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South Shore Opera Company of Chicago, an anchor partner of the South Shore Cultural Center Advisory Council to the Chicago Park District, is proud to co-present THE MARCH, which includes several of our stars in its cast.

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Park District: Samantha Chavis, Coordinator for Theater and Performing Arts 312 742-4947

Producers via <http://www.civilrightsopera.com>, Amy Hutchison [amyhutchison@me.com](mailto:amyhutchison@me.com), Alan Marshall [gettinggrainy@gmail.com](mailto:gettinggrainy@gmail.com).

THE MARCH, A Civil Rights Opera

What: Concert presentation featuring excerpts from the new opera THE MARCH, A Civil Rights Opera Project

When: Sunday, February 26, 2012 at 4pm. (Running time approximately 90 minutes)

Cost: FREE and nonticketed, but reservations requested at [rsvp@civilrightsopera.com](mailto:rsvp@civilrightsopera.com)

– **The Chicago Park District, South Shore Opera Company of Chicago, Composer Jonathan Stinson and Librettist Alan Marshall present a free concert performance of excerpts from their new opera THE MARCH, A Civil Rights Opera Project.** The opera dramatizes the emergence, conflicts, personal stories, and realization of the **1963 Civil Rights March on Washington.**

This free performance, in celebration of Black History Month, is on Sunday, February 26th at 4 pm at South Shore Cultural Center. The event is not ticketed. Reservations are requested but not required at [rsvp@civilrightsopera.com](mailto:rsvp@civilrightsopera.com).

Help us celebrate Black History Month in Chicago by attending a free concert featuring music from THE MARCH Civil Rights Opera Project. You'll hear Martin Luther King Jr.'s aria "Just a Few Hearts", President John F. Kennedy's "How Will You Be Remembered" and other moving selections featuring Roy Wilkins, John Lewis and Emmett Till from this new American opera project.

THE MARCH will recreate a 1963 civil rights mass meeting where it will introduce new characters from the opera including: Coretta Scott King, Diane Nash, Bayard Rustin and Leila Patterson. Audience members will be able to participate in this unique interactive experience.

“After of over a year of preparation, we are pleased to present a glimpse of this civil rights opera to the public,” said co-creator Alan Marshall. “Moreover, we feel that this is a wonderful and unique way to celebrate Black History Month”

The evening will begin with a transformation of the South Shore Cultural Center into a 1963 civil rights mass meeting featuring freedom songs sung by the audience. The characters of Coretta Scott King, Bayard Rustin, John Lewis, Diane Nash and Leila Patterson, will speak at this mass meeting that will lead directly into the opera performance.

Scenes from the opera will include the July 1963 meeting of civil rights leaders at New York City's Roosevelt Hotel to discuss a potential March on Washington, which includes Martin Luther King's jazz-inspired aria "Just a Few Hearts."

Also presented will be a scene in the Oval Office in which a group of Congressional Southern Democrats led by Strom Thurmond implores President Kennedy to abandon pursuit of Civil Rights legislation. President Kennedy responds with the aria "How Will We Be Remembered?"

Marshall continues, "Jonathan Stinson and I are honored to write arias for major American icons like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and President John F. Kennedy, both of whom feature prominently in THE MARCH.

THE MARCH is the creative idea of Alan Marshall. Marshall's appreciation of African American history and his passion for opera inspired him to create an opera that would enlighten audiences about the depth and complexity of the African American experience, as well as become a vehicle for African American singers.

Marshall chose the March on Washington as his subject because all of the major civil rights leaders were involved in its planning. He also felt like it would be exciting to examine the perspective of the Kennedy Administration. Finally, the March on Washington is considered by many historians as the emotional and spiritual pinnacle of the civil rights movement prior to the rise of the Black Power and anti-war movements.

Marshall has researched extensively for this opera to provide him an exhaustive perspective of the setting, circumstances and characters. Despite exhaustive research, THE MARCH is not a documentary. It is an opera that uses the actual March and the surrounding historical period as a backdrop. THE MARCH is an opera about the personal stories of individuals, known and previously obscure, who came together on a hot, sunny day in August of 1963 and made history.

Marshall's creative vision for this project has been brought to life by his collaboration with Jonathan Stinson.

"Jonathan has a profound respect for and a growing understanding of this seminal period in American history," Marshall explains. "He also possesses a creative intuition that allows him to seamlessly fuse various musical elements to create interesting, dynamic and accessible music that touches the entire spectrum of human emotion."

"We are humbled by the legacy that has been entrusted to us," said composer Stinson. "We continue to work tirelessly to bring to the operatic stage a creation that will serve art, history and humanity."

THE MARCH is a work in progress but is very close to being ready for presentation to prospective opera companies for a commission. This would allow Stinson and Marshall to have the opera ready for the 2013/2014 season to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington.

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#### Artistic Team:

Composer - Jonathan Stinson

Librettist - Alan Marshall

Director - Amy Hutchison

Music Director - Rachael G. Kerr

Costume Designer- Shanna Philipson

Cornelius Johnson- Artistic Director, South Shore Opera Company of Chicago

#### CAST

Martin Luther King, Jr. - Martin Woods (Baritone) NOT CONFIRMED

Roy Wilkins - Vince Wallace (Bass-Baritone)

Emmett Till - Brian-Alwyn Newland (Tenor)

Bayard Rustin - Bernard Holcomb (Tenor)

John Lewis - Cornelius Johnson (Tenor)

A. Philip Randolph - Kirk Walker (Bass-Baritone) NOT CONFIRMED

John F. Kennedy - Scott Brunscheen (Tenor)

Strom Thurmond - Corey Grigg (Baritone)

Robert Kennedy - Jeremy Ayers Fisher (Tenor) NOT CONFIRMED

Lyndon Baines Johnson - Tom Hall (Bass-Baritone)

#### Additional cast for the concert:

Kimberly Jones (Soprano) as Coretta Scott King