

# Chicago Tribune

## Grammy winner credits Chicago Children's Choir with teaching him 'the power of raising your voice'; benefit brings in \$1.5 million!

By CANDACE JORDAN  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE



David Goodman of Auction Results®, LLC (Fred Becker photo)

**A live auction and paddle Raise conducted by David Goodman brought in over \$550,000!**

The Chicago Children's Choir hosted Red Jacket Optional, its signature fundraiser, Oct. 18 at The Geraghty. Over 550 guests enjoyed an evening of uplifting performances by young people from the Austin and Englewood

neighborhood choirs, as well as from the Voice of Chicago, CCC's premier choir for teens 13 to 18 years old. The event raised \$1.5 million to support arts education programming that reaches 5,200 kids weekly in over 90 public schools and a dozen neighborhood programs.

Young singers from the Pilsen, Little Village and Hyde Park neighborhood choirs were lined up to greet guests as they came through the doors. Inside, Kehoe Designs set the tone for the Red Jacket Optional theme with brilliant red decor and lighting.



(Kyle Flubacker photo)

The theme song from the film “Rocky” (“Gonna Fly Now” by Bill Conti) signaled dinner (by Boka Catering Group), with choir members lined up and clapping as guests filed into the dining room. Josephine Lee, CCC president and artistic director, welcomed the crowd.

“Imagine a world without violence, a world that’s united, not divided. In a divided world, CCC is a safe haven to bring young people together on common ground to learn, accept and celebrate each other’s differences and grow from our collective experiences by learning to thrive in a global economy. At the

CCC, we create the whole citizen, global ambassadors who are champions of their communities with peace, acceptance, compassion, ambition, art and excellence,” Lee said.

Karim Sulayman, a 2019 Grammy Award winner for best classical vocal performance, shared his memories as a CCC alum. “CCC taught me about community, empathy and the power of raising your voice,” he said. He sang Sinead O’Connor’s song “In This Heart” with the Voice of Chicago choir. Another successful alum, Michael Preacely, sang “The Impossible Dream” (from the musical “Man of La Mancha”), also with the choir. The choirs performed 10 songs, concluding with “We Are the Champions” by Queen as the crowd stood, waved glow sticks and cheered.

Other speakers included co-chairs Kala and Mike Moynihan, Ellen-Blair Chube and Mike Teplitsky, board chair David Koo and design chair Tom Kehoe.

An after-party featured music by Pitch Mafia (a CCC alumni ensemble) and DJ Emilio Abadia, tacos from Dos Toros and Hoosier Mama pies.

Throughout its 63-year history, the Chicago Children’s Choir has had an impact on more than 50,000 young people and has focused on building arts education programs that reflect the racial and economic diversity of Chicago. Eighty percent of those who participate are from low to moderate income homes, with over 4,000 students annually participating free of charge.

*Freelance writer Candace Jordan is involved in many local organizations, including some whose events she covers.*