

Lyric

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#ChicagoVoices

Winners announced for Lyric's Chicago Voices Community Created Performances

Three Chicago groups will share their stories on stage



Chicago – **Chicago Voices**, a groundbreaking initiative led by Lyric Opera and its Creative Consultant **Renée Fleming**, received applications this past winter from diverse groups from around the city who wanted the chance to turn their untold stories into works of original music theater. Applicants were asked to submit stories of their experiences that related to the *One Book, One Chicago* theme for 2016: *Chicago, the City that Gives*. A review panel from the Chicago Public Library selected eight groups to proceed to the semifinalist round for public voting as part of the **Community Created Performances** program. **Now, the winners are in!**

After three weeks of voting and more than 16,000 votes being cast, the three finalist groups are:

Harmony, Hope & Healing: Harmony, Hope & Healing provides music-based programming to homeless and underserved communities, which offers emotional and spiritual support to help them prevail daily over their struggles to achieve better lives.

The Kirin-Gornick Band: The Kirin-Gornick Band's story follows the lifelong collaboration of the group members and reveals how the rich history of traditional Eastern European tambura music impacts people's lives in Chicago.

Tellin' Tales Theatre: Tellin' Tales Theatre creates a common bond between people with and without physical and mental disabilities by encouraging them to share their personal stories with the world in a theatrical setting.

As the top three vote-getters, each finalist group will receive a \$10,000 stipend to support their work. This June, they will embark on a 16-week creative process to bring their stories to life in an original music theater presentation. They will be supported in this process by an artistic team provided by Lyric, which includes animateurs (facilitators), scriptwriters, songwriters, and directors.

The artistic team will work with the groups to develop their stories into original songs and scripts that lead to public readings at three neighborhood venues in August (details to be announced). Following the readings, the artistic process continues, culminating in a fully staged, free public performance featuring all three original works on September 24.

"The most amazing range of groups applied to share their stories through **the Community Created Performances Program**," said Lyric's Creative Consultant **Renée Fleming**. "For the three finalist groups, now begins the most exciting period, when they will make their ideas come to life with professional support from Lyric. And it will be thrilling for us, too, seeing the authentic voices of Chicago's communities take shape on stage."

"We were thrilled at how many Chicagoans took the opportunity to participate in this exciting process by voting for their favorite group online," said **Cayenne Harris**, director of Lyric Unlimited. "We are looking forward to supporting these three groups through the creative process to realize their stories on stage."

Partners for **Chicago Voices** are Chicago Public Library, Chicago History Museum and Columbia College Chicago.

Chicago Voices is a project of **Lyric Unlimited**, Lyric Opera of Chicago's department dedicated to education, community engagement, and new artistic initiatives.

Chicago Voices is made possible by major support from **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation** and the **Ford Foundation**. This project is partially supported by **The Chicago Community Trust**, an IncentOvate Grant from the **City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events**, and the **Eisen Family Foundation**.

Lyric Unlimited was launched with major catalyst funding from **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation** and receives major support from the **Caerus Foundation, Inc.**

Follow along with **Chicago Voices** on Facebook and Instagram at @ChicagoVoices.

About Lyric

Lyric Opera of Chicago's mission is to express and promote the life-changing, transformational, revelatory power of great opera. Lyric exists to provide a broad, deep, and relevant cultural service to Chicago and the nation, and to advance the development of the art form.

Founded in 1954, Lyric is dedicated to producing and performing consistently thrilling, entertaining, and thought-provoking opera with a balanced repertoire of core classics, lesser-known masterpieces, and new works; to creating an innovative and wide-ranging program of community engagement and educational activities; and to developing exceptional emerging operatic talent.

Under the leadership of general director Anthony Freud, music director Sir Andrew Davis, and creative consultant Renée Fleming, Lyric strives to become The Great North American Opera Company for the 21st century: a globally significant arts organization embodying the core values of excellence, relevance, and fiscal responsibility.

About Lyric Unlimited

Lyric Unlimited is a long-term, evolving initiative that encompasses company activities that are not part of Lyric's main stage opera season. Its mission is to provide a relevant cultural service to communities throughout the Chicago area and to advance the development of opera by exploring how opera as an art form can resonate more powerfully with people of multiple backgrounds, ethnicities, and interests. It also leads the development of innovative partnerships with a wide range of cultural, community, and educational organizations to create a breadth of programming through which Chicagoans of all ages can connect with Lyric. In the 2014/15 season, more than 126,000 children, students, and adults participated in Lyric Unlimited activities. For more information about Lyric Unlimited program offerings, visit lyricopera.org/lyricunlimited.

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