Can music change minds? Can an orchestral score grapple with issues like social justice? Increasingly, orchestras and composers are addressing the fierce urgency of now in the music they play, the programs they present, either directly through explicit programmatic content or more abstractly, with an evocative title or dedication. Context is all. Beethoven originally dedicated his Third Symphony to Napoleon Bonaparte, in tribute to Bonaparte’s soi-disant democratic idealism. When Bonaparte declared himself emperor, Beethoven scratched out the inscription and re-dedicated the work to a more generic hero. Same notes, different message. When composer Julia Wolfe started work on her Fire in my mouth for the New York Philharmonic a few years back, no one could have imagined that an oratorio about the 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire would be stunningly relevant. But as debates about immigration, foreign workers, and labor seized national headlines this January, suddenly a multimedia score about a workplace tragedy in which more than a hundred workers perished—most of them young, female, and recent immigrants—felt ripped from the latest Facebook feed.

This issue of Symphony looks at the recent proliferation of musical works and activities by orchestras that bring forward the often overlooked narratives, identities, and communities that make up America today. As a long-lead publication, many stories in Symphony experience a considerable gestation; articles don’t just happen overnight. Rest assured, no one is looking to ignore tradition and abolish the canon. Rather, orchestras and composers are thinking about the music they love, the legacy they revere, in new and different ways, building on a passionate reverence for the music as a point of departure for multiple dialogues.
Conductors

DAVID BERNARD
MUSIC DIRECTOR, MASSAPEQUA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
MUSIC DIRECTOR, PARK AVENUE CHAMBER SYMPHONY

TERESA CHEUNG
MUSIC DIRECTOR, ALTOONA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ANTHONY BLAKE CLARK
MUSIC DIRECTOR, BALTIMORE CHORAL ARTS SOCIETY
DIRECTOR OF CHORAL ACTIVITIES, THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

KENNETH FREED

NEAL GITTLEMAN
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, DAYTON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

CHOSEI KOMATSU
CONDUCTOR LAUREATE, NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF COSTA RICA
CONDUCTOR LAUREATE, CENTRAL AICHI SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

ELLIOIT MOORE
MUSIC DIRECTOR, BLUE PERIOD ENSEMBLE
MUSIC DIRECTOR, LONGMONT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

KEVIN RHODES
MUSIC DIRECTOR, SPRINGFIELD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA (MA)
MUSIC DIRECTOR, TRAVERSE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR, PRO ARTE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA OF BOSTON

BRENDAN TOWNSEND
MUSIC DIRECTOR, LAREDO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

PETER STAFFORD WILSON
MUSIC DIRECTOR, SPRINGFIELD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA (OH)
MUSIC DIRECTOR, WESTERVILLE SYMPHONY
PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR, TULSA BALLET

Ensembles

DAUROV/MYER DUO
MISHA & CIPA DICHTER
IRRERA BROTHERS DUO
SCHWARZ & BOURNAKI
DUO STEPHANIE & SAAR
EUCLID QUARTET
RESIDENT STRING QUARTET, INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTH BEND
**Prelude** by Robert Sandla

**The Score**
Orchestra news, moves, and events

**Letter to the Editor**
A roundup of recent activity by the League of American Orchras.

**At the League**
In a conversation with League President and CEO Jesse Rosen, key figures at North Carolina’s Charlotte Symphony talk about how they are making board diversity a priority—and a reality.

**Digital Update**
Advances in technology and recent legislation will affect how orchestras record and disseminate their music. by Michael Bronson and Joe Kluger

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**Music and Social Justice**
Orchestras and composers are addressing issues such as gun violence, immigration, and mass incarceration through music and social-impact programs. by James Chute

**Work in Progress**
Is there reason for optimism when it comes to composers and gender equality? Women composers share their thoughts. by Jennifer Gersten

**Come Out and Play**
Representation and inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community is on the rise at U.S. orchestras. by Brin Solomon

**Instrumental Excursions**
Fancy the accordion or ukulele? How about the ondes Martenot and the Theremin? Orchestras are exploring these and other intriguing sound combinations. by Clive Paget

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**League of American Orchrasas Annual Fund**

**Coda**
Bach-to-bluegrass mandolinist Chris Thile talks about the importance of bringing a wide array of music to audiences.

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Text marked like this indicates a link to websites and online resources.