

# NEWS



June 2, 2021

## GEORGE TAKEI MAKES MOAB MUSIC FESTIVAL DEBUT IN NEWLY-COMMISSIONED WORK BY KENJI BUNCH

*Lost Freedom: A Memory*, Based on Takei's Recollections and Writings,  
Examines Anti-Asian Bias in WWII and Today

New Work Inaugurates Festival's Commissioning Club



Moab, Utah - On February 19, 1942, Executive Order 9066 changed the lives of 120,000 Japanese Americans in the U.S., by ordering the forced removal and relocation of residents as "enemy aliens." This season, the Moab Music Festival shines a light on this shameful period in U.S. history with the commissioning and premiering of *Lost Freedom: A Memory* by Japanese American composer **Kenji Bunch**, featuring renowned stage and screen actor **George Takei** narrating with chamber ensemble. The new work is based on Takei's speeches, personal writings, and recollections, woven together by MMF Music Director Michael Barrett, and is the inaugural work in the Festival's new Commissioning Club. The piece is the cornerstone of *Lost Freedom: Japanese American Confinement in the U.S.*, a concert honoring

Japanese Americans and, in particular, three Japanese American composers. The program takes place at Red Cliffs Lodge on Saturday, September 4, 2021 at 7pm.

The new composition recalls the disturbing time in World War II America, when Takei and his family, along with 120,000 other Japanese Americans, were stripped of their property and liberty, and unjustly imprisoned in confinement camps. Moab was the locale for a Department of Justice detention camp, where the "troublemakers" were sent, at nearby Dalton Wells, just outside of town. The text for the new piece looks back at this time through Takei's eyes, as he revisits his own childhood imprisonment in two confinement camps in Arkansas and northern California, and the ensuing struggles his family and so many others encountered after their release. It explores his small joys of childhood in the shadow of legalized racism, his mother's hard choices, his father's tested faith in democracy, and the way those experiences planted the seeds for his astonishing future.

Bunch's new work and the surrounding program were influenced by his 2019 MMF performance of his haunting solo viola work *Minidoka*, inspired by the composer's own visit to one of the confinement camps. Barrett was so moved by the performance that he immediately decided to commission a new piece based on Takei's writings, making it the centerpiece of an entire program devoted to this subject.

Multi-Oscar winning composer Paul Chihara, also a confinement survivor, has two works on the program; *Duo Lyrico* for violin and viola, and *Redwood* for viola and percussion (written in Tokyo and inspired by traditional Japanese Ukiyo-e wood cuts). The evening also includes three movements from award-winning composer Andy Akiho's *Synesthesia Suite*.

In this program, MMF's *music in concert with the landscape®* comes together in a completely different, but no less potent, manner. It brings to light this dark time for the nation, Moab's own little-known history in the period, and those who were touched by it, either directly or indirectly. In honoring these composers, the evening also reflects on anti-Asian bias still prevalent today.

**Artists:** Francisco Fullana, Kristin Lee, Cindy Wu, violin; Kenji Bunch, Cynthia Phelps, viola; Ian Rosenbaum, Andy Akiho, percussion; George Takei, narrator; Junction Trio (Stefan Jackiw, violin; Jay Campbell, cello; Conrad Tao, piano).

**For more information about the Festival or to purchase tickets** for the 29th annual Moab Music Festival go to the [website](#), or telephone the Box Office at (435) 259-7003. You may also visit the Festival Office at 58 East 300 South, Moab, UT 84532.

**Photo: Takei Family, Courtesy of George Takei**  
**Program and artists subject to change**

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### **AND IN SCHOOL**

Extensive educational outreach is integral to the Festival's activities, and artists will visit The Grand County and The Moab Charter Schools on **Friday**

morning, September 3 for an assembly for the high school and middle school students. Students will hear *Lost Freedom: A Memory* narrated by George Takei and learn about his experience.

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## Learn More About the Moab Music Festival:



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### *Lost Freedom*

*Japanese American Confinement in the U.S.*

Narrated by George Takei

Saturday, September 4, 7 pm

Red Cliffs Lodge

Kenji Bunch: *Minidoka*

Andy Akiho: *Murasaki (Purple)* from *Synesthesia Suite*

Paul Chihara: *Redwood*

Andy Akiho: *Karakurenai (Crimson)* from *Synesthesia Suite*

Paul Chihara: *Duo Lyrico*

Andy Akiho: *Aka (Red)* from *Synesthesia Suite*

Kenji Bunch: *Lost Freedom* (World Premiere) \*MMF Commission

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