Celebrating 15 years, Chicago Sinfonietta's landmark training program for musicians and administrators receives a rebranding with a new name, new logo, and a new portal.

Chicago, IL - For 35 years, Chicago Sinfonietta has dedicated itself to changing the face of classical music, and for the last fifteen, the Freeman Fellowship program (formerly Project Inclusion) has been a large part of making that change possible. The nationally recognized groundbreaking program, an integral part of the organization's mission, and the largest program of its kind, merges talent and mentorship in intense, in-depth fellowships dedicated to developing emerging musicians, conductors, composers, and administrators. Covering ground both on and off-stage, the newly renamed Freeman Fellowship is a multifaceted professional development program that continues to help to eliminate institutional bias due to factors such as ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic status. Having since broadened to tackle matters of diversity and inclusion from every angle, the Freeman Fellowship Program offers four fellowships: the Orchestral Freeman Fellowship, the Conducting Freeman Fellowship, the Composition Freeman Fellowship, and the Administrative Freeman Fellowship.

The launch of the new portal, a website dedicated specifically to the Freeman Fellowship program, will allow for streamlined access to the program curriculum and for more in-depth communication both within and beyond the program. The portal will be a repository of information, details on current and past fellows, and allow visitors to see the reach of the program throughout the industry, encouraging younger musicians to strive for the careers they envision.

The rebranding of the program is in keeping with the organization's continuous connecting of its past and its future, both in honor of its founder and as a nod to the long history of work that has made the organization a leader in the field of diversity, equity, and inclusion nationwide.

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Stated Kamila Muhammad, Director of Education & Community Engagement, "I'm ecstatic to see an online hub for Freeman Fellows past and present to gather online. My hope is that the Freeman Fellows portal will enable community building within our organization and beyond, reaching prospective Fellows and industry leaders. I'm truly excited for Chicago Sinfonietta to take this leap and look forward to what is to come."

Since its launch in 2008 under the late Sinfonietta founder Maestro Paul Freeman, Chicago Sinfonietta has mentored over 80 diverse early career musicians and conductors. Approximately 95% of graduates from The Sinfonietta’s Freeman Conducting Fellowship alone have worked within the industry.

Praise for the program by Fellows includes:

"Being in the Chicago Sinfonietta family these past few years has been one of the best choices I have ever made as a musician. The tools that I have been equipped with thus far, have tremendously helped to bridge the gap between school and the professional industry. To have direct access to this level of artistry is PRICELESS. Best of all, this is one of the most supportive organizations that I have been a part of. Chicago Sinfonietta is in a lane all by itself and I'm honored to be one of its chosen few." - Glenn Alexander II, Conducting Freeman Fellow

“I cannot say enough just how much the mentorship from Mei-Ann Chen, Blake-A  nTHONY and everyone at the Chicago Sinfonietta prepared me for my professional conducting career. My current work with the Fort Worth Symphony would not have been possible without the life-changing growth throughout the Freeman Fellowship. You get to be right in the heart of the organization, collaborating with and learning from the wonderful musicians and staff, who all believe in you. I can’t begin to express how empowering and unique that is in this field.

“I’m forever grateful to Mei-Ann who prepares us in every possible way for the professional conducting career. She is an incredibly generous mentor, not only guiding us with her insights but inviting us to be involved in the action, bringing ideas into reality. The classical music world is a better place thanks to the Chicago Sinfonietta, and I hope to always continue their work and share this spirit everywhere I go.” – Taichi Fukumura, Conducting Freeman Fellow

“I had the great privilege of performing as a soloist with the orchestra in 2012, and I’ve admired the ensemble and Maestra Chen ever since. To get to develop my conducting with her ten years later is a huge honor. This fellowship is making a vital impact on the diversity of artists in our field and I’m thankful to be a part of it.” - Cleo Goldberg, Auditing Conducting Freeman Fellow

“The Chicago Sinfonietta Orchestral Freeman Fellowship is certainly a big opportunity for anybody who wants to make a career as a professional musician in Chicago. For me, this has been an incredible experience because I have had the chance of playing in incredible venues such as the Wentz Concert Hall in Naperville and the symphony center in Chicago Downtown. Besides that, while

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working with the great musicians of the orchestra, I have learnt a ton about orchestra playing, traditional and contemporary music. I am really grateful at this fellowship program and Chicago Sinfonietta for opening their doors to me and helping me improve my skills as an artist.” -**Diego Diaz**, Orchestral Freeman Fellow

“Being part of the Project Inclusion family as the first Composing Fellow has been instrumental to my growth as an artist. The community of rising talent it has fostered, focused on artistic wellness and curating a more equitable classical music field, has led to lifelong friends, collaborative opportunities, and a greater hope for my artistic future, not to mention our industry’s future. Hearing my commissioned piece, 'Moshe’s Dream', played by Chicago Sinfonietta at Symphony Center was the highlight of my career thus far and a moment I will treasure forever.” -**Michelle Isaac**, Auditing Composition Freeman Fellow

Amongst past Fellows’ recent accomplishments in the field are:

**Taichi Fukumura** has been named Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra's Assistant Conductor for the 2022-2024 seasons; **Michelle DiRusso** has been signed to Concert Artists Guild (CAG) as one of the first conductors signed to its roster. She was named Assistant Conductor of the North Carolina Symphony; **Alejandro Gomez Guillen** has been appointed Assistant conductor for Omaha Symphony; **Glenn Alexander II** made his Carnegie Hall debut conducting Academy Award winning composer Jon Batiste’s premiere of “American Symphony” in September; **Kalena Bovella** is a 2022-24 Taki Alsop Conducting Fellow and made her Switzerland conducting debut with Musikkollegium Winterthur this September; **Antoine Clark** served as Cincinnati Symphony's 2022 MAC Music Innovator and was named Assistant Conductor for the Wheeling Symphony Orchestra beginning fall 2021; **Kyle Dickson** is a recipient of Grant Park Music Festival's 2021 Advocate for the Arts Award, and was chosen as a 2021-2022 Salonen Fellow in the Conservatory of Music's Negaunee Conducting Program at Los Angeles, California's Colburn School; **Roger Kalia** was selected to the music directorships of Symphony NH, Evansville Philharmonic and Orchestra Santa Monica; violinist **Allison Loveira** is first violin of Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra; violist **Seth Pae** is Assistant Principal Violist for Chicago Sinfonietta; violinist **Chauntee Ross** releases an album this season as part of the duo SistaStrings and toured with Brandi Carlile this past spring/summer 2022; composer **Michelle Isaac** has been awarded a 2022 Individual Arts Grant from Chicago’s Department of Culture Affairs and Special Events for a virtual song cycle, *Are Women People?*, to be premiered online fall 2022, and a 2022 Gerts and Hammond Award in Composition from the Musician’s Club of Women; **Ashley Lugo** is a grant writer at Giant Squid Group, LLC.

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CURRENT FELLOWS
2022-23 Orchestral Freeman Fellows

Pedro Pablo Mendez Torrealba, violinist; Lindsey Sharpe, cellist; Diego Diaz, violinist

2022-23 Conducting Freeman Fellows

Conducting Freeman Fellows Glenn Alexander II and Jherrard Hardeman; Auditing Conducting Freeman Fellow Cleo Goldberg

As part of its Conducting Freeman Fellowship, Chicago Sinfonietta selects one of its rising conducting fellows to serve as Assistant Conductor to Music Director Mei-Ann Chen. This 2022-23 season it is Jherrard Hardeman.

2022-23 Composition Freeman Fellow

Auditing Composition Freeman Fellow Michelle Isaac

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ABOUT *Project Inclusion* Fellowships

All Fellowships are financially compensated with practical, firsthand experience.

**Orchestral Freeman Fellowship**
Includes one-on-one mentoring from Chicago Sinfonietta senior orchestra members; performances at every concert during fellowship; opportunities to perform for additional services, extending the impact of the fellowship; full salary for all rehearsals and performances; and assistance in securing work after the fellowship has been completed. Fellowship includes appearances at community events; monthly rehearsals that address individual and ensemble work, as well as introduce new repertoire and performance skills; coaching on presentation and speaking skills, verbal feedback from principal mentors; and payment for all services.

**Conducting Freeman Fellowship**
Introduced in the 2013-14 season, the Conducting Fellowship fosters the development of 4-6 conductors of diverse backgrounds who are on the verge of professional careers. The conducting fellows have the opportunity to work closely with Chicago Sinfonietta Music Director Mei-Ann Chen and other experienced conductors, and industry professionals. The Fellowship includes: intensive and extensive training, mentoring and conducting activities over a nine-month period; coaching of on and off-the-podium topics to develop the 21st century conductor; development of basic orchestra management skills, including but not limited to marketing, programming, fundraising and finance; opportunities to conduct live ensembles through partnerships with leading Chicago classical music organizations and educational institutions.

**Composition Freeman Fellowship**
Introduced in the 2020-21 season, the Composing Freeman Fellowship was created to include emerging composers best suited to the program's criteria and offerings. Composing fellows are given multiple opportunities to learn, workshop, and share the craft of composition with leading composers throughout the nation. They also receive extensive mentoring, technical training, and workshop activities spread out over the course of the fellowship. Sessions include: Sibelius,

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Musicscore, and Finale software training; contract negotiations; management skills in marketing, programming, fundraising, and finance; mock compositional pitches; as well as more nuanced discussions on cultivating diversity, and leadership.

**Administrative Freeman Fellowship**
Includes training and mentoring from Chicago Sinfonietta's experienced administrative staff in the areas of development and marketing; direct involvement with Sinfonietta's audience and donor engagement and Freeman Fellowships; community immersion opportunities; and performance collaborations.

Questions about the Freeman Fellowship program or audition process may be directed to Kamila Muhammad, Director of Education & Community Engagement, [kmuhammad@chicagosinfonietta.org](mailto:kmuhammad@chicagosinfonietta.org).

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