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# Application Summary

## Competition Details

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**Competition Title:** STAMPS Impact Prize (SIP) - Fall 2023 Solicitation

**Category:** Internal Grants

**Cycle:** Special

**Submission Deadline:** 11/1/2023 11:59 PM

## Application Information

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**Submitted By:** Isabella Arthurs

**Application ID:** 2341

**Application Title:** From Poem to Performance: The Professional Production of an Original Studio Album

**Date Submitted:** 10/31/2023 8:49 PM

## Personal Details

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**Applicant First Name:** Isabella

**Applicant Last Name:** Arthurs

**Email Address:**

**Phone Number:**

**Student Classification:** Junior

**Major/Program of Study:** B.A. in English

**Student ID #:**

**Student Employee ID #:**

## Application Details

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### Proposal Title

From Poem to Performance: The Professional Production of an Original Studio Album

### Comments to the Administrator(s)

Hello. Thank you for taking the time to read over my application.

### UM Faculty Mentor Name

Bruce Levingston

### Mentor's Department

Honors College

### Mentor's Email Address

bruce@olemiss.edu

**Earliest Start Date**

01/1/2025

**Latest Start Date**

05/13/2024

**Project Description**

Included in the uploaded document

**Impact**

Included in the uploaded document

**Roles of Student and Mentor**

Included in the uploaded document

**Timeline**

Included in the uploaded document

**Budge and Budget Justification**

Included in the uploaded document

The University of Mississippi

From Poem to Performance:

The Professional Production of an Original Studio Album

Isabella K. Arthurs

Stamps Impact Prize

Mentor: Bruce M. Levingston

1 November 2023

## Project Description

My project is an experiential exploration of the music industry through the creation and professional production of a studio-recorded album accompanied by original artwork, merchandise, and a full-service website. The result of this interdisciplinary and creatively-challenging project will culminate in a 6-track Extended Play album whose original compositions will be copyrighted with the U.S. government, then released worldwide.

I am a singer-songwriter from West Tennessee who found her passion for music and art at the age of 5. I have been performing before audiences for the past 15 years across intimate and expansive venues. I play guitar as well as the piano, but my major focus is in songwriting and performance. When I came to the University of Mississippi, I embraced the flourishing community of artists and wonderful cultural atmosphere. I began to perform in local Oxford venues like Proud Larry's, and now I am ready to record my music.

I spent last summer working for No Reverse Records, a full-service label based in New York City and Jackson, Tennessee. There, I watched musicians like myself take risks. It inspired me to write and work with the realization that I, too, can create and record in a professional capacity. I have written many songs to date, collaborated with other artists, and worked in the studio as a background vocalist. I worked closely with label cofounder Lauren Pritchard, an accomplished artist in her own right credited with hits such as "High Hopes" sung by Panic! At The Disco. Watching her work ethic behind the scenes and her power on stage inspired me to begin scaffolding the blueprint of my future career as an artist. This project is the doorway. I see it in four parts.

**Part I:** I will compose the lyrics and music for the album. Throughout the writing process, I will meet with my distinguished faculty mentor Bruce Levingston. He will be an

invaluable resource for planning and executing this album project. Mr. Levingston will help me choose the best songs that together tell a coming-of-age story—the musical equivalent of a modern Bildungsroman. I want to articulate what it feels like to be alive in our society right now. During this phase, we will also book studio time and make all necessary arrangements.

**Part II:** I move into the studio. I have already identified two different studios in Jackson: Jaxon Records and the University of Memphis-Lambuth recording studio. I have researched rates in Jackson, and they are much more affordable than equivalents in Nashville or Memphis. Additionally, I have experience in these local studios, and I have networked with the sound engineers and watched them work successfully with other artists. No Reverse Records CEO Ashley Kate Adams and aforementioned Lauren Pritchard have both endorsed my upcoming plans, and will be external mentors to lean on in addition to my faculty mentor Bruce Levingston. In the spirit of the music industry, this project will allow for much collaboration, and I will call upon musicians and bandmates that I have met throughout my music career. I want the album to be inspired sonically by three reference albums: Bella Donna by Stevie Nicks, The Good Witch by Maisie Peters, and Melodrama by Lorde.

**Part III:** I will implement my plan for business, marketing, and album design. I will submit my works to the U.S. Copyright Office. Related merchandise will be correlated to the album's aesthetic values. I will solidify a brand deck complete with chosen fonts, colors, and approved logos for the website and all media material. Creative photoshoots will take place with local professional photographers that share my vision for each song. The album artwork, social media pages, and website will all be synchronous and speak to the overarching themes of the brand. The web design will include tabs for navigation with the following titles: home, music, merch, live, contact, words. This navigation style is inspired by Mr. Levingston's landing page

and other contemporary artists. I will ensure easy access to my lyrics as they are my paramount priority. My rigorous education under the English department has informed the artistry and depth of my lyrics; I will be proud to display them.

The final part of this artistic endeavor is the actual release. I will host an album release party for the night before my album goes live on streaming services. Physical copies of the new album and merchandise will be shown, and the event will celebrate the production of the album and the opening of a new horizon for me as a performing artist.

## Impact

Often, my mother says to me that I am always where I am meant to be. In times of unsteadiness or when I am unsure of the path that I am on—which is the broad sweeping state, I think, of most young people—I remember this. We collect our experiences at every unassuming or monumental step. For example, I did not know what compelled me to the University of Mississippi. I did not know what I wanted to do, but somehow I knew I wanted to study in the historic sprawlings of Oxford’s charismatic campus. I closed out my inner artist for a time, but one cannot ignore their heart’s impulse. I found music again singing for the lobby of my dorm. I found music in the poetry I was studying in my English classes. I found music in the discussions between my Honors professors and my classmates. I found music as I found myself. I want to write and produce this album as a love letter to all the beauty and difficulty of growing pains—the pain and joy of youthful uncertainty. What does it feel like to not know yet who you are going to be? I want to create something accessible and relatable and true. This project will be an intricate mélange of exploring my artistic instincts, sharpening my skill, leaning on empathetic mentors, and challenging my comfort across several disciplines. I want to mark my place on the modern landscape of the music industry and realize my most lofty aspirations with the help of my trusted collaborators and mentors. Even at my most distant, I kept myself on the fringes of the creators, the artists, and the innovators. I found music in coming closer and closer to those minds. I do not know exactly what led me to sit amongst distinguished faculty on September 23rd at 4:00pm on a Friday afternoon in the Johnson Commons Ballroom, but my mom would say that it was exactly where I needed to be in that moment. What I heard that afternoon was the music of possibility and potential in this prize. I knew immediately the project I wanted to bring to your table. This prize will equip me with resources to create worlds out of the songs in my

head and bring them into the universe in a professional capacity. It also necessitates a mentor to guide, support, and critique at every point. This opportunity aligns with my future goals of pursuing a creative career in the magical sea of the music industry; this project is the diving board from which I can jump off safely under expert supervision and care of Bruce Levingston. I am where I am meant to be, and I am ready to take this opportunity and bring my sonic visions to life so that other people may hear my music.

## **Roles of Student and Mentor**

Bruce Levingston is a world-class pianist and recording artist. Mr. Levingston is the University of Mississippi Chancellor's Artist in Residence, and he is one of the most accomplished individuals in the state. I have the pleasure to call Mr. Levingston my professor. In my collegiate career, he has already been a strong mentor. He has challenged me to think critically about art and what it means to be an artist with agency to comment on the world we live in. He strives to connect students with one another with a teaching philosophy that could be distilled into one word: empathy. To say that my mentor is renowned in his field is an understatement. His work is critically celebrated all over the world, and he could be anywhere, but chooses to give back to his Mississippi community. I am inspired by his passion for craft, his ferocious work ethic that makes his movements on the piano appear effortless, and his generosity towards students like me. His role in this project is to provide unparalleled expertise on work in the studio, to act as a sounding board for ideas, and to guide me through the creative process while cultivating an environment in which I take risks and trust myself to direct the production of the album and associated works. I could not dream of anyone better with which to share this artistic and challenging voyage into the music industry.

## **Timeline**

Though I have already written material, I will begin writing works for this project as we transition into winter break and over the course of the subsequent semester. I will continue to compose and plan alongside Bruce Levingston and other accomplished mentors Lauren Pritchard and Ashley Kate Adams. This block of time for writing and planning encompasses Part I. Part II is recording, which will take place over the course of a week in the studio. Part III happens after the actual recording process ends. It is where the challenge of marketing and design meets creativity. In this phase, photoshoots will be executed according to the themes of the album. The brand deck will be established, which includes approved fonts, logos, and colors for overall cohesion of the marketing. This brand deck also will inform the design of the website and all associated social media platforms to create a synchronous image of the project. The final part is the actual release. I plan for the release date to occur during the first semester of my senior year: fall 2024.

## Budget

The cost of studio time at Jaxon Records in Jackson, Tennessee is \$2,000 for four days. This includes the cost of their sound engineers and the cost of mixing. Mastering is a separate and complex process. For this, I will contact No Reverse Records and their partner Zampol productions to finish engineering the project. Zampol Productions is credited with over 30 Grammy-nominations. Their rate for preferred clients of No Reverse Records is \$200 per song, or \$175 per song for an album. To protect my work, I will copyright it through the United States Copyright Office: \$85. The media budget entails the cost of professional photographers, videography, editing, materials for set-building, and wardrobe: \$900. I will design and order 50 compact discs with standard dual panel inserts: \$300. Although streaming is certainly a part of the industry, CD's are still a staple of every album's merchandise line. Merchandise also includes t-shirts, posters, tote bags, and stickers. I have contacts with coding experience who will develop my vision for the website and register the domain for \$265.

<b>Stamps Budget Proposal</b>	
<b>Studio Recording at Jaxon Records</b>	2,000
<b>Mastering of 6 songs</b>	1,050
<b>Copyrighting of works</b>	85
<b>Media and Design</b>	900
<b>50 Physical Copies of Album with Dual Panel Inserts</b>	300
<b>Merchandise: T-shirts, Posters, Tote bags, Stickers</b>	400
<b>Website Development</b>	265
<b>Total</b>	5,000