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**Asian American Arts Alliance Names Second Year  
2017 Van Lier Fellows**

*— \$12,000 cash grants support two Asian American early-career music professionals—*

(NEW YORK)—The Asian American Arts Alliance has administered its second cycle of the Van Lier Fellowships in the categories of Music Performance and Music Composition. Pawan Benjamin is the 2017 Music Performance Fellow, and Robert Rusli is the 2017 Music Composition Fellow.

Each Van Lier Fellow will receive a \$12,000 cash grant as well as a package of professional development opportunities that includes artistic mentorship, leadership coaching, and technical assistance resources. The fellowships are supported by a grant from the Edward and Sally Van Lier Fund at the New York Community Trust.

The review committee, composed of respected leaders in the field of music, included jazz guitarist and record producer Rez Abbasi; singer and composer Kiran Ahluwalia; Lecturer in Music at Columbia University, Deborah Bradley-Kramer; opera creator and librettist Cerise Jacobs; alto saxophonist and composer Aakash Mittal; sound designer and composer Fitz Patton; Associate Professor of the Practice of Music at Purchase College, Jenny Undercofler; Japanese taiko drummer and shinobue flautist Kaoru Watanabe; and 2017 Pulitzer Prize Winner in Music, Du Yun.

“All of us at the Alliance could not be happier to welcome these two outstanding music professionals as this year’s Van Lier Fellows,” said Andrea Louie, executive director of the Asian American Arts Alliance. “Sally and Edward Van Lier were proud supporters of young talent, and Pawan and Robert will join an incredible roster of Van Lier fellows across the city whose careers were advanced over the past 26 years with the support of this eminent fellowship. The Alliance is proud to administer this program on behalf of the New York Community Trust.”

The Sally and Edward Van Lier Fund at The New York Community Trust has been underwriting similar fellowships since 1991 at such nonprofit arts organizations as New Dramatists, Second

*— more —*

Stage Theatre, and the Asian American Writers' Workshop. The Trust carries out the Van Liers' legacy of arts appreciation by supporting arts groups and training programs. To read more about the fund's history, please visit:

<http://www.nycommunitytrust.org/CurrentDonors/HonoringourDonors/EdwardandSallyVanLier/tabid/341/Default.aspx>

2017 Van Lier Music Performance Fellow Pawan Benjamin is a saxophonist, flautist, and composer. He received his musical training at a young age in Madison, Wisconsin, receiving guidance and mentorship from jazz luminaries such as bassist, Richard Davis, Saxophonist Hanah Jon Taylor, and AACM founder Roscoe Mitchell. In 2006 he left to attend the Manhattan School of Music. Since then, he has performed and recorded with musicians from around the globe, across genres from Jazz, Hip Hop, Nepali Folk, Indian Classical Music and beyond. Pawan has collaborated with artists such as Roscoe Mitchell, Ranjit Barot, Taufiq Qureshi, Marc Cary, Rez Abbasi, Bill T. Jones and many others. Performance credits stretch across the globe at venues including the Metropolitan Museum of Art (NYC), the Rose Theater, Celebrate Brooklyn, the National Center of Performing Arts in Mumbai, India, the Bimhuis in Amsterdam, and countless other venues in between. <http://www.pawanbenjaminmusic.com/>

2017 Van Lier Music Composition Fellow Robert Rusli is an artist, film composer and rap music maker. He has written music for many films, including the feature film *Good Game*, which won Best Original Score at the 2015 IndieCapitol Film Festival, as well as two new feature films; *Corridor Four*, being released in 2017, and *Moko Jumbie*, which recently premiered at Los Angeles Film Festival 2017. He collaborated with artist Casey Tang on a Sinofuturist soundscape for his *Untitled (Rivers)* video installation at the Queens Museum, and frequently collaborates with poet and drag performer Wo Chan. He composed music and sound design for Wo Chan's *WHITE FLAG/WHITE FACE*, and together they created *♥ I <3 U ALWAYS 4EVER*  , a performance art piece combining pop music, drag, and an emotional soundscape threading interviews with people of color about loss and separation together with music that premiered at BAM Next Wave Festival. He has worked on various experimental rap projects that have been featured on Tinymixtapes, Okayplayer, BBC6, Earmilk, Twitch, and Said the Gramophone. Through his most recent rap project, *OHYUNG*, he's released an EP titled *Yellow Jesus*, and performed at SOB's, Trans-Pecos, as well as collaborated with rapper Kool AD on his 2016 mixtape PEYOTE KARAOKE. Film music website: <http://robrusli.com>

Next year, the Asian American Arts Alliance will administer its last of a three-part cycle of Fellowships recognizing Asian American early-career artists, age 30 or under, who show outstanding promise in their fields. The 2018 Van Lier Fellowships will be dedicated to visual artists and curators.

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*Asian American Arts Alliance is dedicated to strengthening Asian American arts and cultural groups through resource sharing, promotion, and community building. Since 1983, the Alliance has sought to unify, promote and represent the artistic and cultural producers of one of New York City's fastest growing ethnic populations. The organization is a diverse alliance of artists, organizations, and arts supporters who believe that working together as a panethnic, multidisciplinary community is essential to nurturing the development of artists and arts organizations and to providing meaningful and innovative ways for civic engagement in society.* [www.aaartsalliance.org](http://www.aaartsalliance.org).