

TO: DMA, PhD, and first-year masters students
CC: Department Chairs and Program Directors
FROM: ESM Graduate Studies Office
RE: 2026 Presser Graduate Music Award

For the thirty-seventh consecutive year, Eastman is one of a select group of U.S. music schools invited to nominate a graduate student for the Presser Graduate Music Award. This award carries a one-time stipend of \$10,000 to the individual and is **intended to encourage and support the advanced education and career of truly exceptional graduate music students.**

We are soliciting applications for the 2026 Presser Graduate Music Award from interested and highly qualified students. All applications must be approved and ranked by department chairs/program directors and sent to the ESM Graduate Studies Office by **noon on Friday, December 5, 2025.**

About the Award

The Presser Foundation seeks proposals that are both imaginative and practical, demonstrating how the Award will significantly advance the student's scholarly enrichment and musical development. Projects should offer opportunities not typically provided in a university or conservatory setting.

Examples of eligible activities include:

- Research, creative, or performance projects with clear professional impact.
- Study abroad, independent artistic projects, or specialized training.
- Professional auditions, short-term enrollments (e.g., Aspen, Tanglewood), or comparable enrichment opportunities.

Projects must be completed within the academic year following receipt of the Award, with a final report due to the Foundation. Please note that expenses related to applying to or auditioning for admission to further graduate study are **not eligible**.

Application Materials

By **December 5, 2025**, applicants must submit:

- A written statement/project proposal (2 pages maximum), including:
- A description of how the Award will be used and how it will advance the student's professional development.
- A project budget accounting for the \$10,000 (taxable) stipend.
- Confirmation that the project can be completed by May 2027, with a final report due by June 2027.
- Information on any prior experience with or previous awards from The Presser Foundation.
- **Applicants must also send their proposal to their department chair.** The chair must provide a written endorsement to the Graduate Office, ranking multiple applicants if applicable. Departmental endorsements are due by Friday, December 5, 2025.
- Applications and endorsement letters should be sent to Deanna Phillips at dphillips@esm.rochester.edu.
- From these applications, the Graduate Award Committee will select Eastman's nominee. Following Eastman's review, the nominee will work with Jason Roberts, Associate Director of Foundation Relations, to finalize the proposal for submission to the Presser Foundation by its **February 15, 2026** deadline. Final approval rests with the Foundation.

Each applicant for the Award must be a returning graduate student in 2026-2027.

EASTMAN PRESSER GRADUATE MUSIC AWARD WINNERS

Tamara Levitz (1989)

Dissertation research in Europe during the summer of 1989.

Anthony Padilla (1990)

Study and performance in Moscow and Victoria, B.C., during the summer of 1990.

Mary Frandsen (1991)

Dissertation research in Europe during the summer of 1991.

Phillip Simms (1992)

Studies during 1992-1993 of the music of Satie in Rochester, Ithaca, and Paris.

Michael Pisani (1993)

Dissertation research in various parts of the U.S. during 1993-1994.

Robert Eidschun (1994)

Serving as a conductor of Present Music (a new music ensemble) for preparation in Milwaukee and presentation in Turkey of concerts including one of his pieces.

John Sheridan (1995)

Research in Sweden and Germany on the works of Gottlieb Nittau and attendance to the Symposium Hamburg-Skandinavia, as well as publication costs attendant to dissemination of the results of his Nittau research.

Susan Chodorow (1996)

Dissertation research on the genesis and production of Kurt Weill and Franz Werfel's musical drama, *The Eternal Road*, and to gather materials with which to reconstruct the score of the New York Production.

Stanley Pelkey (1997)

Research in the United Kingdom during July and August 1997 to complete studying, transcribing and editing keyboard and orchestral music by the English composer, Samuel Wesley. When editions of Wesley's eight violin concertos are complete, they will be recorded. Eastman students will perform several of the violin concertos in Rochester during 1997-98.

Stephen Benham (1998)

Research and teaching in the Ukraine during August 1998 to develop a deeper and broader understanding of music education, as it is practiced in the Ukraine, for the purpose of gaining insight into the process of developing new, or revitalizing existing, music education programs.

Elizabeth Wells (1999)

Dissertation research on Leonard Bernstein's "*West Side Story*: Perspectives on a Great American Musical." Archival, documentary, and oral history research will explore *West Side Story* as an embodiment of American culture.

Randall Hall (2000)

Research into the works and aesthetics of the mid-20th century Italian composer, Giacinto Scelsi to gain a more complete understanding of his musical aesthetics and to explore his use of improvisation as the genesis of formal composition. The results of the research will be shared through articles and analyses, performances, and workshops on improvisation and contemporary techniques.

Amy Wlodarski (2001)

Research on the problematics and ambiguities of history, memory, and Jewish identity in musical works commemorating the Holocaust at the International School for Holocaust Studies at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem during summer 2001. The knowledge and pedagogical training received will be used to preserve the legacy of the Holocaust through education and outreach programs.

Thomas Rosenkranz (2002)

Research on the piano music of Olivier Messiaen with his wife, the pianist Yvonne Loriod, in Paris during January-March 2003.

Seth Brodsky (2003)

Research on the manuscripts of Luciano Berio, Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Helmut Lachenmann, György Ligeti, and Wolfgang Rihm at the Sacher Stiftung in Basel, Switzerland.

J. Daniel Jenkins (2004)

Dissertation research in Vienna, Austria, New York City, and Washington, D.C. on the vocal music of Arnold Schoenberg.

Nathan Simington (2005)

Research in Romania on the compositions of Georges Enescu.

Paul Miller (2006)

Dissertation research on Stockhausen *Lichter-Wasser* and attend Stockhausen Festival in Kürten As well as the biannual International Vacation Courses in New Music in Darmstadt.

John Koslovsky (2007)

Dissertation research in New York City – cataloguing the Felix Salzer Collection at the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts (Music Division).

Randall Harlow (2008)

Research on the organ as a cultural artifact in Greenland Society.

EASTMAN PRESSER GRADUATE MUSIC AWARD WINNERS, CONTINUED

Katherine Hutchings (2009)

Study manuscripts in Venice, Florence, and Padua related to her research on her dissertation, “Mediating Ancients and Moderns, Humanists and Scholastics: Johannes Ciconia’s *Nova musica* and its Cultural Contexts.”

Julie Beauregard (2010)

Field study in Ghana, West Africa at the Dagara Music and Arts Center to enhance her studies in the doctoral program in Music Education and master’s program in Ethnomusicology.

Anyango Yarbo-Davenport (2011)

Research on a left-hand technique for violinists, based on orthopedics, working in conjunction with orthopedists from the Cleveland Clinic and the Finnish Medical Society for Performing Musicians in Helsinki, Finland.

John Liberatore (2012)

Private study with Japanese composer Jo Kondo at Tokyo University of Arts.

Sarah Fuchs Sampson (2013)

Archival research in Paris, London, and Toulouse to study opera pedagogy, performance, and production.

Aaron Grant (2014)

Archival research at several European libraries to study Schubert’s sonatas and unfinished works.

Aristea Mellos (2015)

Working in Samos, Greece on her Ritsos Project: a festival uniting Greek actors and artists along with Eastman performers and composers, celebrating the artistic legacy of one of Greece’s foremost poets, Yannis Ritsos.

Samuel Bivens (2016)

Pursuing Wagner source study in Bayreuth and in Würzburg.

Derek Remeš (2017)

Studied with renowned scholars Ludwig Holtmeier and Felix Diergarten, in Freiburg, Germany in preparation for the publication of a two-volume book on the figured-bass chorale tradition of J.S. Bach.

Alexis VanZalen (2018)

Archival research in France as well as visits to many important French baroque organs that remain in working condition today.

Jane Sylvester (2019)

Archival research on *verismo* throughout libraries in Milan, Turin, Florence, and Lucca.

Austin Richey (2020)

Conduct public humanities workshops on the history of black American music in the city of Detroit.

Kyrsten Chambers Jones (2021)

Research and performance project involving the songs of black British composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.

Reginald Bowens (2022)

Arranging projects in Sacred Jazz with notable jazz composers and performers across the U.S.

Ruixue Hu (2023)

Developing a new line of research into the guqin (a Chinese instrument resembling the zither) and its music.

Paul David Flood (2024)

Innovative ethnographic research in Malmö, Sweden into the cultural significance of the Eurovision Song Contest, and the cultural uses of popular music in general.

Chenxin Han (2025)

Creating an open web resource of Children’s Songs of Chinese Origin for educational purposes.