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**Chicago Philharmonic World Premiere:
*Invictus & An African American Requiem***

CHICAGO (October 1, 2025) - On October 18, 2025, Chicago Philharmonic and Ear Taxi Festival present one of the most significant classical music events of the year: the Midwest Premiere of Damien Geter's *An African American Requiem*, paired with the World Premiere of Stacy Garrop's *Invictus*. With nearly 200 musicians on stage including Chicago Philharmonic, the Apollo Chorus of Chicago, and five world-class soloists, this program confronts injustice, celebrates resilience, and affirms the power of music to speak truth in turbulent times.

Geter's *An African American Requiem* has been praised as one of the most important new choral-orchestral works of the decade. Combining the Latin requiem mass with African American spirituals and the words of activists, it forces listeners to reckon with the realities of racial violence while holding space for grief, remembrance, and hope. The words of journalist and civil rights icon Ida B. Wells, who made Chicago her home in 1895 and co-founded a Black women's suffrage organization here, anchor the piece historically. A new text by contemporary human rights advocate Jamilia Land gives voice to present-day struggle. For Geter, who calls Chicago home, bringing the work to this city is a deeply meaningful milestone: after acclaimed performances on the West Coast, the requiem arrives in the cultural capital where he lives and works.



Learn more: [▶ An African America Requiem Composer Damien Geter](#)

Opening the program is the World Premiere of Garrop's *Invictus*, composed for multi-Grammy-nominated pianist Marta Aznavoorian. Inspired by William Ernest Henley's enduring poem of the same name, and a text with profound personal resonance for Garrop and her family, the concerto embodies defiance and determination. Each movement traces the poem's themes of resilience and willpower, casting Henley's words into bold, symphonic sound. *Invictus* will be recorded live and published as a record by Cedille Records.

Together, these premieres form a rare and urgent evening of symphonic music. From Wells's fearless reporting to Land's frontline advocacy, from Garrop's visionary concerto to Aznavoorian's commanding performance, and from Geter's monumental requiem to its long-awaited Chicago debut, the program honors artists who use their platforms to demand justice and reshape the world.

Event Details:

- **Date:** Saturday, October 18, 2025
- **Time:** 7:30 PM
- **Venue:** Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E Randolph, Chicago, IL
- **Tickets:** Starting at \$25, available at harristheaterchicago.org

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit harristheaterchicago.org or contact the box office at **(312) 334-7777**.

Chicago Philharmonic

Scott Speck Conductor

Apollo Chorus, directed by Stephen Alltop

Marta Aznavoorian Piano

Tiana Sorenson Soprano

Leah Dexter Mezzo-Soprano

Cameo Humes Tenor

Khary Laurent Bass

Marketing Materials:

Photos: [Link to concert promotional photos](#) | Headshots: [Invictus and An African American Requiem](#)

Videos: [An African American Requiem - The Origin Story](#) | [About the Chicago Philharmonic](#)



About Ear Taxi Festival

Ear Taxi Festival 2025, themed "The Composer's Voice," is a landmark event showcasing contemporary concert music across Chicagoland from October 3 to November 2, 2025. A citywide, multi-week festival, Ear Taxi Festival is the largest contemporary concert music festival in the Midwest and presented by New Music Chicago, a 501c3 non-profit. This year's festival features over 550 artists in over 50 hours of programming across Chicagoland, including 27 world-premieres by Illinois composers.

To learn more, visit [Ear Taxi Festival 2025](#)

About Chicago Philharmonic:

The Chicago Philharmonic is reimagining the orchestra concert experience through culturally diverse, genre-bending programs that break barriers of exclusion in orchestral music. With diverse, trailblazing leadership, it is one of the most ambitious and innovative orchestras in the country.

Founded by Lyric Opera principal musicians in 1989 and restructured in 2012 as a community of 200 musician members, the Chicago Philharmonic has become an essential pillar of Chicago's cultural ecosystem. The orchestra offers culturally relevant concerts that are unique within the city's orchestral scene, continually pushing the art form forward and responding dynamically to the evolving needs and interests of Chicago audiences.

In 2021, Terell Johnson, a Crain's Business 40 Under 40 awardee and APAP "Spark of Change" honoree, joined as Executive Director. Since then, the orchestra has grown as a force for inclusion, achieving milestones such as its 2024 Lollapalooza debut as the first orchestra to perform at the festival to a global audience of over 100,000 live attendees and on Hulu. .

To learn more, visit www.chicagophil.org.

About Composer Stacy Garrop

Dr. Stacy Garrop is an award-winning, internationally recognized freelance composer and lecturer whose music is centered on dramatic and lyrical storytelling. Her catalog covers a wide range of genres, with works for orchestra, opera, oratorio, wind ensemble, choir, art song, and various sized chamber ensembles. Dr. Garrop has received numerous awards and grants including an Arts and Letters Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Fromm Music Foundation Grant, Barlow Prize, and three Barlow Endowment commissions. Notable commissions include *Forging Steel* for the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, *The Battle for the Ballot* for the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra, *Goddess Triptych* for the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, *Berko's Journey* for the Omaha Symphony, *Forged by the Sea* for the U.S. Navy Band, *The Transformation of Jane Doe* for Chicago Opera Theater, *In a House Besieged* for The Crossing, *Give Me Hunger* for Chanticleer, *Glorious Mahalia* for the Kronos Quartet, *Rites for the Afterlife* for the Akropolis and Calefax Reed Quintets, and *My Dearest Ruth* for voice and piano with text by the husband of the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.



Dr. Garrop has served as the featured composer of the Bowling Green State University New Music Festival and the Indiana State University Contemporary Music Festival, as well as a mentor composer for the Cabrillo Conductors/Composers Workshop, LunART Festival Composers Hub, and Chicago a cappella's HerVoice Emerging Women Choral Composers Competition. She was the inaugural Emerging Opera Composer for Chicago Opera Theater's Vanguard Program (2018-2020), and Composer-in-Residence with the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra, funded by New Music USA and the League of American Orchestras (2016-2019).

To learn more, visit www.garrop.com

About Composer Damien Geter

Damien Geter is an acclaimed American composer whose rapidly growing body of work includes chamber, vocal, orchestral, and full operatic works. Praised by *The New Yorker* for writing "beautifully for voices and elegantly for orchestra," his "emotionally driven" (Opera) compositions are widely hailed for their "skillful vocal writing" (*Wall Street Journal*). Geter is Richmond Symphony's Composer-in-Residence through 2026, and Composer-in-Residence for Fall 2025 at both Indiana State University's Contemporary Music Festival and Ear Taxi Festival. He serves as Music Director for Portland Opera.

This season, IN Series premieres Geter's new opera, *Delta King's Blues*. His song *Amanirenas*, commissioned by soprano Karen Slack for her African Queens art song program, continues to tour nationally at the Portland and Piedmont Operas, as well as the Naples Philharmonic in its orchestral premiere. His song cycle *COTTON* will be performed at La Jolla Music Society. Additionally, Richmond Symphony premieres his *Loving v. Virginia Suite*, the Chicago Philharmonic presents *An African American Requiem*, Ear Taxi Festival presents *I Said What I Said*, VocalEssence presents *The Justice Symphony*, and Fresno Philharmonic performs *Sinfonia Americana*.

As a conductor, Geter leads Portland Opera in Verdi's *Requiem*, Symphony New Hampshire for their Holiday Pops concert, and Redlands Symphony in works by Britten, Copeland, and Teresa Carreño.

Geter has been recognized by the Library of Virginia with its honorary Patron of Letters degree, was honored at the 2025 Strong Men & Women in Virginia History awards presented by Dominion Energy and the Library of Virginia, and was selected as a 2025 BRAVO! honoree by the Chesterfield Education Foundation. He is an alumnus of the Austrian American Mozart Festival and Aspen Opera Center, hosts the podcast ARTillery, and owns DG Music, Sans Fear Publishing.

To learn more, visit www.damiengetermusic.com

About Maestro Scott Speck

With recent performances in London, Paris, Moscow, Beijing, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Washington, Scott Speck has inspired international acclaim as a conductor of passion, intelligence, and winning personality. Scott Speck was named Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of Chicago Philharmonic in June of 2013 and has been Music Director of the Joffrey Ballet since 2010. He has become a frequent guest for the Chicago Symphony's family concerts. His work with Chicago Philharmonic earned him the award "2021 Conductor of the Year" from the Illinois Council of Orchestras.

Scott Speck is the co-author of two of the world's bestselling books on classical music, *Classical Music for Dummies* and *Opera for Dummies*. These books have received stellar reviews in both national and international press, have garnered enthusiastic endorsements from major American orchestras, and have been translated into twenty languages. His third book in the series, *Ballet for Dummies*, was released to great acclaim as well.

To learn more, visit www.scottspeck.org.

About Pianist Marta Aznavoorian

A multi-Grammy nominated artist, Marta Aznavoorian performs to critical acclaim on the world stage as an orchestral soloist, recitalist, chamber musician, and educator. She made her professional debut at age 13 with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the invitation of Sir George Solti. A champion of new music, she collaborates with several of today's most innovative composers and has been recognized for her outstanding outreach, performance, and mentoring in the United States and abroad. She is a founding member of the celebrated Lincoln Trio and the Aznavoorian Duo with her sister, Ani. A Steinway Artist, Aznavoorian currently serves as Lecturer in Piano and Chamber Music at DePaul University and records extensively under the Cedille Records Label.

To learn more, visit www.martaaznavoorian.com.

About Cedille Records

Cedille Records brings Chicago's finest classical musicians to a worldwide audience

For more than three decades, Cedille has produced world-class recordings featuring outstanding classical musicians. Founded by James Ginsburg in 1989, Cedille Records has supported Chicago's classical music community for over 30 years. A nonprofit record label, Cedille's mission is to produce and disseminate audiophile recordings presenting the finest classical music performers and composers in and from Chicago. The recordings further the careers and legacies of these Chicago artists as Cedille invests heavily in marketing and promotion, not only of the recordings but of the artists represented on them. Unlike other record labels, Cedille never removes albums from its catalog. Each recording is a permanent



documentation of the artist's work, available both as a physical album and on online platforms.

To learn more, visit www.cedillerecords.org

About the Apollo Chorus of Chicago

The Apollo Chorus of Chicago is the area's premier volunteer chorus. It's over 120 auditioned members are a diverse group of singers brought together by their abiding love of music. The singers' dedication, artistry, and passion produce performances of unrivaled majesty.

Apollo performs the masterworks of the choral repertoire in concert halls and cathedrals all over the Chicagoland area. Recently the Chorus has performed the Verdi Requiem, Bruckner's "Te Deum" and "Psalm 150," and Rossini's "Petite Messe Solennelle."

Apollo's annual performances of Handel's complete Messiah have become a beloved holiday tradition for Chicago families. The Chorus embraces new masterpieces and has featured contemporary composers Kile Smith, Jeff Beal, Eric Whitacre, Eleanor Daley, and Stephen Paulus and more in their repertoire.

In addition to its own season, Apollo has frequently been invited to perform in music festivals and concert series with top orchestras and conductors around the Midwest, including the Ravinia Festival with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Peninsula Music Festival in Door County.

Apollo has also been featured in Star Wars In Concert, performed with Jackie Evancho and Josh Groban, and appeared on Oprah's 2 part finale, Oprah's Surprise Spectacular. The chorus has also recorded a track for the Netflix show, "Sense8," and performed as back-up singers for Louis The Child at Lollapalooza.

To learn more, visit www.apollochorus.org

About Tiana Sorenson

Wisconsin-born and Chicago-based soprano Tiana Sorenson is an accomplished performer whose work spans the breadth of the classical repertoire—from early music to contemporary commissions. In chamber settings, she has collaborated with renowned ensembles across the country, including The Crossing (featured on their 2023 and 2025 Grammy Award-winning albums), Conspirare, Lorelei, Alarm Will Sound, and Apollo's Fire. Tiana is a frequent collaborator with The Thirteen, a Washington, D.C.-based ensemble, where she serves as a mentor for their Vocal Fellows Program—an initiative designed to support and develop early-career singers from underrepresented backgrounds. In Chicago, she has performed with a wide range of ensembles: Hearing in Color, Newberry Consort, William Ferris Chorale, and Bella Voce, as well as the choruses of Grant Park and Chicago Symphony. Her operatic work includes covering roles with both Chicago Opera Theater and Lyric Opera of Chicago, most recently in Lyric's 2024–25 season as Girlfriend 1/Nurse in Jeanine Tesori's Blue.

About Leah Dexter

A force in the Chicago area performing arts scene, Leah debuted two world premiere roles, this past season, with Chicago Opera Theater: Herbalist in Remedios Varios, and Susie “Mama Sue” McDonald in the critically acclaimed, *She Who Dared*, for which her performance was praised as “pointed and iridescent” (Chicago Tribune). Further solo performances for the 24/25 season included *Girlfriend 3* (cover) for Lyric Opera of Chicago’s *Blue*, Handel’s *Messiah* with Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, Rutter’s *Feel the Spirit* with the DuPage Symphony, and Reicha’s *Requiem* with the DePaul Community Chorus. Upcoming engagements include *Notes for Peace* recordings and concerts with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s Negaunee Institute, a return to Chicago Opera Theater for *Die Silbersee* in the role of Frau von Luber and a debut with the Rockford Symphony for Bernstein’s “*Jeremiah*” Symphony No. 1. In addition, Leah continues her work with the Lyric Opera of Chicago Chorus, the Chicago Symphony Chorus, and the Grant Park Festival Chorus throughout the season.

To learn more, visit www.leahdexter.com

About Cameo Humes

Hailed by critics for possessing a “compelling lyric tenor that pulses with the perennially conflicted feelings of the character” [Opera News] and a “sonorous, dark-hued timbre which vividly projected the complicated nature of the drama” [theWholeNote], CAMEO HUMES is quickly becoming one of the most sought-after tenors in operatic and concert repertoire. He has performed with Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, the Richmond Symphony, Fort Wayne Philharmonic, the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra, SANAA Opera Project, and the Orchestra Sinfonica dell’International Chamber Ensemble in Italy. His most recent engagements included a debut with Lyric Opera of Chicago in the role of Mano Alfaroin Terrence Blanchard’s *Champion* as well as debuts with Lucerne Festival, Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, and Teatro alla Scala in the roles of Peter, Crab man, Mingo and Robbins in *Porgy and Bess*. Other operatic credits include the title role in Mozart’s *La clemenza di Tito*, Reverend Milton Allison in the world premiere of Errollyn Wallen’s *Quamino’s Map* with Chicago Opera Theater, Ottavio (Don Giovanni) with Operafestival di Roma, Almagiva (Il Barbiere di Siviglia), Gastone (La Traviata), Prunier (La Rondine), Peter (Porgy and Bess) with Lyric Opera of Chicago (cover), Dayton Opera and Skylight Music Theatre of Milwaukee, Crab man (Porgy and Bess) with The Princeton Festival, Nelson (Porgy and Bess) with Cincinnati Opera, and Ensemble (Show Boat) with Houston Grand Opera. He has recorded the lead role in Richard Thompson’s *The Mask in the Mirror*—a modern opera based on the life of Paul Laurence Dunbar—with Navona Records which was reviewed by Opera News and selected as Critic’s Choice. A lover and avid performer of the Negro spiritual, Cameo has toured Spain, France and Ireland with the world-renowned American Spiritual Ensemble. He is also a full-time member of the chorus at the Lyric Opera of Chicago.



About Khary Laurent

Khary Laurent (also known as K. F. Jacques) is a classical singer and hip-hop producer. He has been featured on The Rosie Show (OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network), WGN News, ABC7 News, and multiple television and radio networks, having toured extensively throughout the U.S. and Europe. Currently, Mr. Laurent serves as head composer and stars as Figaro in The Rosina Project—a “hip-hopera” adaptation of The Barber of Seville, featuring a dynamic cast of rappers, dancers, singers, a beatboxer, and a DJ. The production has been featured in the Pivot Arts Festival for two consecutive years, and highlighted by the Chicago Sun-Times and The Chicago Tribune. It also received grants for a citywide summer tour through the Chicago Park District’s “Night Out in the Parks” initiative.

His latest work, Telekinetik, was commissioned by Catapult Opera and incorporates cameos of his octogenarian, Haitian-born father. Blending science fiction elements, the piece explores themes of violence and bravado in contemporary society.

Previously, L'Assassino—a hip-hop opera film commissioned by Resonance Works Pittsburgh—delves into the backstory of Verdi’s infamous villain Sparafucile. During the pandemic, Chicago Fringe Opera commissioned Corsair for the Decameron Opera Coalition’s Tales From a Safe Distance. The work premiered to critical acclaim, earning “Best New Local Opera Production” from The Chicago Reader and “Best Music Video” from the Aladerrri International Film Festival, among other awards.

A native of Chicago, Illinois, Mr. Laurent holds a Master of Music in Voice Performance from the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University. His recent roles include Tom in Fizz ‘n’ Ginger with Chicago Fringe Opera, and the title role in Don Giovanni with Fargo-Moorhead Opera.