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AMERICAN LEAGUE OF ORCHESTRAS

Conference Finale with Valerie Coleman

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(Music)

Jesse Rosen: Good morning and welcome to the League's online national conference. This is the end. It's the last day. It's been quite a ride. We have wonderful people to hear from, Valerie Coleman, our keynote speaker, and two recipients of the Gold Baton award. We have a special guest to close, and we have Afa Dworkin, president of the Sphinx Organization.

Big thank you to our sponsors for staying with us the past six weeks. Your help has been fantastic.

Thank you.

Also, remember not to leave PheedLoop, but if you do you can just come right back in. The session is being recorded and you can go back, probably not

tomorrow, but in a couple days, as the session will be on the PheedLoop platform.

Today, there is a survey, where you can tell us what you think about this afternoon. Also, look out for a survey for the whole conference, which will be coming your way soon and will be in your email box.

We suspended our fundraising campaign, but I thank everyone who donated this year to Stronger Together. The campaign has reached \$162,000, nearly double last year's total. Thank you. If you happen to be one of the very few 3,700 registrants who has not made a contribution, you still can. All you have to do is click on the stronger stronger button on the left side in the panel or visit our website.

Also, I thank the Julian Family Foundation for helping us reach our goal by committing a \$35,000 per dollar match. We surpassed our goal and, even better, since we have not exhausted the available matching funds, they allowed us to extend their match through June 30, 2020. So contributions still have doubled the impact.

Your gift today supports our increasing commitment and value to League membership. All support is welcomed. Thank you for making a gift that's meaningful to you.

This session is being generously sponsored by Akustiks, which specializes in acoustic design to concert halls. I've been in every one of their venues, and they are wonderful.

Thank you, Akustiks, for your continued support of the League.

I will begin by reflecting on this conference. We began six weeks ago, and New York City had already become the epicenter of the global pandemic. The new cases and deaths were surging. The curve has been bent downwards, but in 22 other states, it's still going up. Worldwide, it continues to rage. On May 25, George Floyd was murdered by Minneapolis police, setting up a profound reckoning of the country's violence against black men and women of all ages.

Who could have thought -- would have separated ties with the Minneapolis police? It was voted to dismantle the police department. The twin crises hit people of color the hardest. Those of us who are white can barely imagine what has been the foreground of this. We entered the pandemic with fragile business models and a shameful record of racial discrimination. Now, we are being called to account for the way we do business and the way we failed to address systemic racism. From our conversations of the League, this time feels

despairing. We have never felt so unsure of the future or the steps to take moving forward. The future is uncertain. The conditions that supported our activities in current form feel like they're slipping away. There's hardship among the many of our community, who lost their jobs.

Some things give me hope and encouragement. The first is it about a group that's been working together for the last two years to address structural barriers that early professional Black and Latino musics faced, working to enter American orchestras. I'm referring to the Advisory Committee of the National Alliance. We will hear shortly from Afa Dworkin about the great progress in that effort.

In the Advisory Committee, from the point of its inception, this has been an effort that brought together managers, musicians, Black, Latino people, white people to take on a huge problem, namely, the lack of racial and ethnic diversity on our stages. League of American Orchestras, International Congress of Symphony and Opera Musicians and Regional Orchestra Players Association joined us to take on this important work.

Our meetings were often fraught with debates about how far we could go, questions of tenure, tackling implicit bias and the audition process itself, increasingly

seeming so out of touch with the world's orchestral musicians. The committee, including conductors, set in motion two important groups.

One, dedicated to establishing guidelines for equitable tenure practices, and the other, for capturing the demographic data about who's auditioning and who's winning jobs. How can you be serious about making change if you're not keeping track of what's going on? I'm reminded of three questions, what do you choose to change, who do you commit to involve and what assets can you share? The NAAS committee is clear on what it wants to change and will involve a broad set of stakeholders with a range of lived experiences in a way that pushed beyond the norms of decision making for classical music. It worked hard to knock down artificial barriers and leveraging the assets of partner organizations, extending higher out to the higher education community.

We invite groups of lived experiences and expertise to the table. Who can not be stirred by the unending creativity we're seeing and hearing from the gifted musicians among us? — the legendary manager of the San Francisco Symphony pointed out that when an orchestra goes out of business, invariably a new one gets cropped up, because the musicians won't look in

the rear view mirror. We must let go of old mind sets to interact with our communities.

In our session on artistic leadership, Esa-Pekka Salonen said we must determine the creative work that must be done and see that at expansive dedication to inclusion brings vibrancy. And relevance, then, we can reimagine how to organize our work and organizations.

There's good news, that we are being taught by our environment how to let go of old habits. It's hard not to notice the readiness of our community to come together, to find many paths forward. 3700 people have registered for this conference, almost now, four times our usual participation. There were increases in all categories, especially among musicians, small budget orchestras, youth orchestras and trustees. The peer group meetings have been overflowing with intense conversation. I've been hearing a great deal of vulnerability in the meetings. That's where leadership begins.

Like you, the League is reimagining its work, learning from its experience so we can be with you and for you. I celebrate the League staff for its flexibility, creativity, innovative thinking, and plain old hard work in this conference. We would all cheer if we were here

together.

So, our reorganization must include a focus on becoming anti-racist. I can say, orchestras must take action to make change in their organizations, and in their communities. We must acknowledge our personal organizational racism and transform our field into a space that's actively anti-racist and must work to understand the harm we caused. We must actively listen to and validate the experiences of our black indigenous people of color, to take action to share the power and advances that comes with whiteness. Saying we are sorry is not enough. We must be specific in our actions.

Some of the guidance came from two members of the League board. I'd like to close by mentioning them here. From Aaron Flagg's the ways to combat anti-Black racism. Center the people being harmed to understand and work from their perspective, learning the history of systemic discrimination, grow your awareness of words, behaviors, and processes that communicate racism, beliefs of superiority, or inferiority. Stay open to new perspectives on the familiar to remain vulnerable and tolerant.

Find your own way to stand up against racism in your life, community, organizations and our country.

Be an ally, increase the number of allies. Show deep commitment to the goals of equity and conclusion.

Develop mechanisms to keep yourself accountable, educated, and sensitive to the journey of others. That was from Aaron.

The final comment comes from Daniel Trahey, in the same session, in response to a question about how to lead when the leadership won't. He said, do not give up, now is not yesterday. You might be better heard today, but be quick because tomorrow the moral amnesia will set in for us all. Be polite, but persistent. Rally, push, embrace, challenge, but just do one thing. Don't stop.

That's what I wanted to share before we jump into our official printed program. It's my great pleasure to introduce my colleague and friend and president of the Sphinx Organization, Afa Dworkin.

>> Thank you so much. It's an honor to be here with 37 other fellow musicians, artists, community leaders and those who understand the power of the arts and impact of American orchestras. I will talk about the work of the National Alliance for Audition Support. It's unprecedented in its nature, to increase diversity in American orchestras. NAAS offers Black and Latino musicians a customized combination of mentoring,

audition preparation, financial support, and audition previews. NAAS is made up of the Sphinx Organization, and the New World Symphony, America's Orchestra Academy and the League of American Orchestras.

It's been launched with the support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, who we thank for their dedication to this work over the decades. It's a collaboration between three organizations, and also a group of Black and Latino musicians of American orchestras. I thank them for their patience and leadership. It involved partnership and contribution from 77 American orchestras.

I want to extend thanks to two people on my team who lead this work. Bill -- and Andrey, professional musicians who have been instrumental in figuring out schemes to administer the work, and work with each recipient, to truly understand their concerns, the barriers they face and the matters in which we can best empower them.

>> Since 2018, 24 artists have won places in American orchestras, including the Louisville Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, and many others. Recognizing the need for lasting support for orchestra track musicians, 77 members of the League contributed financially to partner with NAAS, and their thoughts, guidance, and their

constructive feedback as to how we can see to it that our orchestras begin to be more reflective of the communities in which they reside. I thank all the member orchestras, including San Francisco, Minnesota Orchestra, Detroit, Louisville, and so many others.

NAAS has supported 138 black and Latino musicians from all over the country. We support them financially, to help them pursue opportunities, and through mentorship and other support. Nearly \$300,000 in financial support alone have been awarded, and 222 audition grants, 43 substitute musicians grants and 50 instrument grants.

In 2018 and 2019, artists participated in our five live audition intensives, held by the New World Symphony. This year's audition intensive will provide nearly 70 artists an opportunity to participate in over a dozen distance learning sessions, recording mock auditions, and so forth. Prior to 2020, more than half have never had an experience in distance learning. An additional 12 musicians were placed on sublists with major orchestras. Five musicians won one year contracts with orchestras, so we have made progress and have a long way to go. We can only go there together.

We are working to pivot the audition, tenure

and promotion sphere. There's a committee looking at those processes, so this challenging time in the country is a time also to reimagine the circumstances under which we empower black and brown musicians. By the end of our pilot period, in a year and a half, our goal is to have at least 150 orchestral partners, and now we're at 77. I urge you to learn about the program, drop me a line, talk to any of us. The work continues to evolve, particularly in the wake of the pandemic and the other epidemic plague in our country. We are looking at these challenging times, at our musicians to help us navigate and pilot this work. We would appreciate your input and support and partnership from member orchestras. Let's get to 150 together, to help our orchestras reflect our community.

>> Thank you so much. We will turn now to some other chapters, to talk about our emerging leaders. The League's involvement in leadership development goes back to the 1950s, and Peter — got a start in the business from the orchestra management seminar. My dad also got his start, there, both were tutored by Helen Thompson. The orchestra management fellowship evolved into the emerging leaders program.

This program offers a -- focus one to one coaching, seminars and leadership experts and

institutions from outside the orchestra field. There's a faculty led by John McCann, known to many of you. The program lasts 8 months. Every year we have a new class, and the graduation of the class of 2020, and normally I would ask them to stand and we would cheer them. Let's take a minute to see them on this brief slide show.

Thank you and congratulations on this year, Karina. Robin, thank you and congratulations. And JT, and Giuliano, Rachel, congratulations. Monica, Brian, great to see you again. Andrew, congratulations. Ignacio, Sarah, great working with you. Congratulations. And Leah, congratulations. And Michelle. Congratulations.

There you have it. The class of 2020 of our emerging leaders. Big cheers all around.

We will turn to our Gold Baton. It is given annual for distinguished services to American orchestras, recognizing individuals and institutions whose contributions advance the cause of orchestras and symphonic music. This year we award two extraordinary organizations, devoted to supporting American's composers.

For decades, we neglected American composers. Our apparatus, mostly played music of

white European composers. There was no sign of much desire to change, it's a good thing that New Music U.S.A. came on the scene. Without them, composers would have had no viable means of support. They were making sure composers received professional development, grants, mentorships, recordings, and commissions. It's a good thing they did that because when orchestras finally woke up, the truth is, it's not like we woke up. We got woken up by these organizations, who figured out we needed composers and came up with ways to help us see the centrality of the composers. Today, we understand the driving towards relevance and inclusion, begins with the creative voice of our nation's composers. We have American Composers Forum, and New Music U.S.A. to thank for helping us get there. The Forum was founded in 1973, as a group of students at the University of Minnesota. The purpose was to create performance opportunities outside the academic setting. Imagine that, it was a radical idea at the time.

In the bad old days, the only way to make a living for a composer was in the academe. It started out as the Minnesota's composers forum but under the visionary leadership of Libby Larsen it became the American Forum and with that name change came many initiatives. We are familiar with nationwide commission

program, the first nation's composer initiative from 2004.

That's for the unique needs of Native American composers and performers.

Over the course of four decades, the American composers nurtured work of thousands of composers, their recording labels released over 600 titles and reached over half a million students. New programs like ACF connect offer direct commissions, leading national ensembles.

John handed the reins to Vanessa Rose, who already carved out a new, exciting direction for American Composers Forum. I will invite her to speak in a moment. Let's look at this video about ACF.

(Video)

>> I'm Vanessa Rose, President and CEO of the American Composers Forum. This is our office in St. Paul. As we have grown to be a national organization, it's important that we do the work from our home in the center of the country, recognizing the artistic communities in the country. Repeat events highlighted racism in our country made them ever more important. Our mission is to amplify the relevance and vitality of today's music. We invite you to envision the many ways you can collaborate with living composers or create yourself -- we enabled artists to build residency

programs with the high schools in south Minneapolis, and a women's prison. Creating music together, how many times the stories of individuals within these communities validate their experience. Fellowships seeded the development of new work and provided the opportunity for mid-career artists to focus on their art making, our residence programs allow young people across the country to commission music with a composer. Each piece is pushed with a free curriculum guide for other programs.

Attracting one of the most diverse audiences I've seen, race, age, socioeconomic status, and musical background, the association for the advancement of creative musics is our partner for our program, to commission three artists through an open call for scores. They will collaborate with pieces in Chicago and as part of their monthly program at the arts bank in Chicago.

Through our record label, we provide a platform for artists to be heard and an invitation for audiences to listen. Our commitment to being a racially equitable organization guides our work. We practice how to be anti-racist, and lead an ecosystem that's equitable. We support generations of artists through resources, and invite music lovers to be curious listeners. Thank you.

>>> Thank you, Vanessa. If we were in St. Paul, at our conference, I'd be asking you to come up and I'd hand you our Gold Baton award. People would take pictures as we would have hugs, but we have to do this virtually. So let me invite you, having shared the wonderful video, to share a few more words with us.

>> Thank you. It's my pleasure to thank you all and gratefully accept this award. A special note, our founders, Libby and John are watching now. In our original forum, the mission was to provide a platform and audience for the creation of performance of new music composed by Minnesota composers. We used a broad definition of the term, merge, and continue to develop a platform for both music being created today and the artists themselves. We strive to cultivate curious listeners like you.

I trained as a classical violinist. I moved to the administration and the life changing experience was the foundation for the leader I am today. When I moved last year, to see our community respond, in the spirit of our city's protests, makes me proud. This can be a tipping point in our field. We created, followed and questioned the various responses to the movement, and in your own orchestras, I ask that you consider context. The music we play reflects commitment to demonstrating that black

lives matter. Each creator has a unique journey. When you program a living composer, you collaborate with that person as well as their music. Together, we engage a truly diverse audience. I invite you to ask, whose music are we missing out on?

As we have done for years, let's work together.

Last September, we heard music creators leading conversations with other leaders and venues, media, and schools. You're not alone. Our ecosystem thrives because of the diversity of people and forms of music they create. We have the people sharing the session, with amazing Black artists, Black-led organizations, because of this deep investment in artists and partnerships, like orchestras, that ACF exists today.

Thank you to the League of American Orchestras, board and staff. I acknowledge the League support of ACF, and artists like today's featured speaker, Valerie Coleman. Thank you.

>>> Thank you so much, Vanessa. Your leadership is inspirational. Thank you for challenging us and for being with us today.

>> Thank you.

>>> All right. New Music U.S.A. was formed in 2011, out of the merger between Meet the Composer and the American Music Center. Meet the Composer

was founded on a radical idea that composers could make a living out of academia, but also make extraordinary contributions to the lives of communities and performing arts organizations. John Duffy, professional boxer, founded Meet the Composer in 1974 and awarded countless commissions and residencies to composers of all kinds of genres. Orchestras were the beneficiary, through its landmark residency program. Another program implemented in partnership with the League. Composers like -- many were introduced to orchestras. The Music Alive program, in its twenty years, supported 110 composers, 76 organizations, and 114 district residencies. The American Music Center was founded in 1939 by Aaron Copland, this was dedicated to building a national community of artists, organizations, and audiences creating, performing and enjoying new American music. It created programs, commissioned and recorded new orchestral works. In 1999, the American Center launched a web magazine, New Music Box, the place to go for important conversations about music today.

A quote from Robert Patterson. If the contemporary music is the fabric, the new music box is the -- that us together. It advocates for the field, New Music U.S.A. works with its community in response to

unaddressed needs. New Music U.S.A. envisions an equitable ecosystem for new music throughout the United States.

Vanessa Rose gave away my joke. I was about to say, that in order to lead one, your name must be Vanessa. Both of these wonderful organizations are led by Vanessas. And New Music U.S.A is led by Vanessa Reed. Let's look at this brief video.

(Video)

[singing] >> Being a composer with this orchestra has given and taught me so much. It reminds me of the extraordinary skill these musicians have. In addition, the extraordinary love they have for all music, there are many musicians that play in jazz groups, so the paradigm of what is called classical music is something that's in flux now, as it should be.

>> It's always been a goal to champion musicians -- opportunities for composers who look like me, a platform to compose openly, freely, with limited parameters, thinking beyond concert openers, bringing new color and life to the ever growing music, an opportunity to offer diverse perspectives.

>> Here in Atlanta, the home of the Civil Rights Movement, the importance of featuring music of color can't be overestimated, and when they put their

weight behind my vocabulary, that really helped me tremendously become part of the conversation.

>> I'm excited to be working with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, writing my first large scale work. In the orchestral world and in my relationship to writing music is a rare thing. I'm grateful to be part of this whole program. There are so many shining voices that have not been heard yet. It's so important to find ways that we can hear them.

(Music)

>>> Wow. Vanessa Reed, there you are.

>> Hi.

>>> Welcome. Thank you for that terrific video. I'm handing you the League's Gold Baton, and I learned this morning, it's in the mail, so I'm sorry we can't do better virtually. But here we are. Welcome, and let's hear from you now.

>> Thank you so much. It really is a huge honor to be accepting this award. Everyone who's been involved this this organization, I love that I'm receiving this award along side our sister organization, and Vanessa Rose. So congratulations, Vanessa and ACF. New Music U.S.A. supports the appreciation of new

music through our work as advocate for the field through a growing number of grants and our media platform, New Music Box.

We were founded in 2011 through the merging of Meet the Composer and American Music Center. When I moved to New York to take up the leadership role I was inspired by the extraordinary commitment the organization made over the years, to supporting long term relationship relationships between composers and orchestras. That's why the film for today's award focuses specifically on this work, with new music at the heart of orchestral life.

As you heard, from Jesse, our program was launched by one of our founding organizers, Meet the Composer, in partnership with the League of American Orchestras. Across two decades, it supported hundreds of composer residencies, in orchestras of all sizes. Thanks to support from the Mellon Foundation, this showed the vital role of living composers, in extending the art of symphonic music and the relationship to the orchestra's community.

Thank you to everyone who made this work happen. John Duffy, Fran Richards, and to Ed Hirsch and thank you to Jesse. This work changed the lives of many composers. It created many new opportunities for

orchestras and their audiences. When our building on this deep collaboration, we know there's a lot of work to do. One way we approach this is to the program we launch in January, with support from Sphinx Organization, which collects six orchestras committed to co-meditating black and Latino composers, working with them to program repertoire, past and present, previously omitted from major concert programs.

We hope it will start transforming new orchestral music for future generations. The orchestras you heard about in the film are in the process of forming their -- this is a way to be part of a commissioning process, while taking collective action toward an each future for orchestral music.

There's also a link in the chat for more information on the program. Please, see our website for information on the other programs we are running. We welcome your suggestions, questions and ideas. Thank you for this distinguished award. Big thank you to my current team and board at New Music U.S.A. for working with me on the next chapters of the new music U.S. story.

>>> Thank you for being with us and for your wonderful leadership. Into the home stretch, and I'm introducing you to Valerie Coleman, who has one of

those biographies, about three miles long, and it makes, one person shouldn't get to have, to be so good at so many different things, she's a flutist, composer, an educator, and brilliant at everything. Good for you, Valerie. The last piece of hers I heard, a piece drawn from -- book, we will hear a new piece of hers and I will let her tell you about it. We will go from that piece into her key note speech. Welcome, Valerie, over to you.

>> Thank you so much. Thank you so much for the League's work, ACF, and New Music U.S.A, for all you do to support composers, especially those of color. The work you are about to hear comes from a back story, in 2019, the Philadelphia Orchestra, asked me to write a rendition of -- for them. Now, looking forward, it's a rare opportunity for a composer to create a second work for a group they contracted with, and it's all the more sweet because when you create that second work, you get to know all about the musicians, their personality and capabilities so you can write for them. When they asked me to create this work about specifically healing, I jumped on it. It's everything I stand for, my creativity.

So, I came up with Seven O'Clock Shout, inspired by that moment in time, every day, when people lean out your windows and cheer on the essential

workers as they come home. The piece is about that, and it's about the abilities of the essential workers, sacrifices they give every day, it's about nature regenerating itself. It's about people coming together. -- his conducting was videotaped right at seven o'clock to bring in the light of day and energy to the video itself. I would be remiss in not mentioning, if you will name a piece seven okay shout, you must have a shout in it. So there's a moment, where the orchestra has a call in response going on between the trombone and the orchestra family itself. It's a fun moment, where the orchestra gets a chance to cheer. So the work ends in a provided anthem, just to celebrate not just sacrifices, but the idea that we get to survive another day and we don't take it for granted. This is Seven O'Clock Shout. Thank you.

(Video)

(Music)

>> It's with gratitude to the League of American Orchestras for the honor of being with you at the close of Global Stages, Local Stories. I was struck by the conference speaking directly to the humanity at the heart of our collective work in music. We begin our

process from within, journey through the landscape of stories that show interrelationship between composers and performer. We see the kindness, goodness, harshness and cruelty in the world but we also know that music has unique advantage of transforming all that can seem far way, and global, to what is emotional and nearby. Global stages reflects the thoughtfulness, humanity and care that was put into a brilliant lineup and array of speakers, educators, and I'd say musical care givers, a term I don't give lightly in our current situation. At this time in the world, we are entrusted with the work of organizing sound, exposing aspects of our souls into shared feeling. It's our expressive, that can move the listener to feel, and may not have been been obvious to feel. We may meet them by evoking their most familiar feelings.

I've always maintained that musical competitions are their own living entities, unfolding themselves like children and have personalities that you could not have predicted. They don't eat, but yet, they breathe and have meaning and full of life. The impact they make on others is what makes them into living beings. The symphonic community has the power to open a new chamber of the human heart, with compassion and empathy. It's a creative sense of well

being in a person, creating love. This is a process that is positive within itself. When love is communicated through music, it has the potential to change lives.

2020 has shown itself to be a year that aggressively confronts our collective humanity. Artists and organizations are being asked to choose which path to walk. These times put into sharp relief our value systems and challenges us to venture away from them. With hard work, we just might receive the abundant power of change, the kind of transformation that so many of us dreamed of and longed for. Through this time, isolation has become a sacred space of transformation for me. While creating, I've been working through the ideas of what it means to be a woman composer of color, and that's made me take a hard look at what my true responsibilities are. But more than ever, it's clear that it's a job, to recorded times, to shed light on unspoken history and hopefully bridge gaps between differences of opinion and do so in a way that can be received with openness.

Composers can be dangerous. We record the times, create new histories, interpret what's happening and put it into music. That's what we're wired to do. So this is a very exciting time for women composers. I've come to understand our belated acceptance into the

world scene has never been about equality or creativity. Women composers bring a certain instinctual thing that's unique. We have a different message. The world is finally ready and taking an interest in what we have to say. Perhaps it's the depth of our intuitive ability, needed more than ever. There's the hill to climb. I'm happy to take on that challenge. Current events give us a charge but that for sure needs release. It's not just me, but for artists around the world. When we address humanity, and nature of morality, it shows that what nourishes the arts will nourish the audience. This is how we, artists of all kinds, push humanity forward.

At the end of the day, our compassion, empathy, is the most human quality we have. Yes, things in the news, the feeling of helplessness, but we as artists are not helpless. We have a gift for reframing. How the struggle is handled with grace, through determination, how not to only persevere through, but to thrive. I wrote Phenomenal Women, a symphonic work celebrating American women who are icons. It was written for American composers orchestra, and I learned it's scheduled for a Orpheus Chamber Orchestra's upcoming season. These women have changed the way we look at life. It honors Maya Angelou, Olympic gold medalists, Michelle Obama, and many others. I felt

called to dedicate one movement to the mothers of the caravan, the fact that the caravan had children and mothers hit a note, being a parent myself. As a mother, I can't imagine being separated from my young daughter.

As they took the journey north that ultimately engaged so many children, I needed to acknowledge their strength as they helped envision a prayer for a better life for their children. We should nevertheless become desensitized to their struggles. In Seven O'Clock Shout, especially workers of all kinds are honored. I felt the work that so many souls are doing to meet the intense challenge of the coronavirus, as a pandemic descended upon us. It's about everyone's 7:00 p.m. cheering, everywhere, gratitude, and celebrating our humanity, one day at a time.

Those who survived and those who did not have one thing in common. They each held a vision of a world beyond this virus. They fought with all they had for that vision, for themselves and families and for the world. That's what figures hugely into what I composed in Seven O'Clock Shout. It was just performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra, in its virtual formation as a premier. The music clearly showed me where it needed to go towards a story of healers, of all kinds, who keep the world standing right side up. When you see those

things happening around you as an artist, it's a different kind of fuel. What began as anger, at the stunning amount of loss in this moment, we turned it love, acknowledge all the physical care givers keeping us alive. Every crucial play, medical teams, sanitation crews, without them, where would we be? Now, I can't go further without expressing my immeasurable thanks to the maestro again, and to, the inspired, amazing Philadelphia Orchestra family. You're phenomenal musicians. You changed my life. I'm blessed to have completed two commissions by you. My gratitude goes beyond whatever words can express. The feeling is of absolute wonder, that I have in this moment, having just heard the heartfelt performance of a creation I ask considered to be new born. My own relationship to music began in the room when my mother, she played a recording of Beethoven's 6th Symphony, every day, clearly she knew I was in there listening. As a small child, I created my own music, as part of play time with the advanced technical aid of a cheap electric keyboard with organ sounds. Looping back and forth ended up being distorted tunings, that could have been a sound track to a horror movie. My instinct to create was pretty much already there and I believe wholeheartedly it's a gift that all children share. I began composing music

before I learned how to write it.

It must have been around six years old, it came to me, the idea of creative, productive work. It's always been there, long before I learned how to play the flute. My father passed away when I was nine. I credit my mother to allowing, and also encouraging my creative unfolding while guiding me through the city. I came from the same neighborhood as Mohammed Ali. I learned to notate music and was playing the flute. I wrote symphonies, which received local performances, where, or at least in my mind it's not a typical little kid's existence. That neighborhood, my mother, is running and has run a day care, now going on for 60 years. I witnessed her loving and coaxing the next generation full of meaning by nurturing those children's imagination. She gave me that, saw us through every step of growing up. While she communicated to me that it's the force of my nature that will always be the primary mover of change, she made sure to walk the talk. I lived by that ever since.

Another way of saying this, if you see something important, and you feel it in your heart, get busy. Make it happen. Growing up, I remember sitting in the backyard watching the sun go down every evening, listening to the radio playing orchestral music. I

said to myself, one day people will play my music all around the world. In orchestras. Here we are, with the Philadelphia Orchestra playing Seven O'Clock Shout, still ringing in the air.

It's been a long journey to get to this point. As a young flutist, I took advantage of every opportunity to play in ensembles, youth orchestras, man, I loved it. Playing with large groups of kids was home to me. As a result of the summer at Boston university, I got my mother's blessing, packed up and moved to Boston to study is there. It was exciting, but to be truthful, it was a culture shock. Music making has always been a world full of kids of every hue, everyone was together. In Boston, it was a different story. But my love for orchestral and chamber music was what gave me -- I learned a great deal about the musical ecosystem there. I lived with a keen sense of musical homesickness. When I got to New York to pursue my graduate degree, I was given my future in performing a very close-- and I wondered how I was going to pay the bills.

Part of me knew I had to tend to what was missing, in not only my musical world, but building a professional career. We always hear necessity is the mother of invention. I lived it a bit different. In my case, the necessity was the taskmaster of invention. I was a

young woman, full of ideas, but I knew that no one was going to make my ideas a reality. I could not wait around for that. It would take truly rolling up my sleeves to realize any visions. I learned that it takes vision, hard work, faith, patience and persistence, to knock down doors. Chamber music was then a career path taken by string players, but not yet a full time wood wind quintet in the world, it was unheard of. But as long as you have a plan and mission, a directive, a style, a strong personal interest in music unique to your voice, there will always be a place for you in the field. It was only a matter of time and you have to work hard, just wait. I believe that if you have courage and put it out there, life has a way of attracting the right people into your sphere in a way you couldn't have planned.

The moment you feel the real faith in the process keeps you striving onward. With all that in mind, I can see my vision through so I got on the phone and just like a telemarketer, called, cold, some of the most inspiring musicians in New York City and they happened to be African American. And that fueled me further. I asked them if they would be interested in sitting down and reading, forming possibly a quintet with me and I asked them who do you look to for inspiration, your role models. If I shared experience, cultural experience

would lend itself to interpreting music, in a different way, so I started writing for the group. That's where the real journey began. It's like being a cook in the kitchen.

When someone is hungry, you cook something but you know the amount of love that goes into cooking for people you care about is the same with the creative process.

I always want to create music, for the people I'm writing for, something they will enjoy playing. I have to admit, I don't really write for myself. It's all about the sharing experience, to making people around me better for the experience. And in being in the zone of writing, and connecting with something greater than yourself, you taste something huge. Then you crave the feeling of always touching the divine. I did it at the time, but it was truly the start of fulfilling my childhood vision of having my music played on world stages. It was a journey that proved itself to be a pure expression of my soul.

It brought me so much unexpected bounty, with colleagues that constantly challenged me to grow. A few of the brightest including a Grammy nomination, the opportunity to record with extraordinary people in the field, like Steve Coleman, Chick Corea, and so many others. But it wasn't until I retired, after being in the group for 22 years that, due to recognition from an array

of awards, include recently classical woman of the year, being cited by the Washington Post as one of the top 30 women composers. Suddenly, I realized my accomplishments are the product of my mother, aunts, grandma, their strength to survive. I know I'm literally the product of my ancestors' wildest dreams, leading us to up to today. At this daunting moment, in America, we witnessed the death of over a hundred thousand people, all of our lives are deeply touched by multiple crises and as we look around the world, seeing how hard we have been hit in the U.S., we're humbled and grateful to be here and, in a state of virtual togetherness, yet, recognizing who's hardest hit, we show we all have so much work to do.

We need to bring into being a world that makes life truly liveable beyond just trying to survive. We need to move towards a real experience of thriving for us all. The focus on the road ahead should be what the world of live music performance means and will be task ahead, we need research, innovation, persistence, and belief that we are all equal, all of us belong to this future. We reached profound understanding that on physical, emotional, spiritual levels, the arts generate healing.

There's a powerful example of this, in the form of a nonprofit I supported for a while and witnessed its

growth. It's Crossing Point Arts, which bridges, brings the arts to survivors of human trafficking. They're doing their work because they know healing from PTSD without the arts is next to impossible. Using their creativity and expression, time and time again, survivors heal. So I have to ask, can you afford to deny the value of arts in our society? As Robert Battle of Alvin Ailey Dancers said, the arts nurture the positive imagination. Imagination costs nothing. But if it's not used, it will cost everything.

As I see it, the arts are as crucial as the air we breathe. For the future of orchestras in their devoted organizers, funders and staff, there's much to consider. At the crux, the enormously important question of what that truly means. And what it can look like. We have a chance now. In this sacred space of isolation, we can rethink things as never before. It is well within reach but we must be tireless in efforts to achieve this. We are in this spot of together. We share the responsibility, all of us, audiences, stakeholders, gate keepers, I'm reminded of the seeds of imagination my mother planted in my heart. They apply to everyone in ear shot.

It's the force of nature that will always be a prime mover of change. We're being called to transform ourselves in the world to a better vision of what has been

before. Now is the opportunity, where the world is determining how to move forward, again, who do we want to be? How do we want to express it? How can we reinvent ourselves so that the only choice for change to happen is for it to happen and we never go backwards again. Do we fully understand that we must reinvent ourselves?

I think we must. Many things are being raised right now. The hope and sound. The Seven O'Clock Shout, but also our protest signs, fists in the air, our voices are cries for justice. This astonishing time of transformation is a confluence of love, anger, determination, awakening, passion, and conviction. At last, people are understanding our collective power. We have become so individualized along our paths that social distancing almost seemed normal. On the flip side, we witness the worldwide response to a four hundred year old system devised to exploit, diminish and destroy brilliant lives.

But here we are. Change in view. The question is, what are we going to do about it? I honored my path to help push the world forward with an urgency for deep healing. If we demand that we each do this work, and I see our wildest dreams are no longer beyond reach, so beautiful. Utterly dazzling, and beautiful.

>>> Valerie, thank you so much for your remarkable work and remarks. I was so glad that hundreds of people got to hear Seven O'Clock Shout and your comments, I'm so glad they're recorded. So much you shared, your reflections on the power of music and your own journey and incredible spirit, taking us forward. Enormous gratitude to you. Thank you so much for being with us this afternoon.

We are now about at the end. I want to introduce you to a terrific friend and colleague, well known to some of you. That is the principle oboist of the Nashville Symphony, Titus Underwood. He will tell us about a piece we are about to hear. When the piece is over, the conference is over. Please fill out your surveys, and thank you to all our sponsors and exhibitors. And that's all from me. Over to you, Titus.

>> Thank you so much. Beautiful, Valerie, absolutely inspiring. I was so inspired, and we put together Lift Every Voice and Sing, a composition written for, became the African American national anthem for Black Americans, and we decided to, it came about as the pandemic hit. I reached out to Black colleagues, said let's do, put together a piece, how about we do, show the younger Black students that show representation there because we don't see ourselves

represented that much in orchestras. To inspire young Black musicians to see beautiful players playing together. I said how about we do Lift Every Voice, an arrangement of it. My dear friend, Fred -- and he said write us an arrangement of Lift Every Voice and Sing. So we took, roughly two months, this was in the works before the protests happened. We were about to release the Strauss about a week ago. A friend of mine said maybe we should release Lift Every Voice and Sing. I said that's great because the timing can not be better.

It's already recorded, then, one morning, I had a vision for this. I meant it to be an art presentation, not just us as symphony music playing next to each other. But there's a message to be heard. I put together pictures, thought about how I wanted this to translate the message to get across, stand in solidarity with people who lost their lives. We wanted to, the beauty of Lift Every Voice and Sing, it was rooted in a deep tradition in Black culture and wanted it to represent in the pandemic, that orchestras have written their solidarity statements, saying black lives matter, challenges us to move to substantial changes, taking corrective action. It's taken our consciousness to a different place. Rooting us in the specificity of Black life in America. We see ourselves shown in orchestras, in tenure, see ourselves in the

board rooms, and composers, and we want to make the statement showing we're here to inspire. I want to leave you with some of the lyrics of Lift Every Voice and Sing. These are some of the lyrics written by James Johnson, and then later set to music by his brother, John. These are some of the words. Lift every voice and sing, til earth and heaving ring with the harmonies of liberty, let our rejoicing rise, high as the skies, let it resound loud as the rolling sea. Sing a song full of faith that the dark past taught us, full of hope that the present has brought us facing the rising sun of our new day begun. Let us march on to victory. Stony the road we trod, fell in the days when hope unborn had died. Yet, with a steady beat not our weary feet come to the place for which our fathers, we came over a way that tears have been watered, we tread our path through the blood of the slaughtered, out of the gloomy past to, now we stand where the white gleam of our bright star is cast. I hope you enjoy this piece, and where do we go from here with Martin Luther King so we are in music and art, moving forward, as culture ambassadors, that we are in better literature leading us to corrective action to give us a clear path working together. Enjoy Lift Every Voice and Sing. Thank you.

(Music)

