

Global Stages / Local Stories

In a global society, orchestras are significant public institutions confronting the question of what it means to be citizens of the world. Due to the pandemic, in mid-March the world changed dramatically. To help orchestras meet today's extraordinary challenges, the League of American Orchestras shifted its 2020 National Conference from a three-day gathering in Minneapolis-St. Paul to a free online event running May 5–June 12. More than 3,700 Conference registrants heard diverse voices on how orchestras are relevant and essential organizations for their communities—especially now—and how they can best weather the current crisis.

By David Styers

The first week of March, the League proudly launched the website for its 75th National Conference, highlighting the exciting sessions we had planned with our hosts at the Minnesota Orchestra and the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra. Within days, as we watched the pandemic spread and saw orchestras move from postponing individual concerts to cancelling the rest of their seasons, we realized that an in-person Conference in June would be impossible.

We knew, though, that the orchestra field needed information and resources from the League more than ever, so

canceled the Conference was not an option. And we knew that orchestras needed those resources right now, so waiting until mid-June to do a three-day virtual Conference did not make sense. We also wanted to preserve as much of the planned Conference content as we could, plus have room to add new, coronavirus-specific sessions without overwhelming attendees. And we wanted to provide the content for free to League members. So, an online Conference event stretching six weeks, with near-daily sessions starting the first week of May, was born.

And, as the League's online Conference progressed and worldwide demonstrations



in June protested racial injustice following the death of George Floyd while in police custody, the Conference adapted again, this time to include new and newly refocused sessions on today's most urgent social issues.

Inspiring Speakers and Live Music

The online Conference commenced on May 5 with live music and a stimulating discussion of where orchestras are now. At the Opening Session, Anthony McGill, principal clarinet of the New York Philharmonic and a board member of the League of American Orchestras, shared his musical artistry, and he was then joined by New York Philharmonic President and CEO Deborah Borda

Conference 2020

The League of American Orchestras' 2020 National Conference, "Global Stages / Local Stories" took place online, free of charge for League members, from May 5 to June 12. Visit leagueconference.org for more about the League's 75th annual Conference, including videos of select sessions.

Schedule Overview

All sessions below at 1:00pm Eastern/10:00am Pacific unless otherwise noted.

Week 1

- Tues, May 5: [Opening Session with Deborah Borda, Anthony McGill, Jesse Rosen, and Henry Timms](#)
- Wed, May 6: [Scenario Planning in the Time of COVID-19](#)
- Thu, May 7: [Philanthropy in Transformational Times](#)

Week 2

- Tue, May 12: [Is Your Organization a 21st Century Communicator?: Four Critical Questions to Ask Right Now](#)
- Wed, May 13: [The Leader's Influence: Championing the Advancement of EDI Practice](#)
- Thu, May 14: [Engaging Audiences at Home](#)
- Fri, May 15: [Philanthropists Discuss How They're Thinking About Giving in a Crisis - and Beyond](#)

Week 3

- Mon, May 18: [Harnessing Opportunities For Tomorrow](#)
- Tue, May 19: [Outside the Box: An \(Unconventional\) Orchestra Musician's Perspective](#)
- Wed, May 20: [How to Use Scenario-building to Plan for an Uncertain Future](#)
- Thu, May 21: [Tools for Problem-solving in Negotiations with the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service](#)
- Fri, May 22: [The Business Model Evolution: Earned Revenue Opportunities in a Virtual World](#)

Week 4

- Tue, May 26: [Conference Keynote with Nina Simon: Re-envision Relevance to Build a More Inclusive Future](#)
- Wed, May 27: [Surfing the Digital Wave: Increase Your Orchestra's Footprint in Local and Global Arenas](#)
- Thu, May 28: [Addressing Gender Equity On and Off the Stage](#)
- Fri, May 29: [International Touring Critical to Profitability, Despite Challenges](#)

Week 5

- Mon, June 1: [You are Hearing the Physics of Sound](#)
- Wed, June 3: [What is the Artistic Work of Orchestras for Today?](#)
- Thu, June 4 at 11:00am Eastern/8:00am Pacific: [So You Want to Know About Sensory-Friendly Programming?](#)
- Thu, June 4: [Anti-Black Racism and American Orchestras](#)
- Fri, June 5 at 11:00am Eastern/8:00am Pacific: [Loan Forgiveness and the Paycheck Protection Program](#)
- Fri, June 5: [Aligning Strategic Facility Initiatives with COVID-19 Response](#)

Week 6

- Mon, June 8: [EDI at the SFS: Foundational Work and the COVID-19 Challenge](#)
- Mon, June 8 at 3:30pm Eastern/12:30pm Pacific: [The American Orchestras' Futures Fund Forum](#)
- Tue, June 9: [Creative Youth Development Online: How Orchestras, Youth Orchestras, and Musicians Join Young Learners as Agents of Change](#)
- Wed, June 10: [Engaging Audiences in the Post-pandemic World: The Evidence for Change](#)
- Thu, June 11: [Gathering Again: The Science of Orchestral Music Making Amid COVID-19](#)
- Fri, June 12: [Conference Finale with Valerie Coleman](#)

[Click here](#) to see the schedule of Constituency Meetings.

The League of American Orchestras' 2020 National Conference was presented online from May 5 to June 12, free of charge to League members. The schedule of the general sessions, above, was adapted as the Conference progressed to incorporate new and newly refocused sessions on today's most urgent social issues. In addition, the Conference included a comprehensive lineup of Constituency Meetings for groups including executive directors, artistic administrators, composers, conductors, musicians, staff members, volunteers, and board members.

and Lincoln Center President and CEO Henry Timms for a thought-provoking conversation on what opportunities and inspiration they had been seeing to understand the moment unfolding around us and how to navigate this new world.

McGill stated, “The normal is not going to be the normal of the past. There’s

nothing we can do to make it so. Through this obstacle we can become stronger, and more beautiful, and more diverse, than ever before.” Timms observed, “This world is opening up. Our job is to get people to engage in our mission on their own terms.” And Borda offered, “New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said that ‘shutting down

was easy; reopening will be an art form.’ And who’s better at art forms than us?”

Over the course of the six weeks, nearly 40 hours of keynote addresses, elective sessions, and sponsored sessions—streamed and recorded on Zoom, and broadcast and archived on our Conference portal PheedLoop—highlighted the current challenges and opportunities orchestras face; the need to continue committing to equity, diversity, and inclusion; and the artistic work and digital evolution in a changing world. Throughout the Conference, small-group Constituency Meetings gathered delegates by peer group to focus on their most pressing concerns. And a

Scenario Planning in the Time of COVID-19

Wednesday, May 6, 2020
1:00 PM – 2:30 PM
Google Calendar · ICS

Speakers: *Susan Nelson*, Executive Vice President, and *Dalley Hoar*, Project Manager, TDC

The COVID-19 crisis is affecting the arts and culture sector in an unprecedented way. Amidst an uncertain and seemingly ever-shifting environment, organizations must continue to respond to immediate challenges presented by the crisis while attempting to understand the potential implications of the crisis for next month, next season, and beyond.

This session will help participants think about how scenario planning can support more productive conversations and informed decision-making. Drawing on TDC’s conversations with leaders of nonprofit organizations from across the country, the session will outline how to develop scenarios that sit at the intersection of public health, audience demand, and programming; pose questions for leaders to consider as they refine their scenarios; and share how continued scenario planning can support organizations’ long-term recovery and repositioning.

The session will include a 45-minute presentation followed by 45 minutes of questions and discussion.

Please be sure you are [registered for Conference](#) by 10:00am on the day of this session in order to participate.

Philanthropists Discuss How They're Thinking About Giving in a Crisis – and Beyond

Friday, May 15, 2020
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM
Google Calendar · ICS

This session is generously developed and sponsored by Aspen Leadership Group.

Speakers: *Bruce Clinton*, Chairman and CEO, The Clinton Companies; *Sakurako Fisher*, President, San Francisco Symphony; *Peter May*, President and Founding Partner, Triam Fund Management, L.P.; and *Ron Schiller*, Founding Partner, Aspen Leadership Group

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic uncertainty, orchestras are faced with shuttered seasons, canceled fundraising events, and upended community engagement. Despite the critical contributions that orchestras make to our culture, society, and economy, many orchestra leaders are wondering, “Can we even ask for money right now?”

This panel directly asks leading philanthropists and patrons of orchestras how they are thinking about giving in the face of unprecedented need in the arts community. Moderated by Ron Schiller, Founding Partner of Aspen Leadership Group, a consulting and executive search firm serving the arts and broader nonprofit sector, the panelists will offer their first-hand perspective and discuss how they are focusing on organizations they already support, who have strong relationships with them, who are sensitive in their approach, and who are clear about their most important needs. Ron also will share evergreen best practices from his book, *Belief and Confidence: Donors Talk About Successful Philanthropic Partnership* which profiled more than 50 leading philanthropists on their most satisfying and successful giving experiences.

Please be sure you are [registered for Conference](#) by 10:00am on the day of this session in order to participate.

If you are already registered, [click here](#) to connect to the Pheedloop Virtual Event Portal.

You are Hearing the Physics of Sound

Monday, June 1, 2020
1:00 PM – 2:00 PM
Google Calendar · ICS

Speakers: *Henry Fogel*, Director of Marketing, Talaas | Sound Thinking and *Richard Talaas*, Principal Acoustics Consultant, Talaas | Sound Thinking

The content of this session was developed by and sponsored by Talaas | Sound Thinking.

Acoustician Richard Talaas will be joined by Henry Fogel in a discussion about the always-interesting subject of acoustics. Mr. Fogel will offer probing questions of interest to musicians on topics from Talaas’s recent invited lecture, “You are Hearing the Physics of Sound,” presented as part of the University of Chicago’s Physics & Contemporary Architecture Guest Lecture Series, which is tailored for the general public.

Please be sure you are [registered for Conference](#) by 10:00am on the day of this session in order to participate.

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Anthony McGill

virtual Exhibit Hall provided an opportunity to connect with Conference exhibitors and sponsors.

Mid-Conference, National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Mary Anne Carter opened our Annual Meeting with the reassurance, “By being apart, we’re actually coming together more. And we need to. This is an incredibly challenging time. Especially for the performing arts. Yet, despite the unknown and uncertainty, you continue to create and share your music. I applaud the orchestra community for adapting so quickly to this new digital environment... Please, stay safe, healthy, and always let the music play.”

The Annual Meeting was followed by an inspiring address by Nina Simon, a museum director turned community activist who founded OF/ BY/FOR ALL, a nonprofit that aims to build a more inclusive world by helping organizations embrace the full diversity of their commu-

Anti-Black Racism and American Orchestras

Thursday, June 4, 2020
1:00 PM – 2:30 PM
Google Calendar · ICS



Speaker: *Aaron Flagg*, D.M.A., Chair and Associate Director, Juilliard Jazz Studies Department, The Juilliard School

Aaron Flagg, D.M.A., Chair of the League’s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee and Chair and Associate Director, Juilliard Jazz Studies Program, leads this session that explores racism’s connection to orchestras, what orchestras can do about it, and how the League’s EDI Committee is engaging with and learning about racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Dr. Flagg will be joined by members of the League’s EDI Committee of the Board.

This session replaces “The Post-Pandemic Future” with *Adrian Ellis* and *Elizabeth Merritt*.

This session is made possible by generous grant from *The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation*.

Please be sure you are [registered for Conference](#) by 10:00am on the day of this session in order to participate.

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Nina Simon

nities. Civic and cultural organizations are focused on inclusion and relevance—and Simon discussed how orchestras can turn aims into actions. She stressed four questions to re-envision relevance to build a more inclusive future:

- What do you choose to change?
- Who do you commit to involve?
- What assets can you share?
- How?

For the Conference Finale on June 12, flutist and composer Valerie Coleman shared her story of founding Imani Winds, an American wind quintet known



Matthew Murphy

Valerie Coleman

for adventurous programming, and her work to stretch awareness and understanding of the musical art form while engaging more communities. And she shared *Seven O’Clock Shout*, her recent world premiere performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra at its June 6 *HearTO-*

GETHER: A Healing Conversation in Music and Words event; Coleman’s work was commissioned for musicians performing and recording during social distancing, and honoring frontline workers.

At the Closing Session, Coleman stated, “I have to ask: can we afford not to reconsider where we place the arts in our society? As Robert Battle, the director of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, said: ‘The arts nurture the positive imagination, and the imagination costs nothing. But, if it is not used, it will cost everything.’ As I see it, the arts are as crucial as the air we breathe.”

In addition, the League’s Gold Baton award was given to two of the orchestra field’s most vital organizations: to the American Composers Forum for cultivating a vibrant ecosystem of music creators, performers, advocates, and new-music listeners; and to New Music USA for foster-

ing a thriving, interconnected new-music community and unparalleled support of creative artists and their work.

To all who attended the Conference online to exchange ideas, resources, and tools: thank you for your work to lead, support, and champion your orchestra during a time of crisis. Each session of the Conference opened with an energizing selection from Jessie Montgomery’s *Starburst*, performed in a recording by the Minnesota Orchestra. As League President and CEO Jesse Rosen said in his opening remarks, “We’re looking forward to the time we can hear it live.” And we look forward to the time we can have in-person convenings again. Until then, thank you for gathering with us online. **S**

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Marilyn Rosen Presents
IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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