

**Lyric**  
LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO



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#ChicagoVoices



Choose the story you want to see brought to life through

**[Chicago Voices Community Created Performances](#)**

**Public voting now open through April 2;**

**Three winning groups receive \$10,000 + professional support  
from Lyric!**

Chicago (3/13/2017) – Diverse groups from across Chicago applied to share their compelling, untold stories through **Lyric Unlimited's** groundbreaking **Chicago Voices** initiative. Now, eight semi-finalist groups have been selected to move forward, and it's up to the public to decide which three stories will be brought to life on the stage! Online public voting is now open for **Community Created Performances** at **[ChicagoVoices.org/community](http://ChicagoVoices.org/community)**

Members of the public can vote once every 24 hours for the story they find most intriguing until **11:59PM April 2**. The three groups with the highest number of votes will each receive a \$10,000 stipend and will work over the course of sixteen weeks with a professional artistic team provided by Lyric to craft their stories into original music presentations. The final pieces will be performed for the public on **Sunday, September 10 at 2pm** at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance.

Spearheaded by world-renowned soprano and Lyric's creative consultant **Renée Fleming**, **Chicago Voices** is a groundbreaking, multi-year initiative celebrating the city's distinct music culture and exploring the diverse stories of Chicago communities.

Last year during the first round of **Community Created Performances**, over 16,000 public votes were cast online to determine

the three winning finalist groups. **Harmony, Hope & Healing, Kirin-Gornick Band,** and **Tellin' Tales Theatre** each presented their final works to a sold-out crowd at the Harris Theater. Learn more about each of these group's creative journeys and watch elements of final performances at [chicagovoices.org](http://chicagovoices.org).

"It's incredibly exciting to see the diversity of Chicago reflected in the applicant groups," says **Cayenne Harris**, Lyric Unlimited director. "By taking the time to get to know these groups and voting, the public can play a role in bringing stories to the stage that reflect important aspects of our community."

The semifinalist groups are listed below in alphabetical order:

### **Bathrobe Heroines**

Individuals who suffer with a severely debilitating yet misunderstood disease called ME/CFS (Myalgic Encephomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) team up with an advocate writers group to form a new artistic team called "Bathrobe Heroines." They seek to perform an original musical story that explains the severe limitations the disease imposes and informs Chicagoans about their often disastrous and absurd encounters with the medical profession which does not yet understand how to treat or cure this devastating chronic illness.

### **Blu Rhythm Collective**

Blu Rhythm Collective is a group of Chicago urban artists pushing the boundaries of original live theater using a mix of artforms to focus on some of the city's hardest-hitting topics. Its members are a direct reflection of Chicago and its various neighborhoods. Blu Rhythm looks to illuminate one of Chicago's biggest issues by providing insight into the lives of young Chicagoans from these marginalized communities and their struggle to overcome the challenges of violence in order to succeed.

### **Chicago MU-saic**

Chicago MU-saic includes artists, adults, and youth brought together by their shared desire to use music to revel in Chicago's diversity and history, while elevating the experiences of youth in the Chicagoland area. The group strives to build better community (a Chicagoland mosaic), confront racial inequality, and celebrate their shared history through music. Chicago MU-saic will tell the story that people do not have to be defined by where they come from; Chicago is a place where anyone can make their "Promised Land" dreams come true!

### **Kuumba Lynx**

Kuumba Lynx is a youth development art making organization that utilizes urban arts to cultivate strong communities built on a foundation of love. Members come from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. The group strives to use Hip Hop as a means to mentor, motivate, and inspire artists to produce, share, and publish meaningful works of art. The group members see the making of an original music theater work as an opportunity to shift the perceptions of Chicago youth and their communities by telling their own stories rather than have them told by someone else.

### **Radclyffe Hall**

Radclyffe Hall is a memoir-writing group of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) seniors in the Lakeview neighborhood who come together regularly to share their stories and the difficulties they have faced. Their story centers around the history of Chicago's LGBT movement. The group seeks to share their personal stories of celebration and suffering, and their ongoing fight for equality both within and beyond Chicago.

### **Teatro Americano**

Teatro Americano is the arts education program and theater ensemble of Latinos Progresando, a 19-year-old social services organization located on Chicago's southwest side that delivers information and resources for people in their community to build secure, healthy and productive lives. Teatro Americano strives to bring awareness to the unique struggles, including immigration obstacles and labor exploitation, experienced by its community members. The group will bring together people of all ages to tell their personal stories of immigration and relocation to Chicago.

### **YOLO Boomers**

YOLO Boomers is a group of Northcenter Chicago seniors actively engaged in different forms of creative expression including writing and improvisational acting. The group hopes to use the collective, personal stories of its members spanning decades to bust negative stereotypes associated with age. This group intends to demonstrate what it truly means to be an active senior in Chicago.

### **Youth Empowerment Performance Project**

The Youth Empowerment Performance Project (YEPP) is a Chicago nonprofit working to support the city's LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning) youth experiencing housing instability. The group was created to address the lack of safe spaces and resources for LGBTQ youth in Chicago. YEPP aims to create an original music theater work that will raise awareness about their community by telling the personal stories of their participants who struggle with homelessness and discrimination on a daily basis because of who they are.

### **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, President & CEO 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.

To learn more about Lyric's current season, go to [lyricopera.org](http://lyricopera.org). You can also join the conversation with @LyricOpera on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. #Lyric1617 #LongLivePassion

### **About Lyric Unlimited**

Lyric Unlimited, a division of Lyric Opera of Chicago, offers a multifaceted program of education, community engagement and artistic initiatives. The purpose of Lyric Unlimited is to provide a relevant cultural service to communities throughout the Chicago area, including communities for whom opera and opera companies have been largely irrelevant; to explore a wide range of ways in which Lyric can collaborate with cultural and community organizations throughout the area; and to advance the development of opera, exploring ways in which opera as an art form can resonate more powerfully, and in a range of different ways, with people of multiple backgrounds, ethnicities, and interests. In the 2015/16 season, 94,386 individuals participated in Lyric Unlimited programs.

For more information about Lyric Unlimited program offerings, visit [lyricopera.org/lyricunlimited](http://lyricopera.org/lyricunlimited).



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

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