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2018 SCHWARTZ PRIZE NOMINATION

CROWDOUT

Illinois Humanities

OVERVIEW

Illinois Humanities nominates *crowd out* for the Helen and Martin Schwartz Prize in 2018. *crowd out* reflected a desire on the part of Illinois Humanities to produce a true citywide experience that also laid the foundation for future work.

This innovative program allowed Illinois Humanities to touch and impact new communities while bringing them together and creating a lasting cultural infrastructure in Chicago.

Please visit *crowd out*'s [website](#), which gives further insight about the program. You can also view the program's social media success using **#CrowdOutChi**.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

crowd out was an 1,000 voice experience by and for the people of Chicago. The program culminated as the American premier of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer David Lang's piece of music and performance written for a choir of 1,000 or more trained and untrained voices, that occurred on October 1, 2017 around Anish Kapoor's *Cloud Gate* sculpture in Millennium Park in Chicago. *crowd out* combined the human voice (spoken, sung, and shouted) with dynamic movement of people in public spaces, exploring what it meant to be part of a crowd and in unison with others.

The program was organized through a series of open rehearsals and community conversations, facilitated by Illinois Humanities, in each of Chicago's 50 wards. Through these conversations Illinois Humanities and its partners learned about the assets, needs, and desires of each community in order to produce more collaborative, responsive, and impactful programming in the future.

This [video](#) highlights *crowd out*'s final performance.



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"I was particularly touched by the spirit of community – sharing a project with people from all over our great city and suburbs – all working together toward a common goal. How often does that happen?! Add that to a gorgeous day and a terrific crowd, and we all shared something very special." - Emily Ellsworth, Artistic Director - Anima Singers

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & IMPACT

crowd out arose from a desire to collaborate on a citywide project with a sister organization, the Chicago Humanities Festival, and received an IncentOvate grant—given in support of work that prioritized innovation; community engagement; diversity and equity; and collaboration—from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE).

Each organization sought to increase its presence and form new relationships across the city, particularly with communities not frequently engaged by arts and humanities organizations. The grant from DCASE allowed for the Chicago Humanities Festival to oversee the production of the final performance while the portion Illinois Humanities received went to engaging the singing groups and choirs in each ward and hosting, in partnership with a neighborhood organization, the open rehearsals and facilitated

community conversations where local leaders and residents discussed the existing resources but also needs and desires that could inform future arts and humanities programming in that ward. In doing so, Illinois Humanities created relationships and partnerships with over 70 neighborhood organizations and choirs. In many cases this project marked the first time Illinois Humanities worked in these communities or parts of the city. Each participating singing group and partner organization received an honorarium, and where needed, Illinois Humanities also provided hospitality, childcare, translation, and transportation. Please view the full list of our partnerships [here](#).



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"It was so inspiring to see all different ethnicities as well as ages gather to achieve a common goal, and at what better place than a jewel of Chicago, Millennium Park. Once again, I'd like to thank the entire team of crowd out who made this experience one that our students and staff will not forget. Your professionalism and artistry as well as social consciousness has inspired our students to look at how they feel as minorities in a similar crowd situation. They've even started to come up with their own piece inspired by yours entitled, Singled Out. We hope that in the future you will think of PTDYA for any future events. Once again thank you to your commitment to public arts and community." -
Michael Jones, Executive and Artistic Director - Professional Theatre and Dance Youth Academy (PTDYA)

After 50 of these rehearsals and conversations, Illinois Humanities convened four dress rehearsals of approximately 250 participants at Chicago Park District Cultural Centers located in the far north, south, and west ends of the city as well as the city center. All of this culminated in the final free performance in which Chicagoans from all parts of a city known across the country for its divisions along the lines of race, class, and geography, participated in a shared experience alongside one another. The 34 singing groups included elementary school students, retirees, church choirs, high school choirs, a Mariachi band, a punk glee club, university choirs, a hip-hop dance troupe, and more.

While the performance of *crowd out* provided a brief but exhilarating moment to bridge some of the city's divisions, the project offered a foundation for future work. As a result, Illinois Humanities now has relationships all across Chicago; venues first encountered through *crowd out* have hosted subsequent programs while relationships with local partner organizations have been sustained and deepened in subsequent initiatives such as a two-year series of arts and humanities programming focused on criminal justice reform called *Envisioning Justice*. The relationships formed and knowledge gained through *crowd*

out will continue to inform Illinois Humanities as it strives to produce more collaborative and responsive work accessible to all residents of the city and the state.

Our Partner Organizations

18th Ward Office
Albany Park Community Center
Archer Heights Library
Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture
Beverly Art Center
Blue Ribbon Glee Club
Bright Star Church
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council
Center on Halsted
Cradles to Crayons
Encore Illinois
Free Spirit Media
Friends of the Blackstone Library
Friends of the Pullman State Historic Site
Garfield Park Community Council
Garfield Ridge Chamber of Commerce
Global Girls
Hairpin
Hyde Park Art Center
Hyde Park-Kenwood Community Conference
INTUIT
IPAINTMYMIND
Jane Addams Hull House Museum
Links Hall
Logan Center for the Arts
Logan Square Chamber of Commerce
Musical Arts Institute
National Public Housing Museum
Norwood Park Historical Society
Old Town School of Folk Music
On the Table
OPERA-Matic
Pilsen Alliance
Port Ministries
PullmanArts
Pullman Civic Organization
SKY-Arts
Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP)
St. Sabina's Church
The Hideout

Our Partner Choirs

Apollo Chorus
BandWith
Blue Ribbon Glee Club
Bright Star Church
Chicago Artists Chorale
Constellation Men's Ensemble
Encore Illinois
Global Girls
The Hideout
Kelly High School Choir
Kenwood Academy Concert Choir
Lawndale Community Church
Lindblom Math & Science Academy
Logan Square Chamber of Arts
Loyola University Choir
Mariachi Tradicion Juvenil
Missio Dei Wrigleyville
Musical Arts Institute (organization and choir the same)
North Park University Choir
Old Town School Community Choir
OPERA-Matic
Professional Theater and Dance Youth Academy
Pullman Community Choir
Senn High School Choir
SKY-Arts
Son Monarcas
St. Mary Star of the Sea
St. Richard Parish Choir
St. Barnabas Choir
St. Jane de Chantal Choir
St. Sabina's Church (17th Ward)
Taft High School
Voices in Your Head
Wicker Park Choral Singers

IN THE NEWS

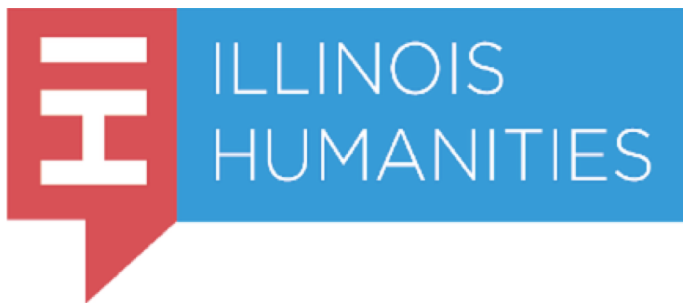
crowd out received media attention from major Chicago news outlets. This coverage enabled Illinois Humanities to reach additional communities and further promote our mission.

[Chicago Tribune](#)

[Chicago Magazine](#)

[Chicago Sun-Times](#)

[The Daily Northwestern](#)



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FINANCIAL STRUCTURE

crowd out received a \$50,000 IncentOvate grant from the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE), a grant given to support work that prioritizes innovation, community engagement, diversity and equity, and collaboration. The grant was then split between Illinois Humanities and Chicago Humanities Festival.

Chicago Humanities Festival used their funds to oversee the production of the final performance while the portion Illinois Humanities received went to engaging the singing groups and choirs in each ward and hosting, in partnership with a neighborhood organization, the open rehearsals and facilitated community conversations where local leaders and residents discussed the existing resources but also needs and desires that could inform future arts and humanities programming in that ward.

In addition, Jewel-Osco provided in-kind donations of food and beverage for the four dress rehearsals and final performance.



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"I want to take a moment to congratulate you on having organized a tremendously large and fascinating event. and I wanted to thank you. I was participating in crowd out as a member of the Chicago Artists Chorale which was representing the 46th ward. Upon first hearing about the opportunity my interest was piqued, but I wasn't exactly sure what it would be like. Despite having attended the rehearsals, nothing could have quite prepared me for what I can only describe as a combined sociological/anthropological/societal/emotional/physical overwhelm (of the most startling and satisfying kind). Standing in that crowd around "the bean," in the middle of downtown, in this city in which I've lived for half my life, I've never felt quite so connected to those around me as when we whispered and shouted and sang the most personal and empowering and revealing of phrases. I felt exposed and seen and heard and, at the same time, anonymous, forgotten, and expendable. I also felt unbelievably connected to my context as a human, my context as a member of this city, of the community, of the neighborhoods, of the Midwest, of the U.S., etc. it was an intense experience on so many levels and one I will not soon forget and am so grateful to have had. Thanks to you and everyone involved in coordinating this effort. Please know that your hard work has been noticed, has been appreciated, and is not forgotten. Thank you for your tremendous service to Illinois, to Chicago, to the humanities, and for enabling music and art and creativity and expression and community experiences and, ultimately, human connection. Thank you from me, a very moved and grateful member of the 'crowd.'" - *Krista Damico*

CONTINUED MISSION & IMPACT

Illinois Humanities seeks to strengthen the social, political, and economic fabric of Illinois through constructive conversation and community engagement. Our mission is to build dialogue across all sectors of society and examine issues important to democracy, using humanities as a tool to stimulate discussion.

crowd out gave us a unique way to bring Chicago's diverse communities together and discuss important issues, culminating in a large, thought-provoking public performance. Throughout the program, Illinois Humanities developed strong relationships with communities and organizations all over the city, giving us a chance to share our mission while learning more about their needs and experiences.

The connections we have built have been and will be important aspects of our current and future programs. [*Envisioning Justice*](#), is a project that utilizes the relationships formed during *crowd out* with Bright Star Church to start conversations about criminal justice reform in Chicago. We have also

continued working with Chicago's Cultural Centers, most recently in our program [*Everyone's a Designer/Everyone's Design*](#) – a traveling museum exhibition that explores and celebrates everyday Chicagoans' influence on art and design in the city and is being hosted by two of the Centers, Austin Town Hall and Indian Boundary, that also hosted the large group rehearsals.

crowd out also gave us a chance to strengthen previous relationships. Four high schools that participated in *crowd out* were involved in a prior program, [*Continuing Ed.: Parents and the Future of Illinois Public Schools*](#). Continuing to strengthen our outreach in these communities brings important and diverse voices to our work and future endeavors.

Our programs at Illinois Humanities rely on the involvement and engagement of our communities and their organizations. Every chance we have to continue building and strengthening these relationships is vital to the success of our overall mission and impact. *crowd out* was a wonderfully unique opportunity to do just that while creating constructive conversations and allowing Chicagoans to express themselves in a distinctive, exceptional way.



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"First, excellent job organizing, rallying, cheering and preparing everyone for this incredible undertaking. It brought together our community here in Rogers Park and our city. This was a huge undertaking that you did so, so, so well! Thank you for being an exceptional leader." - Andy McGuire, Sullivan High School