

May 6, 2021

League's 76th National Conference, Embracing a Changed World, Will Explore the Promise of a Post-Pandemic Future

Online Conference, June 7 – 17, Will Spotlight New Voices in Reflecting on Opportunities Ahead

Performances by Ten U.S. Orchestras Will be Showcased

**Wynton Marsalis—Renowned Musician, Composer, and Bandleader—
in Opening Keynote Conversation with League President and CEO Simon Woods**

**Conference is Free of Charge for Orchestra Musicians, Students,
and Furloughed or Laid-off Orchestra Staff**

New York, NY (May 6, 2021) – As orchestras emerge from the pandemic and lean into recovery, the League of American Orchestras' 76th National Conference, *Embracing a Changed World*, will tackle the big questions about the future through new perspectives, actionable content, and provocative discussion.

The first Conference since League President and CEO Simon Woods joined the organization features many new voices; an unprecedented number of orchestral performances; a redesigned format encouraging more open discussion among attendees; accessibility accommodations for a wide range of disabilities; and a newly-created constituency group for students. All orchestra musicians, League-member college and high school students, and furloughed or laid-off orchestra staff can attend free of charge.

“Since concerts with audiences were felled a year ago by the pandemic, the world has changed beyond recognition,” commented Woods. “In the coming months, people will flood back into our halls for the inspiration of live music - but it will be against the backdrop of the deep inequity that has been so starkly revealed by the events of 2020 and 2021. As orchestras put their organizations back together and build sustainable futures, we have an opportunity to dig deep inside ourselves for ways in which our field can reach more people, more fairly. And as we do this, we are sustained by the extraordinary journey of learning that the last year has brought us: learning about digital media, about addressing racial equity, about stretching our programming, and about how art can sustain audiences and communities in times of crisis. Now we can transform this learning—and the newly acquired skills that have come with it—into a future that we can all be proud of. This is what ‘Embracing a Changed World’ is all about.”

The Conference Line-up:

[Eight speakers and a vibrant line-up of emcees and panelists](#), from both inside the orchestra field and beyond, will provide inspiring perspectives and ideas.

The [Opening Session](#), June 7, features musician, composer, and bandleader Wynton Marsalis in conversation with Woods. From his point of view as an educator and leading advocate of American culture, Marsalis will reflect on the future of the arts and orchestras in expanding musical offerings and audiences. He will share his core beliefs, based on the principles of jazz: individual creativity (improvisation), collective cooperation (swing), and facing adversity with persistent optimism (the blues). Additionally, recipients of the 2021 [Ford Musician Awards for Excellence in Community Service](#) (to be announced closer towards Conference) will be presented virtually with their awards.

On June 17, the League's Annual Meeting will include remarks by Jennifer Chang, White House Liaison and Senior Advisor to the Chief of Staff, National Endowment for the Arts. The [Closing Session](#) that day will feature a keynote conversation between Elizabeth Alexander, President, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and Emil Kang, the foundation's Program Director for Arts and Cultural Heritage, addressing why change is so important for the orchestra field, as we place the arts and artists at the center of thriving, healthy communities.

[Five thematic days](#), focused on a different critical question each day, will encourage in-depth reflection through a new three-session format: 1) featured speaker, 2) moderated panel discussion, 3) facilitated open chat for members to take the conversation forward. All Conference registrants will also have access to an online discussion board for continuing the conversation around the critical question of the day. The five themes are:

- **Concert Hall vs. Digital:** What new opportunities and challenges are emerging, and how do we balance the need for both engagement and revenue? Speaker: Colleen Dilenschneider. Emcee: Anwar Nasir. Panelists: Joe Kluger, Alexandra Llamas, Doug McLennan, Bahia Ramos, Ignacio Barrón Viela, and Brenda Jean Walker.
- **Better Together:** What responsibilities and opportunities do orchestras have to deepen their relationships with their communities? Speaker: Marc Bamuthi Joseph. Emcee: Laura Reynolds. Panelists: Maria Araujo, Åsa Armstrong, Michael Frisco, Briana Scales, and Janna Walters-Gidseg.
- **Showing Up for Racial Equity:** What shifts across the board can we make in order to progress towards a more equitable, post-pandemic future? What new tools and approaches do we need in order to sustain and expand this work? Speaker: Denise Wilmer Barreto. Emcee: Blake-Anthony Johnson. Panelists: Harold Brown, Dr. Akuoma Nwadike, Doris Parent, Leslie Wu Foley, and Jessica Schmidt.
- **New Directions:** How has a year of adversity and awareness changed our approach to programming and the concert experience? (Format on this day features three panel discussions.) Moderator for first panel: Titus Underwood. Panelists: Jennifer Arnold, Ashleigh Gordon, Lee Koonce, and Fred Onovwerosuoke. Moderator for second panel: Ed Yim. Panelists: Kyu-Young Kim, Alecia Lawyer, and Jeremy Rothman. Moderator for third panel: Eun Lee. Panelists: Christine Lim, Shzr Ee Tan, and Mari Yoshihara.
- **Reframing the Narrative:** How do we make a compelling case that resonates with government, funders, and the public as a new chapter in the work of orchestras begins? Speaker: Kiran Singh Sirah. Emcee: Michelle Miller Burns. Panelists: David Bohnett, Nadia Elokdah, and David Holland.

An **Innovation Day** will be devoted to sessions led by experts in the fields of acoustics, finance, brand strategy, audience retention, wellness, and patron engagement, among others. These include David Dombrosky, Henry Fogel, Susan Nelson, Roger Sametz, Richard Talaske, Gabriel van Aalst, and Stephanie Wagner.

The Conference also offers ample opportunities for networking, constituency meetings, socializing, and visiting League Business Partners in the Conference virtual Exhibit Hall.

Conference Music:

An unprecedented **ten orchestras from across the country** will showcase a wide range of music, programming an exhilarating mix of classics, as well as the music of our time, through live-streamed or pre-taped evening concerts. Featured orchestras are: Albany Symphony, Great Lakes Chamber Orchestra, Greensboro Symphony Orchestra, Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra, Interschool Orchestras of New York, Minnesota Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, New Bedford Symphony Orchestra, Omaha Symphony, and San Diego Symphony.

Soloists include, among others, violinist Kelly Hall-Tompkins, saxophonist Branford Marsalis, and pianist Daniil Trifonov, as well as eleven conductors and music directors: Yaniv Dinur, David Alan Miller, Gianandrea Noseda, Libor Ondras, Rafael Payare, Steven Schick, Dmitry Sitkovetsky, Barry L. Stern, Osmo Vänskä, Thomas Wilkins, and Lidiya Yankovskaya.

Five works will receive world premieres at the Conference: Tré Bryant's *Quarantainment Overture* and Roger Tallman's *Conflicted* (both performed by Great Lakes Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Music Director Libor Ondras) and Michael Daugherty's *Lift Up Thine Ears* for orchestra (performed by Omaha Symphony, conducted by Music Director Thomas Wilkins), as well as Alexis Lamb's *Serotiny* and Nina Shekhar's *Above the Fray* (both performed by Albany Symphony, conducted by Music Director David Alan Miller).

Commissioned and performed by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and conductor Katharina Wincor, Quinn Mason's *Inner City Rhapsody* will be woven throughout as the Conference's theme music.

[View the schedule overview.](#)

[View the complete day-to-day schedule.](#)

Additional Conference Features:

This year's Conference offers a range of enhanced accessibility features. Adhering to the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, the Conference's online platform will offer options for improved readability as well as orientation adjustments to mute sounds, stop animations, hide images, and more. Additionally, for the first time, Conference registrants will be able to access dedicated user profiles designed to improve the experience of registrants with epilepsy, vision impairments, cognitive disabilities, or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Keyboard navigation profiles are available for registrants with motor impairments, and audio muting functionality is in place to ensure an optimal experience for registrants with hearing devices.

Also new this year is a Conference constituency group comprised of high school and college-aged students from conservatories and other academic institutions. The students will have dedicated meetings and social opportunities, with access to customized content intended to equip and empower them on their career path. The Gold Baton—the League’s highest honor, normally presented at Conference—is postponed for one year, until delegates can safely meet in person.

[Register for the 76th League of American Orchestras National Conference. \(Not for media\)](#)

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The **League of American Orchestras** leads, supports, and champions America's orchestras and the vitality of the music they perform. Its diverse membership of more than 1,800 organizations and individuals across North America runs the gamut from world-renowned orchestras to community groups, from summer festivals to student and youth ensembles, from conservatories to libraries, from businesses serving orchestras to individuals who love symphonic music. The national organization dedicated solely to the orchestral experience, the League is a nexus of knowledge and innovation, advocacy, and leadership advancement. Its conferences and events, award-winning *Symphony* magazine, website, and other publications inform people around the world about orchestral activity and developments. Founded in 1942 and chartered by Congress in 1962, the League links a national network of thousands of instrumentalists, conductors, managers and administrators, board members, volunteers, and business partners. Visit americanorchestras.org.