



SPHERES OF A GENIUS. HONORING CARLA BLEY

A jazz composition competition by JAM MUSIC LAB in cooperation with ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra

Call for Scores / Composition Competition

Spheres of a Genius 2023 – Honoring Carla Bley

A jazz competition by JAM MUSIC LAB University (JMLU) in cooperation with the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra (RSO). The prize-winning work will be premiered on **October 4th 2023** in the Grand Hall of the Konzerthaus Vienna under the direction of Marin Alsop. The concert will be recorded by ORF and broadcast on the O1 program.

RSO and JMLU are continuing their first collaboration from 2017/2018. The composition competition “Spheres of a Genius” was based on the 100th Birthday of the jazz composer and pianist Thelonious Monk. The subsequent competition paid homage to Leonard Bernstein. This third “Spheres of a Genius” event pays tribute to Carla Bley.

Idea and outline of the competition

As a pianist, composer and arranger, Carla Bley first distinguished herself in the 1960’s. She entered the realm of modern creative music – then known as free jazz - producing numerous genre-bending works that stand as touchstones in the development of modern music. Her efforts forged new modes of expression that both reflected and expanded jazz’s conventions.

With the aid of illustrious collaborators – which included Pharoah Sanders, Steve Lacy, George Russell, Steve Swallow, Gary Burton and Charlie Haden - in groups large and small - Bley created a singular voice that continues to inspire forward-thinking artists.

She has shaped generations of music-makers, and her work serves as a model for utilizing jazz’s important innovations in the context of contemporary music. Bley’s work continues to inspire women in jazz to arrange and compose, and to help nurture the expansion of groundbreaking ideas.

The aim of the contest

The task of the composition competition relates to the role of Carla Bley as a composer. The winning piece shall succeed in transferring the **impulses** shaped by her into a demanding musical language of the 21st century.

The special challenge of placing the idioms of jazz in the context of a symphony orchestra should be taken into account.

The submitted composition should embrace her adventurous spirit, utilizing and developing stylistic elements that demonstrate a thorough deliberation of her recorded works. The composer’s aim is to create music showing evidence of inspiration. Innovation and originality will be rewarded.

For much of its development, jazz was a male-dominated genre. Carla Bley made significant contributions leading the way among arrangers, composers and band leaders. Because of her, women now forge creative opportunities and advancements that push the music forward. She is a central figure and an important role model for the growing group of female composers in jazz. (Marcus Ratka)



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Ensemble and instrumentation

The composition must not exceed 12 minutes.

The orchestral composition must not exceed the following instrumentation

Orchestra: 3333 – 4331 – hf – tmp – orchestral percussion (3) – Strings 14-12-10-8-6.

Woodwinds (3333): 3 flutes (inc. opt. Piccolo), 3 oboes / cor anglais, 3 clarinets (inc. bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, 1 contrabassoon

Brass (4331): 4 horns (F), 3 trumpets, 3 trombones (inc. bass trombone), 1 tuba

Harp (1)

Timpani (1)

Orchestral Percussion (3): marimba, vibraphone etc., to be allocated freely

Strings (14-12-10-8-6): 14 first violins, 12 second violins, 10 violas, 8 celli, 6 double basses

Soloists are not provided. The composer will provide the sheet music free of charge.

Jury and selection process

Marin Alsop

Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra (RSO)

Christoph Becher

General Manager, ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra

Bill Dobbins

Jazzpianist, Composer, Professor of Jazz Studies and Contemporary Media at Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester

Marcus Ratka

Composer, Rector of JAM MUSIC LAB, Private University for Jazz and Popular Music, Vienna

The decision of the jury will be announced in writing by e-mail one month after the final submission deadline of phase 2.

Prizes

1st prize: The winning composition will be premiered by the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra in the Grand Hall of the Konzerthaus Vienna on October 4th, 2023 and broadcasted as part of the Ö1 radio program. The prize money is 5,000 EUR.

2nd prize: 3,000 EUR

3rd prize: 2,000 EUR



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Submission mode and selection procedure

The competition will be carried out in two evaluation runs

Phase 1 - Sketch and segment

Phase 1 consists of the submission of a meaningful sketch of the entire work as well as a fully elaborated segment of the score with a duration of 1.5 to 2 minutes.

The following components are required for submission:

- fully completed online application form to be found at www.spheresofagenius.com

Additionally, via e-mail to bley@jammusiclab.com

- a meaningful sketch of the entire work
- a fully completed segment of the score, duration 1,5-2min
- a written abstract of the idea behind the composition, specifics and concepts honoring the guidelines of the competition
- optionally an audio file (Sibelius, Finale etc)
- CV
- a portrait photograph, free to use for promotion purposes related to this competition

The deadline for submission of Phase 1 is **Februar 20th 2023**

3 finalists are selected, who we then invite to continue on to Phase 2.

Phase 2 - Entire composition

Phase 2 consists of the submission of the entire composition in the range of 10 to a maximum of 12 minutes.

Deadline for submission is June 2nd 2023

Other provisions for submission

The competition is international and without age limitation.

All persons who have submitted full application documents in due time are entitled to participate.

The submitted work may not have any prior performances.

Any legal process is excluded.

From now on we recommend that all applicants announce their intended participation via

bley@jammusiclab.com

Please include contact details in order to receive further updates regarding the competition procedure.

The submission documents must be submitted electronically to: **bley@jammusiclab.com**