

Chamber  
QUEER



# This Is the Way That You Are

Friday, October 29, 2021 | 7:30 PM

Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art

## ChamberQUEER

Jules Biber, *cello*

Danielle Buonaiuto, *voice*

Sydnee Drake Peterson, *production manager*

MaKayla McDonald, *voice*

Grey McMurray, *guitar*

Brian Mummert, *voice*

Rebecca Wu-Norman, *speaker*

Andrew Yee, *cello*

Rohan Zhou-Lee, *trumpet*

Eli and other selections

Joy Boy

This Is The Way That You Are

It will look like you

Arthur Russell

Julius Eastman

Andrew Yee

Michael Genese

Improvisations by Grey McMurray

*ChamberQUEER gratefully acknowledges the support of the  
Leslie-Lohman Museum in presenting this event.*

*Support also provided by the City Artist Corps Grant  
and Brooklyn Arts Fund.*

## PROGRAM NOTES

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As we process everything our community has been through (and continues to go through) over the past couple of years, the question in our minds is always, "How do we meet this moment?" How do we serve the community, and its urgent needs, through art?

Protest is in itself an art, and, in being enacted in public and in the physical world – with bodies and voices – it can also occur through art. Whether or not the pieces we have assembled tonight were written expressly as a form of protest, they contain resistance within them. Michael Genese's new work, "It Will Look Like You", takes as its text five activists' manifesto-like statements of their visions of liberation. At the other end of the spectrum – from theatre of oppression to theatre of the absurd – Andrew Yee uses transcripts from episodes of "Tranny Surprise" on Jerry Springer to consider what it means to be defined by others' preconceptions and prejudices around gender, transness, and identity – and what it means to be free of them. We are so excited to be able to premiere these two new pieces tonight, which both provide visionary characterizations of what liberation looks like for the queer community in the 21st century, complemented wonderfully by OMNISCIENT, a gorgeous, multifarious exhibit exploring visual languages of queer culture and identity formation.

We also explore music of our New York predecessors in this program. Arthur Russell and Julius Eastman occupied the same space in downtown queer experimental music in the 80s, and putting their work in dialogue lets us peek back in time, to another era in which queer musicians were making music about their politics in a highly-charged milieu. How has the foundation they laid brought us to where we are today, in the same city, dealing with many of the same concerns? Grey McMurray's signature guitar/vocal improvisational style – ambient but charged, observational while also critical – creates the connective tissue that allows us to slip back and forth among past, present, and future.

The program has come about through much reflection and discussion on the part of the artists involved, which is a model for curation that ChamberQUEER feels to be connected to these ideas of liberation and subjectivity. What do we each have to say about the themes we are considering, and how do our perspectives build on each other, converse with each other, and become part of a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts? How can we always be striving for art that helps us see ourselves, heal ourselves, and grow?

Rebecca Wu-Norman's simple yet powerful statement offers a standard for all our collective efforts for liberation in politics, art, and life, which avoids seeming idealistic by being utterly true: "It will look like you. It will look like me. It looks like the times when we are free together."

Danielle Buonaiuto

### It will look like you

This work was created by six people, brought together by 2020's Stonewall Protests. The five authors of the text all answered the same question: "What does liberation look like to you?"

The music begins in a nebulous, disparate place, that slowly barrels forward into cohesion and newly found consciousness, accompanied by text from Qween Jean. The second movement drives forward in proclamation of self-expression without explanation, with text by Neptunite Roa. Thirdly and from a place of exhaustion comes a mantra from Rohan Zhou-Lee: "when the colonial state collapses, when we have learned to truly take care of each other, we will not rest because we have to fight again. We will rest because we truly can." Calling on the fact that it is effortless to recreate systemic, oppressive power structures after their collapse if we deny ourselves of the necessary internal work.

The title of this piece, "It will look like you," comes from the fourth movement's text by Rebecca Wu-Norman, as a reminder to break cycles of consumption as the power is already in our hands. These 12 walls of harmony that waterfall down and crescendo forward might invoke images of seemingly isolated movements throughout our history (Indigenous sovereignty in the Americas, Haiti, the Philippines, South Africa, Palestine, Puerto Rico), slowly conglomerating into a picture of interconnected, intersectional resistance, only if we begin to truly see ourselves involved in the struggles of others. Even in this performance space, we are literally asked to be spectators, watch others do something in front of us, but we are the only ones who will grant ourselves liberation.

*We are used to [spectacles] in which the characters make the revolution on stage, and the spectators in their seats feel themselves to be triumphant revolutionaries. 'Why make a revolution in reality if we have already made it in the theater?' [...] Instead of taking something away from the spectator, evoke in them a desire to practice in reality [an] act he has rehearsed for in the theater. The practice of these theatrical forms creates a sort of uneasy sense of incompleteness that seeks fulfillment through real action.*

–Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*

The fifth and final movement, with text by Shawn Batey, elaborates on the dance of simultaneously liberating the self and liberating the collective. As the music moves through gestural walking, pacing, struggling, rising, we end in the high-range musical space where we began, more intentional, enlightened, and aware.

If someone were to hit "repeat" on the entire piece, we could acknowledge that these five ideas of liberation exist in a constant cycle:

1. Cohesion, 2. Understanding of the self, 3. Understanding systems,
4. Making connections and gathering impetus, and 5. Maintaining awareness

and holding space for others. These conversations move in something like an upward spiral, constantly and non-linearly interrogated and shaped. Toni Morrison says, "The function of freedom is to free someone else," and as our internal and external liberatory journeys continue to expand, space must be made for those who still need to be brought into the fold, emphasizing that liberation must be a constant practice, not a one-time (musical) journey.

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## TEXTS

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### **Eli (Arthur Russell)**

Eli, Eli, Eli

Eli, Eli, Eli

A simple dog

With ears and nose

Eli, Eli, Eli

I don't know why nobody likes him

There's some people trying to put him away

When he comes up to them

They always say "Go away"

"Go away, please take him home"

"Make him stay"

Eli, Eli, Eli

Eli, Eli, Eli

Several times I've tried to tell him

"Please don't make them say that"

But he won't listen to me

Sometimes I pray that there could be more between us

But some people never are satisfied

Eli, Eli, Eli

Eli, Eli, Eli

### **This Is The Way That You Are – Andrew Yee, Desiree LaVecchia, and Jerry Springer Show transcripts**

Maybe things

Maybe things are different for me...

This is the way that you are

Baritone: I have something I have wanted to tell you

I was born a man

Soprano: I should beat your ass down

Baritone: Baby I'm still the same person  
I don't know why you are surprised  
I could be your wife

Soprano: You stay away from me  
You're a man? No. I'm not gay.  
I told you my secrets  
That was your chance  
That was your chance to tell me your flaws

This is the way that you are

You are  
You are loved  
Different is beautiful

**It will look like you – texts by various authors**

*"What does liberation look like to you?"*

**I.**

Liberation Is A World Without Tribulations  
Liberation will feel a sweet lullaby!  
A Song of love and freedom  
Where Racism Is no problem

-Queen Jean

**II.**

Liberation is when you are equals with those who have privilege over you.  
You have just as much a say as they do in various matters.  
You are able to dress how you want, when you want, with no explanation  
needed.  
Liberation is when the world finally gets over itself and lets you be authentic  
to yourself.

-Neptunite Roa

**III.**

Liberation will feel like unadulterated rest.  
When the colonial state collapses,  
when we have learned to truly take care of each other,  
we will not rest because we have to fight again,  
we will rest because we truly can.

-Rohan Zhou-Lee

**IV.**

Liberation looks like...

The transcendence of a value system that reduces life's cardinal virtue to transactional worth. It is being able to show up in the world without predetermined valuation based on capital, our ability to produce, exploit and dominate others; being what defines what is 'good' and meaningful about our existence. It is being free from the shackles of a globalized, capitalist, imperialist, white supremacist, patriarchal, ableist, ageist, homophobic and transphobic system. A system with the intrinsic inevitability that many of us must suffer and die so a very small few white, heterosexual, cisgendered men can hoard and rule. It is the eradication of the structures which result in men on horseback whipping Haitians seeking refuge from catastrophe, who were crossing back over a white-man-made border, to bring food to their children in an encampment under a bridge and the subsequent 'disappearing' of those people. It is putting an end to what makes it 'acceptable' for us to invade other people's land, like we did in Afghanistan for 20+ years, decimate it, and then leave it in the hands of a totalitarian terrorist sect with no regard for women as full human beings. It is the process of uplifting ourselves from the depravity of human's ability to lose themselves, so much as to lose their whole humanity. This is a white-man-made creation NOT destiny.

Liberation looks like the embrace of fluidity. It is the rejection of scarcity. It is the openness to spontaneity, kindness, curiosity, multiplicity and dynamism and a mentality that is the embodiment of love. It is the understanding that we are not the worst of our deeds nor the best, but that there is a fullness and wholeness that exists in the complexity and contradictory nature of life. Liberation is not the absence of hardship but rather a system of shared values and responses that allow meaning to evolve freely, change, morph and transform on a continuum. It is the rejection of violence. Liberation is not static. It is a love response mechanism. It is a process, which we must continually define. It is both the personal and collective harmonizing and striking balance with each other, the environment and the whole of existence.

We must be careful not to confuse liberation with a utopian gaze that always places it just beyond our reach. It is ours. It is all around us in the luminous moments when we are free; when we are here with each other in a way that is authentic, and real and of the moment. It will look like you. It will look like me. It looks like the times when we are free together. Liberation looks like the expansiveness of true and genuine LOVE.

–Rebecca Wu-Norman

**V.**

Liberation is ... when we ALL are FREE

free from chains locked in a system that judges you based on your skin color, expression, and identity.

Liberation is knowing your past does not determine your future.



Liberation is JOY.  
It is expression without hesitation.  
It is empowerment.

Liberation is... standing up for another, knowing your collective power, and owning no fear from systems of oppression.

Liberation is breaking free from internal battles with yourself and affirming you are in control of your destiny.

-Shawn Batey

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## ARTISTS

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**Shawn Batey** is an activist and visual artist based in New York City. Her works center around Black culture, history, and environment. Shawn is the curator of Capture the Movement, a photo exhibit spotlighting & amplifying the work of Black Photographers covering the Black Lives Matter Movement. You can find her documentary, "Changing Face of Harlem," on Kweli.tv. <https://www.capturethemovement.org/> @capturethemovementnyc



**Jules Biber** is a cellist, educator and musical curator based in Brooklyn, NY. An accomplished chamber musician and soloist, Jules' versatility in early, standard and modern repertoire, as well as non-classical styles, makes her sought-after for a variety of high-profile concerts and recording projects, and her deep commitment to inclusive community has made her one of the city's progressive curators of classical music spaces. [julesbiber.com](http://julesbiber.com)



**Danielle Buonaiuto** is driven by community, compassion, and access, whether she is singing or running the show. A co-founder of ChamberQUEER, they are also the manager of TENET Vocal Artists' Mentorship Program, a Teaching Artist with the Met Guild, and a PhD candidate at CUNY Graduate Center. They can be seen on stages all over NYC from the Met to a porch in Ditmas Park, and as one half of cello/soprano project Duo Calisto. Danielle's album "Marfa Songs" is out on Starkland. [www.daniellebuonaiuto.com](http://www.daniellebuonaiuto.com)

**Sydnee Drake Peterson.** NYC: *Night's Dream, Throughoutiveness, Stupid Fucking Bird, Something for the Fish.* Fordham: *To the Bone, Small Mouth Sounds, The Turn of the Screw, Bent.* BA: Theatre Management, Fordham University. Love to Cameron for his endless support and Emma and Shannah for letting me sleep on their couches when needed.



**Michael Genese** (he/they) is a composer, educator, tenor, and multi-instrumentalist. With work converging in social justice, principles of sound, and contextual human experience, Genese's work asks how artistic, sonic, and educational mediums can best reveal new understandings of the self, and how the presence of

intersectionality in our thinking can be fostered through our interactions with music. Genese's broad-reaching work as an educator is rooted in frameworks of abolition and restorative justice. They aim to affirm that in the creation of a more just and equitable world for those deepest in the margins, the arts and humanities are an invaluable tool in affecting states of consciousness and ignorance, as art-makers and listeners. [michaelgenese.com](http://michaelgenese.com)



Soprano **MaKayla McDonald** is an active performer of opera and new works. Recently, she produced a workshop of Jeremy Beck's monodrama *Black Water*, in conjunction with her residency at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity.

MaKayla currently resides in Brooklyn and is an adjunct for the BMCC Music and Art Department. [www.makaylamcdonaldsoprano.com](http://www.makaylamcdonaldsoprano.com)



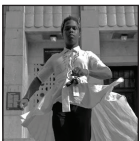
Guitarist, singer and producer **Grey McMurray** has been called "sublimely odd" (New York Magazine), and "the world's least obtrusive guitarist" (The Guardian). He released his first solo album on Figureeight Records in summer 2019. He has performed/

recorded with Gil-Scott Heron, Meshell Ndegeocello, Tyondai Braxton, Alarm Will Sound, Olga Bell, Du Yun, Skuli Sverrisson, Ali Sethi, Theo Bleckmann, Beth Orton, ACME, Colin Stetson, So Percussion, Shahzad Ismaily, Sam Amidon and John Cale among others. He is a co-leader of the trio *Tongues in Trees* with Samita Sinha and Sunny Jain, and of the duo *itsnotyouitsme* with Caleb Burhans, with four releases on New Amsterdam Records. He hopes everyday to provoke joyful tears in strangers' eyes.



**Brian Mummert's** artistic endeavors are driven by his abiding love of literature: he sings, conducts, composes, and arranges music of the Renaissance, Baroque, and present-day, all with the goal of compelling expression of text. He is also the artistic director of The New Consort, a solo-voice ensemble dedicated

to juxtaposing works from diverse musical genres and eras. [www.brianmummert.com](http://www.brianmummert.com)



**Neptunite** is one of the contributors to Michael Genese's piece. [@dragonflyneptunite](https://twitter.com/dragonflyneptunite)



Cellist and composer **Andrew Yee** has been praised by Michael Kennedy of the London Telegraph as "spellbindingly virtuosic". They are a founding member of the internationally acclaimed Attacca Quartet, who have released several albums to critical acclaim, including Andrew's arrangement of Haydn's "Seven Last

Words" which [thewholenote.com](http://thewholenote.com) praised as "...easily the most satisfying string version of the work that I've heard." Andrew likes making stop-motion videos of food, drawing apples, cooking like an Italian grandma, and developing coffee and cocktail programs for award-winning restaurants (Lilia, Risbobk, Atla) in New York City.

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THANK YOU TO OUR 2021 SUPPORTERS

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Teddy Papes and Madeline Healey  
Julian Polaris  
Neal Rasmussen  
Ilana White  
Michi Wiancko

How necessary is this work? Our launch event in February 2019 packed Branded Saloon to the rafters, and at a recent community music reading party, one attendee commented that they'd been waiting for something like this for twenty years. We're really passionate about this project and its long-term success.

Our mission to present queer composers and performers, highlight historically underrepresented queer figures, living and dead, and provide an intersectionally inclusive space for all, is so important in our big and fast-paced city, in the classical music industry, and in our increasingly complex world.

To **support** us, visit [chamberqueer.org/support](http://chamberqueer.org/support) to make a tax-deductible donation, or Venmo @chamberqueer.

Thank you so much for your generosity in making ChamberQUEER a success!

**SAVE THE DATE**

**ChamberQUEER 2022**

June 10-12

Details will be announced at [www.chamberqueer.org](http://www.chamberqueer.org)

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We're ChamberQUEER.  
Get used to it.