



FROM:
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Lyric Unlimited presents

Community Created Performances: Stories and Songs of Chicago,

part of the Chicago Voices initiative

Three Chicago groups will present original music theater works

in a one-time performance

Sunday, September 10 at 2pm at the Harris Theater

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Chicago (8/1/2017) –For the past two years, Lyric Unlimited’s groundbreaking **Chicago Voices** initiative has cast a spotlight on the unique vocal past and present of our vibrant city. Through the **Community Created Performances** program, groups of Chicagoans were encouraged to share the untold stories of their community through song. After a competitive application process followed by more than 10,000 online public votes, three finalist groups won the opportunity to bring their stories to life through an original music theater work: **Blu Rhythm Collective, Kuumba Lynx, and YOLO Boomers.**

Each group was given a \$10,000 stipend and a Lyric-hired creative team to help transform their narratives into a one-of-a-kind musical presentation. They embarked on a 16-week creative process this summer to develop their story and create the script and songs for their work. Now, the groups will perform their final pieces in a fully staged, free public performance featuring all three original works entitled **Stories and Songs of Chicago** at the **Harris Theater for Music and Dance** (205 E Randolph, Chicago) on **September 10 at 2pm.**

Although the performance is free, tickets can be reserved [here](#). Walk-up tickets will also be available the day of the performance on a first-come first-served basis. Please note the performances may contain strong adult themes and language.

Learn more about each of the three finalist groups and their stories below:

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. In response to Chicago's increasingly violent climate and culture, the group seeks to prompt dialogue on how every Chicagoan can be part of creating a better community. Their story will follow four young dancers who face an opportunity of a lifetime when a legendary choreographer returns to Chicago. But to succeed, they must choose to carry their passion beyond the studio and into the streets of a city riddled with crime, violence and poverty. The Blu Rhythm ensemble finds a way forward from tragedy through artistry in song, drama and movement.

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. 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. Their performance will share how their community comes together to create art that speaks out against social injustices. When a family emergency calls away one of their rising stars, the Kuumba Lynx ensemble must push their talents in song, rap, dance, art and poetry to get the show back on track. They're giving a behind-the-scenes glimpse of young urban artists working together to turn political activism and creative passion into an unforgettable live theatrical experience.

YOLO Boomers

YOLO Boomers is a group of seniors who meet in Chicago's North Center neighborhood to actively engage 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 older people. Their story follows the YOLO Boomers through a series of vignettes – searching for love, new creative experiences, and opportunities to make a difference. Between marching in the streets and tweets, leather jackets, bike rides, selfies, and finding new community, these boomers share a secret: there's no one way to embrace your golden years in the 21st century.

"The final performance of this program last season was in itself a community building event," said **Cayenne Harris**, Vice President for Lyric Unlimited. "We can't wait to bring the stories of this season's winners to the stage this September. It promises to be an unforgettable afternoon and a celebration of the creativity that exists throughout our city."

Reserve tickets for ***Chicago Voices Presents: Stories and Songs of Chicago*** at the Harris Theater [here](#).

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, Harmony, Hope & Healing, Kirin-Gornick Band, and Tellin' Tales Theatre** each presented their final works to a sold-out crowd at the Harris Theater.

To read more about the creative process to bring this year's final stories to life, visit the [Community Created Performances blog](#) and 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.

To learn more about Lyric's current season, go to lyricopera.org. You can also join the conversation with @LyricOpera on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. #Lyric1718 #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 2016/17 season, 102,168 individuals participated in Lyric Unlimited programs.

For more information about Lyric Unlimited program offerings, visit lyricopera.org/lyricunlimited.



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 **J. Thomas Hurvis, 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**.

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

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