited for more people to hear him through this project and to work with him in the months ahead."

The Emerging Black Composers Project intends to spotlight early-career Black American composers and their music. It was launched in 2020 with the first-place commission awarded to Trevor Weston in June 2021. The 2025 applicant class was strong and, in addition to Rivera, several talented composers were finalists for the Michael Morgan Prize, including Jasmine Barnes, Kevin Day, Brittany J. Green, Jackson Waters, and Jaylin Vinson.

A call for applications for the sixth annual EBCP Michael Morgan Prize will go out in November.

"With this opportunity," Rivera added, "I feel a deep sense of obligation and empowerment to declare my voice, my identity, and my truth, and it excites me to no end."

The Emerging Black Composers Project is made possible through the generosity of Michèle and Laurence Corash.

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