San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Band Announces Roger Zare as First Recipient for its BIPOC Commission Initiative

The San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Band (SFLGFB) is proud to announce the selection of composer Roger Zare as the recipient of the inaugural SFLGFB BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Color) Commission Program. Zare’s composition, *Awakening*, is set to debut in May 2023 and was selected following a nationwide request for proposal process.

First announced in 2020, the SFLGFB BIPOC Commission Program was created to increase the diversity of voices composing music for Wind Band. The Program was largely funded through generous individual donations made at the organization’s annual Dance-Along Nutcracker®, with nearly 700 individuals donating a median amount of $20 each.

“We are extremely thankful to all of our supporters for helping to fund this commissioning program so quickly,” said SFLGFB President Brandon Moss. “In the wake of the George Floyd shooting, as well as the violence perpetrated against the Asian American and Pacific Islander community nationwide, including in our home of San Francisco, SFLGFB needed to reaffirm our solidarity with the BIPOC population.”

SFLGFB Concert Band Artistic Director Pete Nowlen added, “The LGBTQ+ and the BIPOC communities share a history of abuse and repression. As the world’s first LGBTQ+ musical organization and the Official Band of San Francisco, we must confront this important social justice issue through what we do — music — particularly at this time when all of our freedoms are under renewed attack.”

Following a nationwide search, the selection committee chose Zare as the best composer to encapsulate our message of solidarity, justice, and hope. Said Zare, “the more visible any group of traditionally oppressed people can be at doing something positive like creating beautiful music, the more it helps to increase everyone else’s acceptance of who we are. As a Chinese-American person, I am 100% an ally to all who society has ever tried to put down.”

An award winning composer, Zare wrote his first composition for string orchestra at age 14 and earned degrees in music composition from the University of Southern California, Peabody Conservatory, and the University of Michigan. He has worked with numerous musicians and ensembles, including the Minnesota Orchestra, the American Composers Orchestra, and violinist Cho-Liang Lin. Currently, Zare is serving as a visiting assistant professor of music in the Hayes School of Music at Appalachian State University.
Roger Zare’s proposed work, *Awakening*, is built around the moment a person realizes and embraces their identity. “Society has forever oppressed those who do not conform to societal norms and continues to do so today,” described Zare. “Because of this, I know many people who have spent much of their lives behaving like someone other than who they truly are, often finding little happiness in their forced actions and habits. Those who continuously feel pressure to suppress their identity can’t truly be honest to the world and wither away inside, never meeting their potential. It is a powerful moment when one’s identity is awakened and they are finally able to express themselves as they truly are, and find their true community.”

This new commissioned work, *Awakening*, will have its world premiere performed by the San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Band at its concert in May 2023, and will be available for performance by wind bands around the world starting in 2024.

To learn more about Roger Zare, visit [www.rogerzare.com/](http://www.rogerzare.com/)

To learn more about the San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Band — The Official Band of San Francisco, visit [www.sflgfb.org](http://www.sflgfb.org)

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