

# Lyric

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LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO  
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#LyricChicagoVoices

Public voting now open for Lyric's  
**Chicago Voices' Community Created Performances**  
The public will choose the top three finalist groups



Photo credit: Jaclyn Simpson

Chicago – Lyric Opera along with its Creative Consultant Renée Fleming recently launched **Chicago Voices**, a groundbreaking initiative celebrating the city's diverse music culture and exploring the untold stories of Chicago communities. Groups of Chicagoans were invited to share their stories based on their unique communities and experiences as part of the **Community Created Performances** program.

After receiving numerous applications showcasing diverse, compelling and community-focused stories, a panel from the Chicago Public Library diligently reviewed and scored each group based on a predetermined set of criteria. Eight dynamic groups have been selected to move forward as semifinalists, each of which will have video profiles featured online for public voting beginning today at

<http://www.chicagovoices.org>. Members of the public can vote once per day for the story they find most intriguing until 11:59PM May 1. The top three finalists will be announced on May 2.

The finalists will each undertake a 16-week creative process to develop an original music theater work with the support of a professional team and a \$10,000 stipend. Groups will receive artistic support to create original songs and scripts, culminating in fully-realized productions, which will be presented to the public in the fall.

“I’m excited by the amazing range of groups that applied to be a part of the **Community Created Performances**,” said Lyric’s Creative Consultant Renée Fleming. “This is exactly what we were hoping would happen, and the eight groups chosen as semifinalists demonstrate the remarkable diversity of the city of Chicago.”

Cayenne Harris, director of Lyric Unlimited, said, “The response and interest from groups across the city is thrilling, and it’s a pleasure to present these unique stories on the Chicago Voices website. We are anticipating even more excitement building as the public votes on the stories they want to see realized on stage.”

The semifinalist groups, listed below in alphabetical order:

- **Chicago Slam Works Ensemble Theater** puts poetry in motion to recount stories of strength, struggle, and community, focusing on the challenges in the changing landscapes of Chicago neighborhoods. Their story brings into focus the many challenges of the changing neighborhoods and communities of Chicago.
- **Forte Chicago** is a collective of directors, designers, composers, and classical musicians who define what it means to be female artists in Chicago. Through the unique lens of an all-female perspective, they tell the story of an old Chicago rivalry between two of the city’s infamous sausage shops.
- **Friends of the Gamelan** is dedicated to the preservation and sharing of traditional Javanese gamelan music. They are the only gamelan group in the Chicago area, and seek to share their connection to the city that originated with the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair.
- **Harmony, Hope & Healing** provides music-based programming in many Chicago neighborhoods as a means to offer emotional and spiritual support to homeless and under-served communities.
- **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.
- **Me, Myself, and I** is a writing circle of Chicago seniors, ages 55 to 95, who gather to share their fascinating stories representing a diverse array of religious, economic, and social backgrounds. The strength of their community, and their story, is based on the belief that all of their memories, no matter how different, deserve to be heard.
- **Radclyffe Hall** is a group of senior citizens living in the first LGBTQ-friendly, affordable housing building in the Midwest, Town Hall Apartments in Lakeview. Their story centers on survival and acceptance, as they finally found a safe and welcoming community with Town Hall Apartments.
- **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.

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** and an IncentOvate Grant from the **City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs & Special Events**.

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 21<sup>st</sup> 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](http://lyricopera.org/lyricunlimited).

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