

Class of 2023 Innovators and Influencers

by KATIE VAN LUCHENE



From left to right: Lindsey Rood-Clifford, David Manica, Erin Jenkins, Camry Ivory (seated), Clarissa Knighten (wearing a leather cape by Red Wall), Daniel Smith (seated on floor), Charon Thompson (seated in chair), Alan Carr, Jamila Weaver, Dr. Michael Weaver. Not pictured: Shane W. Evans, Mike Talamantes. All photos by Jim Barcus unless noted

With pinch-me moments and gratitude, this year's roster of extraordinary men and women feel lucky they get to fill their days with passion and purpose.

Our diverse group shares one common trait: the desire to create, whether it's something tangible, or something as ethereal as hope.

You may recognize their contributions to Kansas City if you've had a cocktail at [The Monarch](#); purchased a piece of [R.A.D. jewelry](#); picked up a novel at [Bliss, Books and Wine](#); read *Chocolate Me!* to a child, savored a birria taco in Kansas City, Kansas; or sung along to The Doobie Brothers at [Starlight](#).

Others mold future business champions and healthcare leaders with a focus on encouraging talent to remain in or return to Kansas City.

It's our honor to introduce you to our third year of *IN Kansas City* magazine's Innovators and Influencers.



Music Camry Ivory

“I’ve always been a curious nerd,” Camry Ivory says. That trait led her to combine her talents in singing, songwriting, dance, art, and technology to invent **Coloratura**, an instrument that lets her paint with music.

Standing in front of an easel, Ivory applies color to a glass, metal, or silk canvas using 12 paint brushes connected to a circuit board by long wires. Each brush is assigned a note in the musical scale and each stroke or dab creates a note on a computer. And, nerd alert, production software loops in multiple musical phrases on top of each other to create additional effects. The result is a new music piece and an original painting.

She gave her first Coloratura performance in July 2015 at Oppenstein Park, as part of Downtown Kansas City’s Art in the Loop program. “I thought it would be a one-time event,” she says, “but the feedback was so positive, I decided to keep tinkering with the process.”

She learned about grant money from **ArtsKC** but hesitated about applying. “It can be intimidating because there’s so much talent in Kansas City with the Conservatory and Art Institute. I didn’t go to art school, so how audacious, how bold to think I could win.”

Ivory credits the late Paul Tyler with helping her receive a \$2,500 grant. “He believed in my project and gave me tips and constant encouragement.” Her story should convince other creators to reach out for help whether financially, having a sounding board, or just a soft place to land during struggles.

Since introducing **Coloratura** in 2015, Ivory has appeared at the St. Louis Murmuration Festival, the International Folk Alliance Festival, ArtsKC events, and the Kansas City Maker Faire, where she received “Best in Show” recognition. This June was particularly busy with workshops, the Worldwide Make Music Day, and Kansas City Developers Conference’s Kids’ Tech Day.

In fact, kids are often the first to pick up a paintbrush when Ivory takes Coloratura on the road. “I think it’s because kids have lower inhibitions and aren’t scared of what others will think. They just want to play.

“And one or two have used the brushes in innovative ways I hadn’t thought of.” One of the most humbling moments came when a young girl looked up from her painting to tell Ivory, “This helps with my anxiety.” And during a recent collaboration with [The Harmony Project](#), serving K-5 schools, a teacher commented he’d never seen the kids so focused or engaged.

The inventor is looking for other therapy programs through museums, schools, community centers, and workshops. She’s planning a collaboration with the Kansas State School of the Blind, adding textures to the paints so students can feel their work.

And she’s taking it to the next level with an all-battery powered set-up. “I want to remove as many wires as possible to bring in more wonder and magic,” she says. “I’ve also created ways for multiple people to paint at the same time. With this new version, each set of brushes plays another instrument; drums, tuba, violin.”

Ivory will appear with her wonder and magic at an interactive workshop at [Johnson County Library–Central Branch on July 29](#) and perform solo at the [Black Box Theatre](#) on August 1.