Joyful Abundance 2028 Guidelines: Poets

Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia presents Joyful Abundance: Emerging Artist Commissioning Award. Emerging poets and creative writers in the Greater Philadelphia area are invited to apply. Applications open November 1, 2026, and are due January 31, 2027. There is no application fee.

About Joyful Abundance

In honor of its 150th anniversary in 2024 and the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 2026, Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia (MCP) launched the *Joyful Abundance: Emerging Artist Commissioning Award*. Designed to support emerging creative artists in the Greater Philadelphia area, MCP provided commission awards to five composer and poet teams:

- **Leigha Amick**, *What Now*, poem by Amy Beth Sisson
- **Adelina DiGiacomo**, *Welcome Home*, poem by Haley Storm Evans
- **Baldwin Giang**, *we are made foreign*, poem by Evan Wang
- **Barbara Lewandowski**, *A Fern Uprising*, poem by Naila Francis
- **Ted Babcock**, *Electric Bloom*, poem by Octavia McBride-Ahebee

In coordination with ArtPhilly's *What Now?* Festival, MCP gave the world premieres of these works to critical acclaim in June 2026. (Read poet Octavia McBride-Ahebee's reflection on the event.)

In May 2028, Joyful Abundance will return!

What's the same

Composers and poets apply separately and are paired by an expert panel of adjudicators. Each emerging composer/poet team then creates a new choral work of approximately 3–5 minutes for chorus and one additional instrument. Each pair receives mentoring from professional composers and poets in the Philadelphia region.

What's new

MCP is also inviting applications from emerging performing artists. Each composer/poet team will be paired with an emerging Philadelphia instrumentalist or vocalist, forming a trio. The performer will teach the team about their instrument or voice, then join Mendelssohn Chorus for the world premiere in Spring 2028.

Hoped-for outcomes

Joyful Abundance aims to create new choral music by emerging Philadelphia-area composers and poets for the benefit of the wider music profession. Along the way, it forges new artistic partnerships among the region's emerging poets, composers, and performing artists, and shines a spotlight on their perspectives, stories, creativity, and accomplishments. The program also adds to Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia's rich history of commissions, which includes Julia Wolfe's 2015 Pulitzer Prize-winning *Anthracite Fields*, and builds on the momentum of its 2026 launch.

What you'll receive

Each selected composer/poet team receives:

- A world premiere of the new choral work by Mendelssohn Chorus of Philadelphia in Spring 2028
- Up to three (3) mentoring sessions with renowned Philadelphia-area professional composers and poets, to prepare the team for the collaborative commissioning project
- Individual sessions with MCP's Artistic Director and Conductor, acclaimed composer Dominick DiOrio, winner of The American Prize in both Choral Composition (2014) and Choral Performance (2019, with NOTUS)
- A recording of the world premiere for the team's personal use, to help market their work for future opportunities
- A cash prize of **$1,000 each** to the composer and the poet, paid upon receipt of the finished score

Who should apply

We welcome applications from adult emerging artists (18 years or older) of all levels. That includes those beginning their creative journey, those who have completed university degrees and begun their professional careers, and those coming to artistic work for the first time later in life or returning after a hiatus. The panel will judge each submission in light of the artist's own level of experience and study, and we hope to represent a broad range of ages in the final selection.

- **Creative writers:** you don't have to write poetry primarily; all creative writers are invited to apply.
- **Region:** applicants should live in the Greater Philadelphia area: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia counties in Pennsylvania; Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Mercer, and Salem counties in New Jersey; and New Castle County in Delaware.
- **Fee:** there is no application fee.

Application materials

☐ **Short biography** (approx. 200–300 words) briefly describing your creative and artistic background, values, and story
☐ **Headshot**: high resolution and suitable for printing; it does not have to be formal
☐ **Two to three (2–3) representative samples** of your creative work. These could include:
    ☐ Written poems (unpublished manuscripts are acceptable)
    ☐ Spoken word performances
    ☐ Prose
    ☐ Found texts or collaborative work
    ☐ Other non-traditional submissions, for example evidence of collaborative partnerships or performances, or recordings of your text set to music
☐ **One letter of recommendation** from an artistic partner or mentor familiar with your work
☐ **Goals statement** (1–2 paragraphs) on how and why Joyful Abundance would align with your creative goals and support your aspirations as an emerging artist in the Greater Philadelphia area
☐ **Dream statement** (approx. 100–150 words) describing your initial ideas for the commission, meaning what you hope to create. It will help the panel pair you with your creative partners.

Evidence of musical collaboration is not required, but it is a plus.

Timeline

Date	Milestone
November 1, 2026	Application portal opens
November–December 2026	Information sessions
January 31, 2027	**Applications due**
March 1, 2027	Selected composers, poets, and performing artists notified and paired into trios by the adjudicators
March 15, 2027	Deadline to accept the award
April 15, 2027	Public announcement of award winners
April–July 2027	**Poets' working period**: poems created
July–November 2027	Composers' working period: music created; lessons, mentoring sessions, and meetings with the performing artist take place
November 15, 2027	Draft scores due to MCP
December 1, 2027	MCP provides suggested edits or revisions, if applicable
January 5, 2028	Final scores due to MCP
Spring 2028	Rehearsals begin
May 2028	World premieres

How to apply

Apply online at mcchorus.org/joyful-abundance once the portal opens on November 1, 2026. Applications are due **January 31, 2027**. Information session dates will be posted on the same page.

Contact

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