



STACY GARROP

INVICTUS

Piano Concerto

JOIE DE VIVRE

MARTA AZNAVOORIAN

CHICAGO PHILHARMONIC

SCOTT SPECK

CEDILLE

STACY GARROP (B. 1969)

INVICTUS (31:44)

- 1 I. OUT OF THE NIGHT THAT
COVERS ME, (7:28)
- 2 II. BLACK AS THE PIT FROM
POLE TO POLE, (5:21)
- 3 III. I THANK WHATEVER GODS
MAY BE (8:10)
- 4 INTERLUDE (1:31)
- 5 IV. FOR MY UNCONQUERABLE
SOUL. (9:14)
- 6 JOIE DE VIVRE (8:08)

TT: (40:01)

WORLD PREMIERE RECORDINGS

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a generous lead gift from Gail Belytschko*

INVICTUS

Piano Concerto

BY STACY GARROP

JOIE DE VIVRE

for solo piano

MARTA AZNAVOORIAN

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PROGRAM NOTES

BY STACY GARROP

INVICTUS

English poet, critic, and editor William Ernest Henley (1849–1903) was diagnosed with a tubercular bone disease at the age of 12, resulting in the eventual amputation of his left leg. While hospital-bound in 1873–1875 after a surgery to save his right leg, he penned the poem “Invictus” as a testament of his determination to persevere.

The word *invictus* is Latin for unconquerable or undefeated. Henley named his poem well; its 16 lines speak to having strength and

resolve in the face of great adversity. Nelson Mandela, the South African anti-apartheid activist who was jailed for 27 years before becoming the leader of his country, regularly recited the poem while imprisoned. Prince Harry, the Duke of Sussex, established the Invictus Games in 2014, an international sporting event that promotes the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded service personnel worldwide and celebrates their resilience.

In my concerto *Invictus*, I focus on the first verse of Henley's poem, with each line representing a movement:

I. Out of the night that covers me,

The soloist wakes up at the bottom of a pit, represented by the orchestra. The soloist tries to climb out, only to be forced back down by the orchestra. After singing a song to find inner strength, the soloist climbs again but is forced down once more.

II. Black as the pit from pole to pole,

The soloist is violently tossed from side to side at the bottom of the pit by the orchestral forces.

III. I thank whatever gods may be

Looking up, the soloist prays to the heavens far above.

IV. For my unconquerable soul.

The soloist sings the song again, then climbs, this time placating the orchestra as needed, before triumphantly reaching the rim of the pit and escaping.

Invictus was co-commissioned by pianist Marta Aznavoorian and the American Composers Forum, whose support is made possible by The Thelma Hunter Fund. Marta and I wish to thank individual donors Alexandra Nichols, Madeleine Plonsker, Jim Stone, and Nicholas Yasillo for making this commission possible.

Joie de vivre was commissioned by Joanne Bernstein to celebrate 80 years of a life deeply enriched by love for the arts and the power of music.

JOIE DE VIVRE

I first met Joanne Bernstein at a concert in Highland Park, IL, in fall 2022. Since then, we have worked together on a musical project (*Repair the World*), shared many meals, and jointly attended numerous theater and musical performances. As our friendship deepened, I've been struck by how robustly she embraces life. She takes a proactive approach to living each day and finding moments of joy and beauty in the world around her. Joanne puts this outlook into practice in many ways: the importance of spending time with family, her desire to enrich the lives of people around her through writing and lecturing about arts management, her curiosity to travel abroad, her daily swims in the summertime, and her deep love of art, music, and culture. She has a particular fondness for French painter George Seurat's 1886 masterpiece, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* and the Stephen Sondheim musical

it inspired. To me, all of these combined facets of Joanne's life demonstrate her joy of living. The French expression, "joie de vivre" (joy of life), brings together beautifully everything I want to express musically about Joanne.

To represent Joanne's approach to life, *Joie de vivre* is adventurous and embraces the unexpected. The piece starts with a short, introspective opening that unfolds into a warm, vibrant middle section that explores several musical landscapes, from joyful dancing to soulful singing. The music builds to a grand moment, then winds back down to conclude with the introspective sounds that opened the piece. Every moment of *Joie de vivre* is infused with joy, whether this manifests as excited and dynamic or quiet and contemplative, and is a tribute to the joy I see in Joanne.



PHOTO: MICHAEL BROSILOW

STACY GARROP

Dr. Stacy Garrop is an award-winning, internationally recognized freelance composer and lecturer whose music is centered on dramatic and lyrical storytelling. Her catalog covers a wide range of genres, with works for orchestra, opera, oratorio, wind ensemble, choir, art song, and various sized chamber ensembles. Dr. Garrop has received numerous awards and grants including an Arts and Letters Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Fromm Music Foundation Grant, Barlow Prize, and three Barlow Endowment commissions. Notable commissions include *Forging Steel* for the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, *There's a village in my sneakers* for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, *Invictus* for pianist Marta Aznavoorian and the

Chicago Philharmonic, *Goddess Triptych* for the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, *Frederick and Susan B.* and *The Battle for the Ballot* for the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra, *Berko's Journey* for the Omaha Symphony, *Forged by the Sea* for the U.S. Navy Band, *The Transformation of Jane Doe* for Chicago Opera Theater, *In a House Besieged* for The Crossing, *Give Me Hunger* for Chanticleer, *Glorious Mahalia* for the Kronos Quartet, *Rites for the Afterlife* for the Akropolis and Calefax Reed Quintets, and *My Dearest Ruth* for voice and piano based on a text by Martin D. Ginsburg, husband of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Theodore Presser Company carries her works. Dr. Garrop is a Cedille Records artist with pieces available on 15 albums and two digital singles; her works are commercially available on an additional 25 CDs on other labels. Dr. Garrop earned degrees in music composition at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor (B.M.), University of Chicago (M.A.), and Indiana

University-Bloomington (D.M.). She taught composition and orchestration full-time at Roosevelt University from 2000 to 2016 before leaving to launch her freelance career.

garrop.com



PHOTO: LISA MARIE MAZZUCCO

MARTA AZNAVOORIAN

Marta Aznavoorian is a multi-Grammy-nominated pianist who has built a distinguished international career as a soloist, chamber musician, recording artist, and educator. Celebrated for her bold, expressive interpretations and her deep commitment to both traditional and contemporary repertoire, she is equally at home performing masterworks of the past and championing new voices of today. Her musical journey began at an early age; at 13, she made her professional debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the personal invitation of legendary conductor Sir Georg Solti — a milestone that launched her onto the international stage.

Aznavoorian has appeared with major orchestras across the United States and abroad, earning acclaim for her technical brilliance, emotional depth, and commanding stage presence. A devoted chamber musician, she is a founding member of the Grammy-nominated Lincoln Trio, an ensemble praised for its polished performances and adventurous programming. With the trio, she has toured extensively and recorded for Cedille Records, including the albums *Trios From Our Homelands* and *Trios from Contemporary Chicago*. With her sister, noted cellist Ani Aznavoorian, she recorded the critically acclaimed Aznavoorian Duo album *Gems from Armenia*, reflecting their commitment to their cultural heritage.

A passionate advocate for living composers, Aznavoorian has collaborated with many leading contemporary artists and premiered significant new works written specially for her (including *Invictus*), showcasing her dedication

to expanding the piano repertoire and bringing new music to diverse audiences.

Beyond the concert stage, Aznavoorian is deeply committed to education and mentorship. She serves on the faculties of DePaul University and the Music Institute of Chicago, where she inspires and cultivates the next generation of musicians. As an Ambassador for the Music Institute, she presents her "Healing Power of Music" masterclasses nationwide. Through her nonprofit organization, Keynote Productions, she works to expand access to high-quality music education for students in underserved communities.

Ms. Aznavoorian is a Steinway Artist.

martaaznavoorian.com



PHOTO: TODD ROSENBERG /
CHICAGO PHILHARMONIC

SCOTT SPECK

With recent performances in London, Paris, Moscow, Beijing, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Washington, Scott Speck has inspired international acclaim as a conductor of passion, intelligence, and winning personality.

The Chicago Philharmonic appointed Scott Speck as its Artistic Director and Principal Conductor in 2013. He has served as Music Director of Chicago's Joffrey Ballet since 2010 and has become a frequent guest for the Chicago Symphony's family concerts. In recognition of his contributions to Chicago's cultural scene, the Illinois Council of Orchestras named Speck "2021 Conductor of the Year."

Gala performances featuring Yo-Yo Ma, Itzhak Perlman, Renée Fleming, Joshua

Bell, Midori, Evelyn Glennie, and Olga Kern have highlighted Speck's recent seasons as Music Director of the Mobile Symphony. He collaborates with Carnegie Hall each season as Music Director of the West Michigan Symphony and was invited to the White House as former Music Director of the Washington Ballet.

Scott Speck has conducted at New York's Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall, London's Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, the Paris Opera, Chicago's Symphony Center, Washington's Kennedy Center, San Francisco's War Memorial Opera House, and the Los Angeles Music Center. He has led the symphony orchestras of Chicago, Houston, Baltimore, Paris, Moscow, Shanghai, Beijing, Vancouver, Romania, Slovakia, Buffalo, Columbus (OH), Honolulu, Louisville, New Orleans, Oregon, Rochester, Florida, and Virginia, among many others.

Previously, he held positions as Conductor of the San Francisco Ballet, Music

Advisor and Conductor of the Honolulu Symphony, and Associate Conductor of the Los Angeles Opera. During a tour of Asia, he was named Principal Guest Conductor of the China Film Philharmonic in Beijing.

Speck is the co-author of two of the world's bestselling books on classical music for a popular audience: *Classical Music for Dummies* and *Opera for Dummies*. These have received stellar reviews in both national and international press and have garnered enthusiastic endorsements from major American orchestras. They have been translated into 30 languages and are available around the world. His third book in the series, *Ballet for Dummies*, was released to great acclaim as well.

Scott Speck can be reached at scottspeck.org and on Facebook, X, and Instagram @ScottSpeckMusic.



CHICAGO PHILHARMONIC

The Chicago Philharmonic is re-imagining the orchestra concert experience through culturally diverse, genre-bending programs breaking barriers of exclusion in orchestral music. With nearly 200 musician members, diverse and trailblazing leadership, and a deeply collaborative artistic model, the Chicago Philharmonic is one of the most versatile, innovative, and ambitious orchestras in the country.

The Chicago Philharmonic presents over-30 concerts annually (and year-round), featuring diverse musicians and drawing new-to-the-symphony audiences. The Philharmonic's 2025–2026 partners included Artist in Residence Njioma

Chinyere Grevious, Chicago composers Damien Geter and Stacy Garrop, pianist Marta Aznavoorian, *Sleeping At Last*, Cedille Records, The Joffrey Ballet, the Auditorium Theater, Harris Theater for Music and Dance, and Ravinia Festival. Led by Artistic Director and Principal Conductor Scott Speck, the Philharmonic has been called “one of the country’s finest symphonic orchestras” (*Chicago Tribune*) and has won numerous awards including the Illinois Council of Orchestras’ 2023–2024 “Programming of the Year.”

The Chicago Philharmonic Society was created by principal musicians of the Lyric Opera of Chicago in 1989 and is now a crucial part of Chicago’s music ecosystem and an incubator of talent,

creating thousands of jobs for 425 musicians annually and making Chicago a viable home for talented freelance musicians. Executive Director Terell Johnson, a *Crain's Chicago Business* "40 Under 40" awardee and Association of Performing Arts Professionals "Spark of Change" winner, has led the orchestra as a force for inclusion with a series of increasingly high-profile events, including its 2024 Lollapalooza debut as the first professional orchestra to perform at the festival to a global audience of over-100,000 in person and live on Hulu.

The Chicago Philharmonic's audiences number over-200,000 and its community engagement programs reach 6,000 students and other participants annually. The Philharmonic proudly collaborates

with the greatest artists of our time, in every genre. Past collaborations have included the English National Ballet and American Ballet Theatre, the Lollapalooza Festival, Laufey, Nas, Lindsey Stirling, Justin Hurwitz, Kishi Bashi, Lady Gaga, Tony Bennett, Joshua Bell, Tank and the Bangas, William Basinski, Ryan Speedo Green, and more.

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David Perry, CM
Bernardo Arias, ACM

Sherri Zhang
Carlos Chacon

Christie Abe
Ebedit Fonseca Goyo

Whun Kim
Steven Song

Christine Chon
Heather Boehm

Violin II

Azusa Tashiro, Pr
Daniela Folker, APr

Luis Vivas Valecillos
Karyn Macfarlane

Roberta Freier
Lori Ashikawa

Natalie Boberg
Wendy Evans

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Sally Chisholm, Pr
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Hannah Barton

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Piccolo

Karin Ursin

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English Horn

Erica Anderson

Clarinet

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Horn

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Dave Inmon, Pr
Nuttapong Veerapun

Tenor Trombone

Reed Capshaw, Pr
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Bass Trombone

David R Becker

Timpani

Robert Everson, Pr

Percussion

Michael Folker, Pr
Michael Kozakis

Harp

Alison Attar, Pr



PHOTO: FADI KHEIR

Producer James Ginsburg

Engineer Bill Maylone

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September 15, 2025, Mary Patricia Gannon Concert Hall, DePaul University, Chicago, IL (*Joie de vivre*)

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Steinway Pianos

Publishers

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