Poetry & Music Project 21/22
Call for Submissions

Students in grades K-12 from Nebraska and Iowa are invited to submit works of poetry on the theme Exploring Natural Beauty. Selected poems will be set to music and premiered during a public concert in May 2022.

From the pool of submissions, composers will select poems to set to music. This is not a contest, as the composers will select poems based on what inspires them. The selected poets will have the opportunity to participate with the composer in a workshop to further develop the piece with the composer and musicians, participating in the behind-the-scenes process. The completed works will be performed in concert by local artists including Opera Omaha’s Holland Community Opera Fellows.

This year’s themes are inspired by artist Adam Larsen’s immersive installation piece Nebraska Flatwater which explores the natural beauty of Nebraska from a different perspective. Nebraska Flatwater will be installed at Gallery 1516 in Spring 2022, and selected songs will be included in a special performance at the gallery.

Opera Omaha’s Poetry & Music Project is produced in partnership with Nebraska Writers Collective.

Themes for Poetry Submissions
- Passage of Time
- Freedom
- Reclamation
- Solace
- Connectedness

Suggested Writing Prompts

Passage of Time
How time changes us all.

A blade of grass has a life span around 40 days while a Sequoia tree can live more than 3,000 years. Write a poem in which you live the life cycle of some element of nature, maybe you are a frog or a tree or a piece of fruit or a mountain. Describe all the things you see, how the seasons effect your view, how things shift and shape over time.

For inspiration, consider this poem by John Mark Green:
"Rebellious leaves
going out
in a blaze of glory,
setting trees aflame
in riotous color.
Reluctant surrender
to rumors
of coming winter."
Freedom
The beauty of openness in nature.

Read this poem “Flying Inside Your Own Body” by Margaret Atwood.
Imagine you could fly, how would you do it? Where would you go? What would you see? Now write a poem in which you are a gust of wind. Show us what things you decide to move (leaves in a tree, a flag, a child’s kite) and tell us the places you would roam if you were bound by nothing.

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Reclamation
The things we do, and build, will last for a time but nature will last forever.

In several abandoned places, nature has taken back over. Buildings have been covered in greenery and animals have made homes out of places people have left. Write a poem about human vs nature interactions, about the process of disturbing nature to build things only to leave them when they no longer serve a purpose, think about this process and examine the way that “nature always wins”. For more inspiration check out: “Nature Will Reclaim” by Trina Johnson.

Alternately, peruse this poem, “this beginning may have always meant this end” by Camille T. Dungy. Think about the destructive aspects of nature and how these acts are, in essence, nature cleansing itself. Consider the rebirth that happens after a forest fire or the mountains that have been built by earthquakes over the millennia. Write a poem in which you are a phoenix rising from the ashes of destruction done by a natural phenomenon and how there is a form of beauty there.

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Solace
Finding a sense of peace that only the outdoors can provide.

May Sarton wrote: “Loneliness is the poverty of self, Solitude is the richness of self”

Being alone doesn’t always mean being lonely. Write a poem in which your companions aren’t people but the things you find when you are alone outside. What do you talk about with them? How do they comfort you? What do you learn from being in their presence? How are you better/worse for spending time with these things you find in nature?

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Connectedness
Realizing that we are part of a larger ecosystem than ourselves.

Joy Harjo brilliantly explains how we all come from the same earth in this poem “Remember.” Write a poem in which you are a leaf on a tree. Tell us who are the other leaves, who are the branches that hold you up and how do they do so? What is the trunk that forms the backbone of your existence? Explore how your tree is part of a larger orchard or forest and how each tree depends on one another.

Alternatively, take a look at “Celebrating Differences” by Uma Nair. Write a poem that explores the differences that make nature great, there are hundreds of thousands of different kinds of flowers with no one being better or worse just all evolving differently based on time and place. Look at how plants all depend on the same things, but they all see the world from different angles. Have fun with the diversity that makes nature great.

Writing Workshops

Opera Omaha and Nebraska Writers Collective offer virtual writing workshops focused on writing for music. Facilitated by Nebraska Writers Collective Teaching Artists, these workshops are approximately 1 hour in length but can be adjusted to fit within a class period. Workshops will also be adapted to student grade level. Workshops are offered virtually, or in-person for schools within a 40-minute driving radius of Omaha or Lincoln.

Teachers interested in scheduling a workshop can register at operaomaha.org/poetry

There will also be a virtual writing workshop open to any student, more information and registration at operaomaha.org/poetry
Poetry Book

All submitted poems will be printed in the Poetry & Music Project book which will be distributed to all poets, teachers, concert audience, and available online.

Project Timeline

- **September 2021**: Submissions Open
- **October & November 2021**: Writing Workshops
- **November 2021**: Submission Deadline
- **December 2021**: Composers Select Poems
- **January 2022**: Poets of Selected Pieces Notified, Composers Writing Time
- **March 2022**: Music Workshop with Composers and Poets of the Selected Pieces
- **April 2022**: Composers Submit Final Pieces
- **May 2022**: Poetry & Music Project Concert Performance

Submission Guidelines

- Open to All K-12 Students in Nebraska and Iowa
- Poems should be on the themes, but do not need to use suggested prompts
- Students may submit up to 2 poems
- All work must be original
- Poems should be in PDF or Word file format
- Poems may be in any structure, but should be no more than 1 page in length
- Poems must be submitted with signed submission form

Submission Instructions

Email Poem(s) and completed signed submission form to poetry@operaomaha.org

Submission Deadline: Tuesday, November 30, 2021

For More Information Visit OPERAOMAHA.ORG/POETRY

Contact

Lauren Medici, Opera Omaha Director of Engagement Programs, LMedici@operaomaha.org
Opera Omaha Poetry & Music Project Submission Form

FOR STUDENT AND PARENT: SIGNATURES NEEDED

Poet Name: ________________________________

Poet's Contact Information

Email: ___________________________ Phone:_____________________

Mailing Address:__________________________________________

Poet’s School: _______________________ Grade: _____ School’s County: __________ State: ________

Poet’s Teacher’s Name: ______________ Teacher’s Email (optional): __________________________

Are you a participant in Nebraska Writers Collective’s Louder Than a Bomb Program? □Yes □No
Did you participate in a Nebraska Writers Collective writing workshop? □Yes □No

Poet’s Audio/Video release, Opera Omaha Poetry & Music Project

1. In consideration of my submission to Opera Omaha and Nebraska Writers Collective (NWC) Poetry & Music Project “Project”, without compensation, I hereby grant permission to Opera Omaha and NWC to capture the Project, my physical likeness, voice and other sound, and the work created by me for this Project, including full length performances, by way of photography, audio, audio/video, film, other electronic media, or by any other mechanical, magnetic, or digital means during the rehearsals, performances, recording sessions, and any other events related to the Project. I grant full license to Opera Omaha, NWC, and the Composer to use such photographs and recordings for archival, educational, documentary, fundraising, or publicity purposes through the medium of print, film, television, radio or digital media, internet, webcast, podcast, or any other kind of viewing screen including images created on film, video tape, or any other form of mechanical electric distribution. If any of my performance(s) or portions thereof, in either audio or visual format (or both), appear in Opera Omaha and/or NWC material produced for educational, or promotional use, as additional consideration I will receive one (1) copy of said material, at no cost to me other than the cost of shipping and handling in delivering the material to me. Opera Omaha, and/or NWC, archival or promotional footage or other materials may also be made available to me for a reasonable duplication fee and the cost of shipping and handling, subject to the terms and restrictions of all relevant union, licensing, fee and lease agreements.

2. I grant full license and rights to Opera Omaha and NWC to use my work for performances of the Project presented before a live audience under the control, license, or assignment of Opera Omaha and NWC pursuant to the terms and conditions set forth in this Agreement. Except for the limited rights granted to Opera Omaha and NWC herein, Poet retains all rights in the original works (the “Poem”), including copyright and the performance rights in future performances of the Poem other than the performance(s) for the Project.

3. If my Poem is selected to be set to music, I agree to grant full license and rights to the Composer to use my Poem for performances of their completed composition for this Project and other future performances of the Composer’s Work. The Composer retains all rights in the original Composition of my Poem set to music, including copyright and the performance rights in future performances of the Work.

4. I hereby represent and attest that the Poem I submitted is entirely my own, original material, unless I clearly indicate otherwise and give full and accurate attribution to any material that I do not hold all interest in and to, but which I have permission to use. I agree not to submit any Poem or other material which is not original, which I do not hold these rights in and to, or which I have not so attributed. I shall be responsible for ensuring and affirming to Opera Omaha and NWC that the Poem does not infringe on any existing copyright.

5. I further agree that I, Poet (as well as my heirs, assigns or other representatives), will not make any claim or take any action against Opera Omaha and NWC (including all its representatives of any kind) including but not limited to a claim or action based on privacy or publicity rights, or copyright, in connection with Opera Omaha’s and NWC’s use of my likeness or my performance as agreed to herein. Poet hereby releases Opera Omaha and NWC (including all its representatives of any kind), from and against any and all claims, demands, actions, causes of action in law or equity, and/or other liabilities, including costs and expenses associated therewith, whether now known or unknown, anticipated or unanticipated which I ever had, now have, or may in the future have arising out of or in connection with Opera Omaha and/or NWC use of my Poem or performance as agreed to herein.

6. I have read the foregoing and fully understand its meaning and effects on me, and intending to agree to these terms and be legally bound, I have signed below. If I am not nineteen (19) years of age on the date this release is signed, my parent or legal guardian has also signed below, representing their understanding of their agreement to the terms set out above in this release:

___________________________________________    __________________________
Signature of Poet          Date

___________________________________________    __________________________
Signature of Parent or Guardian  Date

Printed Name                 Printed Name