



2025-7475 GIG Fund

Application ID

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Application Type

GIG Fund

Organization Information

CHICAGO COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA

Street Address

CHICAGO, IL 60632

Phone:

Mission Statement

Mission: Chicago Composers Orchestra (CCO) presents orchestral music by living composers, extending a tradition to make it open, vibrant, and diverse, and to speak to our lives today.

Vision: We envision the orchestra as a powerful vehicle for contemporary music, filled with energy and purpose for composers, performers, and communities.

Annual Operating Budget

\$50,000-\$99,999

Location Designation

Metropolitan

Applicant

Lesley Swanson

Executive Director

Street Address

CHICAGO, IL 60632

Phone:

Email:

Publicity name

What should we call your organization when we conduct any future publicity?

Chicago Composers Orchestra

Project Summary

Please provide one to two sentences that summarize your project in plain, easy to understand language. This description will be displayed publicly when the grantees are announced.

Chicago Composers Orchestra will partner with MUSIC Inc. for “Drawn Together” a composing workshop and performance designed to inspire a new generation of composers. Four professional orchestral musicians and one composer will spend a day teaching composition to students at MUSIC, Inc, which provides free music education to youth on Chicago’s underserved west side. The musicians will guide the youth in creating compositions using non-traditional symbols to notate music. The musicians will perform students' scores at CCO’s April 2026 concert, alongside world premieres by professional composers. Students will receive free concert tickets and a free video recording of the performance.

Short description

Please write a brief, one-paragraph, high-level description of your project. Cover the key highlights of your project and the minimum programming requirements as stated in the application guidelines.

In Spring 2026, Chicago Composers Orchestra will partner with the youth music education organization MUSIC Inc. to present “Drawn Together,” a composing workshop and performances by professional musicians designed to inspire a new generation of composers. In March, composer Jonathan Hannau and four professional musicians—all Chicago artists of diverse backgrounds and exceptional talent and training— will lead a composition workshop at MUSIC Inc., which offers free music education programs for youth ages 4 to 18 on Chicago’s underserved west side. The guest artists will guide students grades 3-8 in writing their own compositions, with each student creating a graphic score—using symbols, drawings and color to represent pitch, tempo and dynamics—to notate their music without the need for traditional music notation. The guest musicians will bring to the workshop a variety of instruments that offer students a range of pitches and sound qualities for them to use in their compositions. At the end of the workshop day, the musicians will perform the students’ compositions. At CCO’s April concert, the guest musicians will premiere the students’ compositions for a general audience as a featured portion of an evening of world premieres, and they will be the highlight of the pre-concert discussion along with any student composer who wishes to participate. Students and families will receive free concert tickets and a professional concert recording as a memento. Workshop and concert facilities are fully ADA accessible as well as easily reached by public transportation.

Prior grant recipient?

Have you received a grant from Arts Midwest before?

No

Have you received funding from your state arts agency in the last five years?

☒ Yes

☐ No

State Arts Agency Funding

Do you anticipate your local state arts agency will fund this project?

☐ Yes

☒ No

Project Start Date

When will the project begin?

02/02/2026

Project End Date

When will the project end?

04/30/2026

Requested Amount

What is the grant amount you're seeking? Please refer to the application guidelines for minimum/maximum limits. This field will automatically round to the nearest \$10 increment.

\$5,000

Project Discipline

Music - Orchestra

Anticipated adults served

An estimate of individuals 18 and older to be served by the project.

150

Anticipated youths served

An estimate of individuals 17 and younger to be served by the project.

25

Anticipated total participants

This will auto-calculate based on your responses above and after you click the "Save" button.

175

Artist summary

Please provide details about the artist(s) you intend to work with. Why have you chosen them?

Haidar "Hamed" Barbarji is a freelance trumpeter and educator based in Chicago, IL. Hamed currently serves on faculty at the Merit School of Music and has taught for Ravinia's "Reach. Teach. Play." program. He has coached chamber ensembles and led masterclasses for the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra, University of Illinois-Chicago high school band camp, Virginia Commonwealth University, and more. In 2024, Hamed was appointed as a regular member of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, and selected for their Civic Fellowship Program in 2025. Hamed has an extensive performance background with professional ensembles across the country.

Jonathan Hannau is a Chicago-based composer and pianist devoted to the surreal, minimal, abstract, and colorful possibilities of music. He is actively engaged with the new music community of Chicago, consistently putting on performances of contemporary music in many genres that regularly include world premieres from an eclectic mix of composers. CCO has performed several of Hannau's works and has invited Hannau to lead pre-concert discussions because of his talent for connecting composers with audiences. Hannau's embrace of eclecticism and broad knowledge of contemporary composition makes him well suited to leading kids in the creation of music that need not conform to any traditional standard.

Traci Huff has been a violist and passionate supporter of new music for over 20 years. Working in genres as diverse as progressive rock to jazz fusion and neo-classical, she has spent her career bringing a new generation of music to the forefront, performing in music venues all across the country and recording numerous albums. She has worked to foster relationships between composers and performers alike, working to instill a creative environment that encourages a continuation of the incredible music making for which Chicago has always been known. As Director of Education for Access Contemporary Music, she brings music at all levels and interests into the lives of students and inspires teachers to cultivate

creative, positive musical environments.

Akshat Jain is an artist committed to outreach and civic practices through the field of music and his voice as a tubist. An active performer, he believes that being a versatile musician is integral to succeeding as a 21-Century musician. This belief is shared in his teaching pursuits. He has taught for the Merit School of Music, teaching group classes at their Tuition-Free Conservatory, assistant band directing at Proviso Math and Science Academy, and teaching lessons and group classes in many Chicago Public Schools.

Katie Klocke serves as Principal Second Violin of the Dubuque Symphony and Professor of Violin at Lake Forest College. She is a founding member of the pop-ambient band Hi Moon, and has written for productions at the Neo-Futurist Theatre and for Jason Narducy, Troigo, and others. She regularly plays in the neo-soul collective Flowers for the Living, and she's shared the stage with Yo-Yo Ma, Jaap van Zweden, Truls Mørk, Gil Shaham, and Deltron 3030. Katie came to Chicago to join the Civic Orchestra before completing her Master's Degree at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden.

Activity summary

Describe the two proposed project activities that feature the artist/ensemble, including where and when they will take place. If exact dates are unknown, please provide a range of possible dates/months. Keep in mind the project requirements from the guidelines. (e.g. performance(s), workshops, talkbacks, exhibition).

CCO will partner with MUSIC Inc. to enrich their existing music education offerings for their students with the introduction of our composition workshop for young people. The project's guest musicians and composer will work with MUSIC Inc students in grades 3 through 8 to teach them how to write their own music compositions, and the guest musicians will perform their compositions in two live concerts. This project serves contemporary American musicians at the earliest phase possible in their careers, stoking future interest in both orchestral music and composition, directly aligning with the mission of Arts Midwest.

Program activities will include:

1. February/March 2026: Composer Jonathan Hannau, along with four professional guest musicians, will provide a one- to two-day workshop at MUSIC Inc. that will guide students in grades 3-8 in writing their own compositions, each student creating a graphic score (symbols, drawings, and color representing pitch, tempo and dynamics) to represent the music without the need for traditional music notation. The guest musicians will bring a variety of instruments that will provide varying pitch ranges and sound qualities for the students to use in their compositions, and the guest musicians will perform the newly composed scores in a concert at the workshop's conclusion. The workshop and concluding concert will take place at MUSIC Inc's programming location at 3613 W. Cermak Rd in Chicago.

2: April 18, 2026: The guest musicians will perform the students' works at CCO's spring concert, which will be dedicated entirely to world premiere works. Students and their families will receive free tickets and free transportation to the concert and a special invitation to CCO's pre-concert discussion featuring the guest musicians as well as the professional composers whose works will be performed in the concert. The students may participate in the discussion however they are most comfortable. Each student will receive a professional recording and YouTube video of the performance as a memento. The April concert and discussion will take place at St. James Cathedral in Chicago and will also be open to the general public.

Describe the community your program impacts

Please describe the community you plan to reach with your programming with details about the underserved group(s) you intend to reach.

CCO's mission includes making orchestral music open to everyone, welcoming all ages and backgrounds. Our community encompasses audiences, composers and performers, and we strive to engage, educate and bring them together through imaginative programs, affordable concerts, and a vibrant and welcoming concert atmosphere. Our partnership with MUSIC Inc is in keeping with our mission: MUSIC Inc's programming combines high-quality music education and social emotional support for students in Chicago's west side communities, redefining what it means to provide arts programming in communities suffering from the impacts of systemic divestment and racism.

MUSIC Inc. provides tuition-free instrumental music instruction in North Lawndale, a historically segregated community with limited access to arts education. Decades of systemic disinvestment, including school closures and underfunded public schools, have left students with few opportunities to learn and perform music. MUSIC Inc. currently serves 70 students, ages 4–18, with 70% of families from west-side neighborhoods including North Lawndale, South Lawndale, Garfield Park, and Austin. MUSIC Inc. students are 87% Black (non-Hispanic), 10% Hispanic/Latino, and 3% other or multiple races. MUSIC Inc. does not collect individual income data from participants to protect privacy and respect families, however, their program serves students from communities with high poverty rates. According to data from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 38% of households in the west-side communities of North Lawndale, South Lawndale, Austin, and Garfield Park, live below the poverty line. MUSIC Inc.'s programs address these disparities by offering high-quality arts instruction, fostering youth development, and strengthening community cultural resources.

CCO's concerts reach audiences from a wide range of Chicago zip codes and span ages 25 and up, as confirmed by our audience surveys. We successfully worked to increase our student audiences—those under 25—by 40% last season through targeted marketing and discounted tickets. Our musicians also represent diverse cultures and heritages; we support a variety of artistic voices and enable audiences to see themselves represented on stage. We select programming, composers, and collaborators that provide a platform for underheard music across cultures, ethnicities and gender identities, with emphasis on BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ artists. Last season 75% of our composers and 24% of our musicians were BIPOC.

We will bring in audiences for the April concert via our digital presence and newsletter; local publications such as the Chicago Reader, whose coverage highlights underrepresented communities and stories; neighborhood press; social media platforms; and livemusicproject.org calendar of classical and contemporary concerts. We will also leverage cross-promotional efforts with our composers, guest artists, and partners, and invite project students, family members and close friends to attend free of charge and provide them with free transportation.

Budget



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Expense Description	Paid by Grant	Paid by Applicant	Paid by 3rd Party	In-kind	Total Match
Musicians (4) for Workshop	\$1,120.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Composer for Workshop	\$280.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Space for Workshop	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$500.00	\$500.00
Art Supplies for Workshop	\$75.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
MUSIC Inc Administrative Time	\$280.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
CCO Administrative Time	\$280.00	\$720.00	\$3,000.00	\$0.00	\$3,720.00
Bus/Transportation Fee for Students to Attend April Concert Performance	\$600.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Musicians (4) for April Concert Performance	\$1,145.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Student and Parent Tickets for April Concert Performance	\$70.00	\$0.00	\$1,005.00	\$0.00	\$1,005.00
April Concert Performance Venue	\$250.00	\$250.00	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$750.00
Videographer for April Concert Performance	\$900.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Misc. (in case of overage on supplies or transportation)	\$0.00	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$50.00
Total Project Expenses:	\$5,000.00	\$1,020.00	\$5,505.00	\$500.00	\$7,025.00

Use this space to offer more detail about your budget

The budget includes a pro-rated portion of the CCO Executive Director’s stipend and the MUSIC, Inc. artistic director’s stipend for their time planning and organizing the workshop for their respective organizations. In addition, CCO’s Executive Director handles all administrative activities for CCO, including hiring all musicians, booking the rehearsal and concert venues, preparing scores, and organizing the pre-concert discussion and special performances.