Speaker 1: The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Nicki Donnelson: Music tells a story. It is a narrative that inspires and moves many. I'm Nicki Donnelson. Today on the Missouri State Journal, I have two faculty from the Department of Music at Missouri State University, Daniel Ketter and Emlyn Johnson. They are here to share about their work with Music in the American Wild and how they are celebrating the Centennial of the Women's Suffrage Movement.

Emlyn Johnson: Dan and I began Music in the American Wild, this broader initiative a few years ago in 2016. And our initial project was celebrating the National Park Service Centennial. So we toured around the country playing in a bunch of different parks. And we realized that what was really valuable about this tour was beyond playing in these amazing places and exploring these amazing places. It was connecting with audiences about some really exciting idea, something that we could really all get behind. And we have continued Music in the American Wild in many different ways. And one of the ways in which we've continued it is really celebrating and telling the stories of different Americans throughout history.

Emlyn Johnson: We have been particularly inspired to celebrate American women. And with this 2020 Centennial of the ratification of the 19th amendment, the Women's Suffrage Amendment, we are really excited about telling stories of some Midwestern American women.

Nicki Donnelson: There are so many aspects of American life the group wanted to celebrate and share, so they started near their home at the time, Rochester, New York.

Daniel Ketter: So as an outgrowth of our work with the National Park Service in 2018, when we were living in Rochester, New York, we did a project in collaboration with the Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, New York, to celebrate the Centennial of the passage of women's suffrage in New York state. So the Women's Rights National Historical Park is significant, because it was the location of a lot of activity with Susan B. Anthony and many other of the early suffragettes. In particular, there was a declaration of sentiments that was read there and one of the first most important events of the women's suffrage movement.

Daniel Ketter: And Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote and delivered a speech called Solitude of Self that we had set to music by Caroline Melanie, who lives in Buffalo, New York, not far from there. And so we played this music in March of 2018 to celebrate the Centennial of women's suffrage in New York state. And at that point we had a plan to continue to commission music leading up to the Centennial of the ratification of the 19th amendment, which is happening this year in 2020.

Nicki Donnelson: In 2020, the American Wild ensemble is performing new music to showcase the lives of amazing barrier breaking women. To tell these unique stories, they're not employing the works of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, or even more contemporary artists like Jimmy Hendrix. They're commissioning new works from today's artists.

Emlyn Johnson: So to continue the celebration of this 2020 Centennial of this 19th amendment ratification, we are working with two composers, maybe not from Missouri and Kansas, but who have a long history here at this point, to celebrate some particular Midwestern or Mid-American women. So we're working with one composer from University of Kansas, Ingrid Stolzel, who's writing a piece inspired by Amelia Earhart. And we're working with another composer named Carolina Heredia who teaches at University of Missouri up in Columbia. And her piece is going to be about another female aviator named Bessie Coleman, who was actually the first woman of Native American and African American heritage to hold a pilot's license. She was quite a fearless daredevil and a really amazing character.

Emlyn Johnson: Working with these two composers, with Ingrid and with Carolina, has been really inspiring, because it's brought together a collaboration between composers and Dan and me as musicians and also other performers from around Kansas and Missouri. It's become this really big collaborative effort, and we are just really thrilled with the team that we've built and with the subject matter and the artistic quality of the product that we're creating.

Nicki Donnelson: This project is supported in part by an award from Mid-America Arts Alliance on the web at maaa.org. With additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts on the web at arts.gov. They will perform this work throughout this spring, and specifically, will be in concert at Missouri State University on April 13th.

Daniel Ketter: We really wanted to try and find some inspiring women that lived close to where we were living now, to tell stories that were relevant to the places that we would be performing the music. Which is one of the reasons why we were very excited to play at the Amelia Earhart Birthplace Museum and Atchison, Kansas. And why we're especially excited also, to tell the story about Bessie Coleman, who's from Texas, which there's also in this Mid-American region.

Nicki Donnelson: That was Daniel Ketter and Emlyn Johnson. I'm Nicki Donnelson for the Missouri State Journal.

Speaker 1: For more information, contact the Office of University Communications at (417) 836-6397. The Missouri state journal is available online at ksmu.org.