

Voices of Refuge

August 29 & 30: 1pm & 3pm
Chicago History Museum's Uihlein Plaza

FEATURING

Amanda Majeski, soprano

Nina Mutalifu, soprano

Victoria Moreira, violin

Charlene Kluegel, violin

Vannia Phillips, viola

Ghyas Zeidieh, cello

Christian Dillingham, bass

Michael Pecak, piano

Vadim Karpinos, percussion

Lidiya Yankovskaya, conductor

PROGRAM

Milad Yousufi, "Freedom"

City Razaz, Cadenza for the Once Young (2018)

Victoria Moreira, solo violin

Sergei Rachmaninov, Cradle Scene from *Aleko*, arr. by Moshe Shulman

Nina Mutalifu, soprano

Erich Wolfgang Korngold, "Mariettas Lied" from *Die tote Stadt*, arr. by Bengt Forsberg

Nina Mutalifu, soprano

Gaetano Donizetti, String Quartet No. 18, 1st movement

Béla Bartok, Romanian Folk Dances, arr. by Arthur Willner

Frederic Chopin, Piosnka Litewska (Lithuanian Song), op. 74, no. 16

Amanda Majeski, soprano

Irving Berlin, Medley arr. by Paul Murtha

Amanda Majeski, soprano

Milad Yousufi, "Imaginary Peace"

Nina Mutalifu, soprano



REFUGEE ORCHESTRA PROJECT

chicagoperatheater

**OPERA
AMERICA**

This program received funding from a Civic Practice Grant from OPERA America's Opera Fund.

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Voices of Refuge

ABOUT TODAY'S PERFORMANCE

Refugee Orchestra Project's performances focus on composers who represent our musical heritage, alongside those who define the present and future of our musical culture. All these composers have been able to flourish largely due to support from those outside their home nation.

Donizetti sought refuge while escaping political persecution, Rachmaninov fled the Russian Revolution, and Bartók and Korngold fled WWII. Irving Berlin left the pogroms of Eastern Europe and wrote defining American Pop classics. Korngold lay the foundation for American film music. Chopin fled Poland and, in France, shaped Romanticism and redefined the art of the piano. However, perhaps most exciting, are the voices that represent the future of our musical language. ROP's Artist-in-Residence Milad Yousufi hid from the Taliban and fought for every opportunity to study music; he is now gaining ground as one of New York City's compositional prodigies. Iranian-American Gity Razaz is quickly becoming a sought-after musical force.

Music's universality allows individuals of all backgrounds and cultures to connect. The inherent teamwork of musical performance allows us to do so as a single, unified whole. Refugee Orchestra Project formed in the country of immigrants, but the U.S. is no longer alone in its inherent diversity—we live in a progressively multicultural world. Today, you hear music by the defining composers of yesterday and today, performed by Chicagoans who believe in music's power to showcase the importance of an interconnected and welcoming world.

ABOUT CHICAGO OPERA THEATER

Led by millennial women, Chicago Opera Theater is a company laser-focused on living its values: expanding the tradition of opera as a living art form, producing high-quality works that are new to Chicago audiences, identifying top-tier casts and creative talent at the beginning of grand operatic careers, and leading the industry in inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility initiatives. Since its founding in 1973, COT has staged over 145 operas, including 73 Chicago premieres and 41 operas by American composers. COT is led by Stefan Edlis and Gael Neeson General Director Ashley Magnus and Orli and Bill Staley Music Director Lidiya Yankovskaya, who is one of only two women to hold the title of music director at a multimillion-dollar opera company in the United States. In addition to its mainstage season, COT is devoted to the development and production of new opera in the United States through its three-pronged Vanguard Initiative, launched in 2018. The Vanguard Initiative mentors emerging opera composers, invests time and talent in new opera at various stages of the creative process, and presents the Living Opera Series to showcase new and developing work.

ABOUT REFUGEE ORCHESTRA PROJECT

The Refugee Orchestra Project intends – through music – to demonstrate the vitally important role that refugees from across the globe have played in our culture and society.

The project was conceived by conductor Lidiya Yankovskaya, who realized in the wake of the Syrian refugee crisis that many of her own closest colleagues and friends were not aware that she – and many others like her – had come to the U.S. as refugees to seek asylum from violence and persecution abroad. Due to the traumatic nature of their experience, refugees are often hesitant to speak openly about their history, and it is common for people to be unaware that their neighbors, coworkers, and friends have been taken in by the United States as refugees at a time of crisis.

The Refugee Orchestra Project brings together musicians whose friends and families have fled to this country to escape violence and persecution, in performances that loudly proclaim these individuals' importance to our cultural wealth. Performances have included appearances at the United Nations, National Sawdust, and venues across New York City, London, Boston, Chicago, and Washington, D.C.

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MILAD YOUSUFI, REFUGEE ORCHESTRA PROJECT'S ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Milad Yousufi is a pianist, composer, conductor, poet, singer, painter and calligrapher who is deeply inspired by his Afghan culture and heritage. Born in 1995, he is the first Afghan-influenced western classical composer.

In Afghanistan Mr. Yousufi taught piano, theory, and a course on Sibelius at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music. When the Afghan Youth Orchestra was formed in 2011 he became the pianist and the first Afghan conductor, and arranged music for their performances. The orchestra performed sold-out concerts at Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center, and at The New England Conservatory, where Mr. Yousufi performed as pianist.

Mr. Yousufi moved to the U.S., where he won a full scholarship to Mannes School of Music and studies piano with Simone Dinnerstein. He has composed Afghan-influenced music for The New York Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra and The Refugee Orchestra Project, and has had additional commissions, including from the Kronos Quartet and Music Worcester.

GITYRAZAZ, COMPOSER

Hailed by the *New York Times* as “ravishing and engulfing,” Gity Razaz’s music ranges from concert solo pieces to large symphonic works. Ms. Razaz’s music has been commissioned and performed by Seattle Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Washington National Opera, Houston Grand Opera, National Sawdust, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, former cellist of the Kronos Quartet Jeffrey Zeigler, cellist Inbal Segev, violinist Jennifer Joh, violinist Francesca dePasquale, Metropolis Ensemble, Canada’s National Ballet School, Albany Symphony Orchestra, Juilliard Symphony Orchestra, New York Choreographic Institute, American Composers Orchestra, and Amsterdam Cello Biennale among others.

LIDIYA YANKOVSKAYA, CONDUCTOR

Russian-American conductor Lidiya Yankovskaya is a fiercely committed advocate for Russian masterpieces, operatic rarities, and contemporary works on the leading edge of classical music. She has conducted more than 40 world premieres, including 16 operas, and her strength as an innovative and multi-faceted collaborator has brought together the worlds of puppetry, robotics, circus arts, symphonic repertoire, and opera onstage. Lidiya’s experience navigating large forces has proven invaluable in leading the American premieres of Rubinshteyn’s *The Demon*, Donizetti’s *Pia de’ Tolomei*, and Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Kashchej The Immortal* and *Symphony No. 1*. In addition to conducting regional premieres of Tchaikovsky’s *Iolanta*, Delibes’ *Lakmé*, Zemlinsky’s *Der Zwerg*, and Rachmaninov’s *Aleko*, she led the first fully staged Russian-language production of Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Snegurochka (The Snow Maiden)* in North America. A sought-after speaker, Lidiya has led sessions at the League of American Orchestras.

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PERFORMERS

Grammy award winning bassist **CHRISTIAN DILLINGHAM** is a rare musician who excels in both the classical and jazz worlds. Dillingham studied at Youngstown State University under the instruction of Tony Leonardi in jazz studies. He continued at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, working with Jeffrey Turner receiving a master's degree in classical studies. Dillingham enjoys crossing genres and has performed with the Lyric Opera, the Grant Park Symphony, Fulcrum Point New Music Project, Chicago Opera Theatre, and is a member of the Chicago Sinfonietta and the Chicago Philharmonic. Dillingham has performed throughout the world and appears regularly at Chicago venues such as the Jazz Showcase, Constellation Chicago, the Hungry Brain, as well as the Chicago Jazz Festival.

VADIM KARPINOS was appointed to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 2001 by Maestro Daniel Barenboim. He was born in Kiev, Ukraine and began showing an interest in percussion at a very early age. He and his family moved to New York in 1991, and he attended the Manhattan School of Music where he studied with Christopher Lamb, Duncan Patton and Don Liuzzi. Vadim was a Tanglewood fellow and has performed with numerous orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, New Jersey Symphony, the New York City Opera, Grant Park Symphony and the Rhode Island Philharmonic. He has appeared as a soloist with numerous orchestras including the Chicago Symphony and at Roosevelt University, where he has been an adjunct faculty member since 2005.

A GRAMMY-nominated artist, **CHARLENE KLUEGEL** is known for her "unsentimental verve, musical feeling and great technical skill" (New York Classical Review) and as violinist of Duo FAE. Dr. Kluegel has concertized throughout North America, Germany, Switzerland, and China and has collaborated with Jason Vieaux, Robert McDuffie, the Cuarteto Casals, and

Frank Huang. Dr. Kluegel serves on the Editorial Board of the American String Teacher Journal, is the Founding Director of Charlene's String Camp-to-Go, Co-Director of Twisted Spruce Music Foundation, and teaches at the Music Institute of Chicago. She studied under Pamela Frank, Susan Waterbury, and Jorja Fleezanis, and is honored to receive sponsorship from Larsen Strings Artist.

AMANDA MAJESKI Internationally renowned American lyric soprano Amanda Majeski is rapidly garnering critical acclaim for a voice of "silvery beauty" (Musical America), "sings with remarkable commitment and radiance of tone...She sounds exquisite." (The Guardian), and "Majeski's well-rounded soprano...is so warm and glorious, the singing so outstanding, that she leaves no emotions unstirred." (Financial Times) Her 2019-20 season includes four debuts with the Nürnberger Symphoniker, New York Philharmonic, Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Teatro Real Madrid and performances with Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Violinist **VICTORIA MOREIRA**, founding member of the KAIA String Quartet, has performed extensively throughout the USA and her native Uruguay. She has also performed in multiple venues in Canada, Argentina, Mexico and China. Moreira is a violinist with ProMusica Chamber Orchestra in Columbus. Additionally, she has been involved as a solo, chamber and orchestral musician in Chicago as concertmistress of Oistrakh Symphony Orchestra and Assistant Concertmaster of Northbrook Symphony. She was also winner of the 2010 DePaul Concerto Competition. Moreira is a faculty member at DePaul University Community Music Division.

NINA MUTALIFU is an Uyghur soprano from China. Mutalifu made her Uyghur Folk Song Concert Tour with Eurasia Festival at Washington DC and NYC etc. She made her Carnegie Hall debut as winner of 2019 Talents of the World 3rd Annual International Voice Competition. As an opera singer, Ms. Mutalifu made her professional debut singing the Countess in *Le Nozze*

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PERFORMERS *(continued)*

di Figaro with Shanghai Philharmonic Orchestra, she appeared as Alice Ford in Verdi's Falstaff with Martina Arroyo Prelude to Performance. She was the Michigan district winner of 2019 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. This year She will be joining the young artist program of Chicago Opera Theater 2020/21 season.

MICHAEL PECAK is a Polish-American conductor, coach, and (forte)pianist based in Chicago. As a conductor, Michael has collaborated with Florida Grand Opera, Opera Saratoga, Winter Opera St. Louis, and Miami Classical Music Festival among other companies. Michael is also music director of the Chicago City Wide Symphony Orchestra. As a pianist, Michael enjoys working with singers as an accompanist-coach and is on the music staff of Northwestern University Opera Theater. A frequent collaborator with soprano Hannah De Priest, they were invited as one of ten international duos for the Oxford Lieder Mastercourses and were recently named Pegasus Rising Young Artists by Pegasus Early Music. A heritage speaker of Polish, Michael is an advocate for Polish art-song.

VANNIA PHILLIPS has been a member of the Chicago Sinfonietta since 1998. Vannia has performed often with the Chicago Opera Theater and was the violist in the Chicago production of The Color Purple. She has worked with Chicago Jazz Orchestra, Ars Viva, Fulcrum Point, New Black Repertory Ensemble, and Joffrey Ballet. She has played baroque viola with local groups. Vannia can be heard on recordings with Mono, Kim Deal, Poi Dog Pondering, and most recently with Steve Dawson. She has performed with numerous artists including Stevie Wonder, Smokey Robinson, and Barry Manilow. She appeared with Common on Late Night with Conan O'Brien, and with Josh Groban on Oprah. She is currently on faculty at the Music Institute of Chicago.

French-born Syrian cellist and conductor, **GHYAS ZEIDIEH** is an active musician and educator in the Iowa and Illinois region. He earned his Doctor of Musical Arts and master's from the University of Iowa, and his bachelor's from the Damascus Conservatory. His dissertation topic is on the Cello Concerto of Syrian composer, Nouri Iskandar. Recently, Zeidieh served as the Instructor of Cello at Western Illinois University, where he was a member of the Julstrom faculty String Quartet. Currently, Ghyas resides in Iowa City, where he is a Suzuki certified cello teacher through the Quad Cities Symphony Orchestra's Education Program and serves as the director for both the Dubuque Symphony Youth String Ensemble and Philharmonia.

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