Project Inclusion

Project Inclusion is Chicago Sinfonietta's groundbreaking program where talent and mentorship converge to develop diverse and emerging musicians, conductors, and administrators on and off-stage. What was created by Sinfonietta's founder Paul Freeman to help eliminate institutional bias due to factors such as ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic status has since broadened to tackle matters of diversity and inclusion from every angle. Today, Project Inclusion offers four multifaceted, professional development fellowships to orchestral and ensemble musicians, conductors, and arts administrators.

Chicago Sinfonietta is dedicated to changing the face of classical music; Project Inclusion is the program to make this change possible.

Project Inclusion Ensemble Fellows and Alumni

Violin I
Allie Switala  
Kyle Dickson  
Danielle Taylor

Violin II
Karla Galva  
Renaudo Christiansen-Robinson  
Shawnita Tyus

Viola
Rita Andrade  
Bruno Silva  
Seth Pae

Cello
Victor Sotelo  
Najette Abouelhadi

Bass
Christian Dillingham

Mei-Ann Chen, music director, Chicago Sinfonietta

Innovation, imagination, passion and dynamism are the hallmarks of conductor Mei-Ann Chen. Music Director of the MacArthur Award-winning Chicago Sinfonietta since 2011, and Artistic Director & Conductor for the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra Summer Festival since 2016, Ms. Chen is acclaimed for infusing orchestras with energy, enthusiasm, high-level music-making, and galvanizing audiences and communities alike. A sought-after guest conductor, Ms. Chen’s reputation as a compelling communicator has resulted in growing popularity with orchestras globally. North American guesting credits include appearances with the Symphony Orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Chicago, Detroit, Fort Worth, Houston, Indianapolis, Oregon, River Oaks Chamber, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Toronto, and Vancouver. Overseas engagements include the symphonies of BBC Scottish, Denmark’s National, Aalborg, Aarhus, and Odense, Sweden’s Gävle, Gothenburg, Helsingborg, Malmö, and Norrköping, Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra at the Concertgebouw, Norwegian Radio and Trondheim, Finland’s Tampere Philharmonic, Austria’s Grosses Orchester Graz, Germany’s Badische Staatskapelle Karlsruhe, Brazil’s São Paulo Symphony Orchestra, and National Taiwan.

Future engagements include debuts with Denmark’s Copenhagen Philharmonic on a 7-city tour, Germany’s Würth Philharmonic, Netherland’s Residentie Orkest, Norway’s Oslo Philharmonic, Switzerland’s Basel and Turkey’s Bilkent symphony orchestras, and return engagements with Atlanta Symphony Orchestra for its Gala program with Lang Lang, and multiple programs Austria’s Recreation Grosses Orchester Graz and Malmö Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Chen’s honors and awards include being named one of the 2015 Top 30 Influencers by Musical America; a 2012 Helen M. Thompson Award from the League of American Orchestras; winner, the 2007 Taki Concordia Fellowship; First Prize Winner, the prestigious Malko Competition in 2005, and several ASCAP awards for innovative programming during her tenure as the Music Director of Chicago Sinfonietta and of Oregon’s Portland Youth Philharmonic (2002 – 2007). Ms. Chen is also Conductor Laureate of the Memphis Symphony.
Civic Orchestra of Chicago

Since 1919, young artists have sought membership in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago to develop their musicianship and to further prepare for professional careers. Founded by Frederick Stock, second music director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO), the Civic Orchestra is the only training orchestra of its kind affiliated with a major American orchestra. The Civic Orchestra offers promising young professional musicians unique access to the CSO through training with its members, music director Riccardo Muti, and distinguished guest conductors, as well as CSO Judson and Joyce Green Creative Consultant Yo-Yo Ma. Under the guidance of the CSO’s artistic leadership, Civic Orchestra musicians develop as exceptional orchestral players and civically engaged artists.

The Civic Orchestra provides its members with opportunities to develop important skills to make professional lives in music. Civic Orchestra members rehearse and perform at Symphony Center, and develop deep connections with CSO musicians through sectional rehearsals, private lessons, side-by-side rehearsals, mock auditions, and career development conversations. The Civic Orchestra is a signature program of the Negaunee Music Institute at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association. The Institute offers education and community programs that annually engage more than 200,000 people of diverse backgrounds.

Members of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago

**Violin I**
Joy Vucekovich
Carmen Abelson

**Violin II**
Liaht Slobodkin

**Viola**
Seth Pae
Roslyn Green

**Bass**
Joe Bauer

**Flute**
Christy Kim

**Clarinet**
Zach Good

**Keyboard**
Mio Nakamura

Takesha Meshé Kizart, soprano

A versatile actress and classical, jazz, soul, and pop vocalist, Takesha Meshé Kizart has appeared as a soloist at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center, with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, Negaunee Music Institute at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Philadelphia Orchestra at the Kimmel Center, the African American Museum of Philadelphia, Winspear Opera House, Fort Worth Opera and Symphony, Dallas Arts District Tuesday Nite Jazz, Aspen Music Festival, Palm Beach Opera Orchestra, France Musique, MIDEM Festival, and Palais des Festivals Cannes. Select stage and screen credits include *Black Rest* (HBO), *The Verdiian Voice* (ARTE), *Spicks and Specks* (ABC), *Intimate Apparel* (Lincoln Center Theater), *Tosca* (Opera Australia, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Cologne, Frankfurt, Opera North UK, Dallas, and Colorado), *La bohème* (Metropolitan Opera, Australia, Deutsche Oper Berlin), *Madama Butterfly* (Deutsche Oper Berlin, Slovenia), *Cassandra/Elektra* (Deutsche Oper Berlin), *Mefistofele* (Montpellier), *Marie Victoire* (Deutsche Oper Berlin), *La forza del destino* (Caramoor), *Il trovatore* (Stuttgart, Tokyo), *Norma* (Opera North UK), *Bluebeard’s Castle* (Cologne), *Otello* (Altamura Center for the Arts), *Macbeth* (Altamura Center), *Shakin’ the Mess Outta Misery* (Pegasus Theatre), and *Sister Africa* (Athenaeum, Odyssey Theatre Los Angeles). As a teacher of youth and adults, she focuses on technical and expressive freedom by holistically integrating the artist’s mind, body, and spirit.

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