



"I was not familiar with the festival before, but I brought my kids to the event at the Sheldon and it totally blew me away... It opened my kids' eyes to a whole wide world that none of us knew existed before. And it was free too! Thank you for making this possible."

- AUDIENCE MEMBER IN LINCOLN

PERFORMERS

Total performances: 12

- Omaha performances: 7
- · Lincoln performances: 5

Total participating musicians: 39

- · Adult artists: 31 Youth mariachis: 8
- · Local Nebraskan artists: 20
- · Visiting artists: 19

Nationalities represented by artists: 10



Canada



Sri Lanka



Denmark



Sweden



Lebanon





Mexico



Turkey



Russia



USA

"There is talent international talent that is here right now in Omaha ... the most incredible experience this festival has to offer."

- JEWEL RODGERS, **NEBRASKA STATE POET**

See for yourself!





PARTNERS

Total co-presenting partners: 11























ATTENDANCE	2014	2025
Outdoor Showcases	4750	1450 Attendance was significantly affected by a heat warning that was issued on the day of the Omaha Showcase
Indoor Performances	850	1954
TOTAL ATTENDANCE	5600	3404 Children under 12: 650







"I was on campus this summer moving into the new building and came across some info. I thought it would be a great opportunity to hear some live music in the newly renovated hall so I jumped at the chance. I confess I wanted to get to know Kimball again after three years out of it. When the performance turned out to be amazing and absolutely riveting musically, I knew I lucked out."

 CAROLYN BARBER, DIRECTOR OF BANDS, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT LINCOLN



CROSSROADS GOES ORCHESTRAL

This year the festival expanded into a full orchestra for two remarkable finale concerts featuring several festival artists as soloists, including Kinan Amzeh, Dinuk Wijeratne, Jake Charkey and Layale Chaker. Members of both the Lincoln and Omaha Symphonies filled out the ranks of the orchestra alongside visiting festival artists for the two concerts.

Festival guest curator Kinan Azmeh interviewed each of the soloists before their pieces, sharing stories, anecdotes and reflections. It was a very intimate way to experience the music. The most personal perhaps was Jake Charkey's performance of his father Stan Charkey's concerto "J/J" written for him, the day after his

father had a serious health emergency at the festival (he has since fully recovered, thankfully).

In some ways, the orchestra concerts were the best example of what Crossroads can do best – bringing people out of their roles, jobs and hierarchies to rediscover the basic joy of making music together. It had the vibe of a youth orchestra with sick chops (and I mean that in the best possible way), creating friendships and a and putting Nebraska at the heart of a musical web with strands stretching across the country.

SEE THE FULL CONCERT

"You know, when you've been playing in a professional orchestra for a while, sometimes it's just so hard to be really present for the concerts. This week at the festival I really felt ALIVE again!"

- FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA MEMBER

AN UTTERLY COOL SOUND EXPERIENCE

ERDEM HELYACIOGLU AT MUSIC BOX AND KANEKO

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Erdem Helvacioglu's soundscapes at the Music Box (MBX) and KANEKO was also unlike anything the festival has previously attempted. Eight speaker surrounded listeners with an immersive landscape of drones, beats, singing choirs, lush strings and electronic pings and clicks. Erdem was joined by four of the festival's artists, who improvised along with the electronic track, their voices weaving in and out of the massive sound tapestry Erdem had painstakingly created.

The space in both venues was almost completely dark, just the vague outlines of the enormous metal sculptures from Bruce Beasely in Kaneko and the calm profiles of listeners with their eyes closed at MBX – a true feast for the ears. One audience member in Lincoln was in tears after the performance, exclaiming: "this was the most beautiful thing I've heard this year!"











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GETTING BEHIND THE MUSIC

One of the festival's newest friends, composer and pianist Dinuk Wijeratne held a talk where he was able go behind the music and talk about how his life has shaped his art and how exactly does one "create" new music.

My favorite moment was when Dinuk started talking about his biggest source of compositional inspiration: "I think my biggest role model is Mozart; not because my music sounds like his, but because of his philosophy: there are never too

many notes, never too few. There is nothing extra there, but it's never missing anything, either. And I absolutely love his mischief and playfulness, which I'd like to think I share at least a little bit of."

With his down-to-earth Canadian charm, he walked the audience through several of his favorite works, touching on the inspiration and writing process. His upbringing — born in Sri Lanka, growing up in Dubai and emigrating to Canada — deeply shaped his musical life; much of his work is a way for him

to explore what it means to have roots in so many different places. He spoke about his piano concerto *Gajaga Vannama* as a way to explore his Sri Lanken musical roots, which he only came to examine later in life. It certainly made the performance of *Gajaga Vannama* on the weekend even more evocative.



MEDIA EXPOSURE

Earned Media

Total Estimated PR Reach:

270,000 impressions statewide

(Television, radio, print, digital and newsletter distribution combined)

Narrative Summary

The 2025 Nebraska Crossroads Music Festival achieved record statewide visibility through coverage across Nebraska's major news and public media outlets. Highlights included:

- **Resilience and innovation** following the NEA funding cuts
- Community unity despite extreme summer heat
- World-class artistry and accessibility, positioning Nebraska as a hub for global collaboration







2025 Press & Media Highlights

OUTLET / PUBLICATION	STORY TITLE	TYPE	EST. REACH	KEY NOTES
Flatwater Free Press	"A Cloud of Uncertainty: Nebraska arts and culture institutions navigating fallout of federal funding cuts" (Aug 7 2025)	Online	~15,000	Statewide coverage of NEA grant terminations; Crossroads highlighted as a model of resilience and adaptability.
Nebraska Public Media	"Nebraska arts and culture institutions navigating fallout of federal funding cuts" (Aug 9 2025)	Broadcast, Web	~10,000	Companion feature co-published with Flatwater; includes interviews with Olga Smola and Erik Higgins
Lincoln Journal Star	"Nebraska Crossroads Music Festival set to start despite rush to spend grant money" (Jul 19 2025)	Print, Web, Social	~45,000	Front-page feature; high engagement on social media with hundreds of comments and shares; strong quotes from Smola and Higgins on federal funding and festival resilience.
Lincoln Journal Star	"Crossroads Music Festival to feature concerts at revamped Kimball Hall and the Music Box" (Jul 25 2025)	Print, Web	~18,000	Preview feature highlighting collaborations with UNL's Glenn Korff School of Music, the newly reopened Kimball Hall, and The Music Box Lincoln; quotes from Erik Higgins.
Omaha World-Herald	"Nebraska Crossroads Festival to open in Omaha" (Jul 26 2025)	Print, Web	~25,000	Regional feature emphasizing festival expansion and curation by Kinan Azmeh.
WOWT 6 News (Omaha NBC)	"Despite the heat, Nebraska Crossroads Music Festival rolls on" (Jul 28 2025)	TV, Web	~35,000	News coverage of Omaha Showcase; strong community framing of resilience amid heat warning.
KETV 7 (Omaha ABC)	"Crossroads Music Festival goes on despite dangerous heat" + "Weekend to Watch" listings (Jul 27 2025)	TV, Web	~30,000	Two segments; wide metro audience exposure.
10/11 NOW (Lincoln CBS)	"Crossroads loses federal funding day before schedule announcement" + follow-up coverage (Jul 25 2025)	TV, Web	~25,000	Coverage of NEA termination and the festival's adaptive response.
KIOS-FM 91.5 (NPR Omaha)	Interview with Mike Hogan (Jul 16 2025, 7:44 a.m. & 3:44 p.m.)	Radio, Stream	~7,000	Omaha NPR affiliate interview aired twice; discussed curatorial themes and accessibility.
Nebraska Public Media – Friday LIVE	Interview Segment (Jul 25) + Three Live Music Segments (Aug 1)	Radio, Web	~9,000	Two statewide appearances: one interview feature and three live music excerpts during festival week.
UNO Gateway	"Strauss Gone Global: Nebraska Crossroads Music Festival brings worldly compositions" (Aug 7 2025)	Online	~3,000	University/community publication covering the finale; highlights cultural diversity.
Strictly Business Magazine (Lincoln)	"Nebraska Crossroads Music Festival receives \$40K NEA grant and prepares for 2025 season" (May 2025)	Print, Web	~10,000	Business-sector feature on NEA award and expansion into Omaha.
Flatwater Free Press + Nebraska Public Media	"A Very Unconventional Case: How Jewel Rodgers Is Transforming the Role of Nebraska State Poet" (Oct 9–12 2025)	Online, Newsletter, Photo Syndication	~23,000	Jewel Rodgers' Crossroads performance featured; republished in Flatwater newsletter (13k subscribers, ~8k opens).



MEDIA EXPOSURE

Blog

11,129 visitors (from Jan 1 – Sept 1, 2025)

Paid Marketing

- 7759 postcards sent out to a targeted mailing list from the LIED Center
- 7,500 spent on digital advertising, Magazine feature and a social media blitz from VisitNebraska.com
- \$2,578 spent on search advertising on Google (made possible by a Google Ads grant), resulting in 3,540 impressions and 338 clicks.

Social Media

Followers:

- · 2024: 1300 Facebook / 612 Instagram
- 2025: 1565 Facebook / 782 Instagram

Facebook (June 1 – Sept 1):

64,768 total impressions;
 2,131 total interactions;
 301 link clicks

Instagram (July & August):

- July: 16,000 views; 86% from non-followers; added 28 followers
- August: 19,000 views;
 75% from non-followers;
 added 91 followers





"As Gajaga Vannama continued, new sections of it left the audience stunned. At one point the 15-piece orchestra set down their instruments and joyously sang back at Wijeratne. Just when the piece had quieted and the audience thought it was coming to a close, Wijeratne grabbed a microphone and began to sing Sri Lankan lyrics to the crowd and to his onstage peers.

The piece took the audience to intermission with little air left in their lungs to exhale and their jaws slack in awe."

- FROM CONCERT REVIEW IN THE GATEWAY



FAMILY CONCERTS

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AT THE JOSLYN, SHELDON MUSEUM OF ART, AND SAIL CAMP COLLABORATION

It is said that visual art decorates space and music decorates time. Our programs at the Sheldon Museum of Art and the Joslyn brought hundreds of families into a bright and colorful world, existing only for a day, but leaving an impression for a lifetime.

Whether it was performing Slavic folk songs in front of the Joslyn's "Russian Beauty" by Konstantin Egorovich Makovsky or performing a traditional Andean song on Bolivia's traditional instrument the Charango in front of the Sheldon's beautiful south American beaded tapestry, the art jumped out the frames and into the imagination. Many thanks to our dedicated partners at the Sheldon and Joslyn for their impeccable professionalism, openness for adventurous programming, and for helping

And for a second year in a row, the Nebraska Crossroads Music Festival has deepened the relationship with SAIL Camp (String Alliance in Lincoln). Festival Artist Oscar Rios Pohirieth rehearsed and performed traditional music from the Andean Mountains with SAIL students during the camp and during their final performance on July 26th in Lincoln.



A NEW PROJECT IS BORN

After meeting during the festival, Nebraska State Poet Jewel Rodgers and producer Fredrik Serholt, decided to take a couple hours in the studio graciously loaned to them by UNO and sound engineer Wyndhem Eneeba. Fredrik was impressed by Jewel's poetry performances during the week and wanted to see what it would be like to have her record her voice with music.

After meeting half an hour for coffee, and no more than 10 minutes in the studio, the tapes were rolling and the magic was crackling. From just those two hours in the studio, three new songs took shape.

● HEAR A PREVIEW OF THE FIRST TRACK

In addition to releasing these songs, Jewel and Fredrik will take part in a multi-day residency in 2026 to expand the project to include more songs, dance and visual art. You'll be able to get a sneak peak at the result at the 2026 Lincoln showcase.





COMING UP

The 2026 festival will take place July 24 - August 2 in Omaha and Lincoln.

Some key artists include:

- · The La Folia Global Project
- · Sandeep Das & Rajib Karmakar
- · Amado Espinoza
- The Dream Warriors Project
- · Jewel Rodgers and Fredrik Serholt
- Full orchestra concerts with new commissions and international soloists

The Dream Warriors Experience

(Multi-media Art Exhibition) will take place at the Museum of Nebraska Art (MONA) from September 2026 through the spring of 2027.





