"All Rise" in Tulsa

This spring, the city of Tulsa, Oklahoma commemorated the somber occasion of the centennial of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre with a week’s worth of events, capped by a June 6 performance by the Tulsa Symphony at the BOK Center arena. In remembrance of the massacre, the Tulsa Symphony and conductor David Robertson performed Wynton Marsalis’s Symphony No. 1 ("All Rise") with the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. Marsalis—who is also managing and artistic director of the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra— joined the onstage forces on trumpet, along with the Tulsa Community Commemoration Choir, comprising singers from local churches, schools, and arts groups, led by Damien L. Sneed. "All Rise," which incorporates influences from classical, jazz, gospel, blues, and Latin-based music, was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic and first performed at Lincoln Center in 1999. In his Tulsa World review of Marsalis’s work, James D. Watts Jr. wrote, “One would be hard-pressed to think of a more appropriate way officially to conclude the city of Tulsa’s commemoration of this tragedy than with a performance of this epic work…. As ‘All Rise’ unfolded over the course of the two hours it takes to perform it, the three sections evoked a state of grace and innocence, a horrific fall from that state, and the realization that to rise up again, you’re going to need help.” The concert was presented in collaboration with the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission; approximately 100 descendants of massacre survivors received free tickets.
Northern Sounds

As new, worrisome variants of COVID-19 spread earlier this year, many Canadian provinces imposed strict stay-at-home orders, after having previously eased restrictions. Given that backdrop—plus Canada’s colder climate, which makes outdoor performances impossible for much of the year—it seems remarkable that during the 2020-21 season the Montreal Symphony Orchestra recorded 39 new concerts, offered via webcasts. Most concerts were recorded at the Maison symphonique de Montréal without an audience, but in March the Québec government began allowing performing arts venues to open to limited audiences. Conductors during the season included Music Director Designate Rafael Payare; Vancouver Symphony Orchestra Music Director Otto Tausk; and National Arts Centre Orchestra Music Director Alexander Shelley. Canadian conductor Dina Gilbert led June’s season-ending concerts of music by women composers Ana Sokolović, Alexina Louie, Barbara Croall, Lili Boulanger, and Elizabeth Maconchy.

Anwar Nasir Tapped as Louisiana Philharmonic’s Next Leader

The Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra has named Anwar Nasir as its next executive director, effective July 19. He goes to Louisiana from the Omaha Symphony, where he is chief revenue and advancement officer; previously he held administrative positions at the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Hollywood Bowl, the Atlanta Ballet, and the Philadelphia Workforce Development Corporation. The Philadelphia native and former professional dancer is a frequent presenter at arts conferences and was one of 12 executives to participate in the League of American Orchestras’ 2018 Emerging Leaders Program. He is also co-chairperson of the League’s Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion working group, and the co-founder of the Black Arts Leadership Alliance. In announcing the appointment, Louisville Philharmonic Music Director Carlos Miguel Prieto said, “From the first time we spoke, Anwar impressed me as a fearless leader who possesses both of those qualities, and I am looking forward to partnering with him as we continue to reimagine the LPO’s connections to the community for an exciting new era.” Nasir succeeds James Boyd, who stepped down as executive director in December 2019.

Live from Des Moines

Like many orchestras, the Des Moines Symphony pivoted online during the 2020-21 season, transforming its “Live from the Temple” series into eight live-streamed concerts. Broadcast live on the orchestra’s website from Des Moines’ Temple for Performing Arts, the concerts featured a reduced-size, socially distanced orchestra; each broadcast included interviews and behind-the-scenes content. Ticketholders could watch concerts on a smart TV, laptop, or phone, and replay them for 30 days after the livestream. Teachers and healthcare workers could reserve free passes to livestreamed concerts. In May, Music Director Joseph Giunta and musicians from the orchestra presented the series’ season finale, featuring Marianna Martines’s Sinfonia in C Major, “Tamborito” and “Cumbia y Congo” from William Grant Still’s Danzas de Panama, Grieg’s Holberg Suite, and the Allegro from Mozart’s Symphony No. 31 (“Paris”). Principal Flute James Blanchard was the soloist in Gluck’s Dance of the Blessed Spirits and Fauré’s Fantaisie. The concert was preceded by a week of online programming, including classes, virtual social events, and prelude talks.

MUSICAL CHAIRS

DANIELLE ALLEN, the Philadelphia Orchestra’s manager of global affairs, has been named the organization’s director of education and community. The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra has appointed MARTY BATES executive vice president and chief operating officer.

Canada’s Winnipeg Symphony has selected ANGELA BIRDSELL as executive director, effective July 5. She succeeds Trudy Schroeder, who is stepping down after 13 seasons with the organization.

The Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra has hired SUZ BREWER as chief marketing officer.

MÉLISSE BRUNET, music director of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic, has been chosen as director of orchestral activities at the University of Iowa School of Music.

Pennsylvania’s Three Rivers Young Peoples Orchestra has appointed PIERCE COOK as conductor of its Symphonette string ensemble.

The Northwest Florida Symphony Orchestra has chosen TODD CRAVEN as music director, effective with the 2021-22 season.

The Asheville Symphony Orchestra in North Carolina has appointed DANIEL CRUPI as executive director, effective in July.

CAMILLE DELANEY-McNEIL has been named director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s new YOLA Center at Ingleswood, set to open in August and welcome its first students in the fall.

Los Angeles Philharmonic Music Director GUSTAVO DUDAMEL has been named to the additional post of music director of the Paris Opera, beginning in August.

KEMPER EDWARDS has joined Michigan’s Ann Arbor Symphony Orchestra as director of marketing and communications.

The University of North Carolina Chapel Hill’s Carolina Performing Arts has named ALISON FRIEDMAN as executive and artistic director, effective in October. Friedman succeeds program founder Emîl Kang, who departed in 2019 to become program director for arts and cultural heritage at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

American conductor KELLEN GRAY has been appointed assistant conductor at the Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

AmericanOrchestras.org
Remembering Lives Lost
May 25, 2021 marked a year since George Floyd was killed by a Minneapolis police officer as fellow police officers looked on, sparking mass protests and a national reckoning about policing and racial equity. In addition to adopting statements and plans of action to address equity, diversity, and inclusion, orchestras have responded by commissioning music dedicated to remembering Floyd and other Black Americans killed in recent acts of violence. In March, the Chicago Sinfonietta performed the world premiere of a new cello concerto by Joel Thompson written in memory of Breonna Taylor, a Black woman who was slain by police officers in her Louisville, Kentucky home in March 2020. Subtitled breathe/burn, the concerto featured cellist Ifetayo Ali-Landing as soloist and Antoine T. Clark as conductor. On the same concert, Sinfonietta Music Director Mei-Ann Chen led Dances in the Canebreaks, William Grant Still’s arrangement of a Florence Price suite; Jeff Scott’s 2018 Sinfonietta of Dreams; and Roy Ringwald’s arrangement of “We Shall Overcome.”

The month of May featured several world premieres on related themes. Four California orchestras co-commissioned John Wineglass to write Alone Together for strings and percussion, honoring George Floyd. The Pacific Symphony gave the world premiere, with performances by the Fresno Philharmonic, Monterey Symphony, and San Jose Chamber Orchestra to follow. The Dallas Symphony Orchestra and Principal Second Violin Angela Fuller Heyde premiered Kareem Roustom’s Second Violin Concerto, which the composer wrote “in memory of George Floyd, Ahmad Arbery, Breonna Taylor and far too many others.” The St. Paul Chamber Orchestra streamed a concert entitled “Songs of Sorrow, Songs of Hope” dedicated to George Floyd. The program featured the world premiere of Brent Michael Davids’s Taptonahana for solo flute, with SPCO Principal Flute Julia Bogorad-Kogan, Haydn’s The Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross for String Quartet, and the adagio from George Walker’s String Quartet No. 1. The Minnesota Orchestra premiered Carlos Simon’s string quartet “An Elegy: A Cry from the Grave,” in memory of Floyd and other victims of racial violence. Next March, Piotr Gajewski will lead the National Philharmonic in the world premiere of Adolphus Hailstork’s requiem cantata in tribute to George Floyd, A Knee on the Neck, at the Strathmore Center in Bethesda, Maryland with the National Philharmonic Chorale and vocal soloists.

Brass Speaks
This winter marked a decade since Gabby Giffords, the former U.S. Congress member from Arizona, was shot. She survived, but the gunshot wound to her left temporal lobe left her with aphasia, an inability to express written and spoken language. Giffords has received neurologic music therapy, which can help brain-injured individuals regain language by creating alternate pathways in the brain. And this spring, Giffords spoke publicly about how she has taken up playing the French horn again after many years as part of her regimen. Singing and playing a musical instrument have been widely cited by neuroscientists and music therapists who work with brain injury and disease as tools for regaining language for people suffering brain trauma, stroke, or other brain difficulties. A recent PBS NewsHour segment described how Giffords’ preparation for a speech she delivered in August 2020 at the Democratic National Convention included sketching musical notation alongside the text of a speech, to help with her delivery. For Giffords, recovery is ongoing—and she says practices the horn five days a week.
The Bradley Symphony Center—formerly the Warner Grand Theater, a lavish 1931 movie palace—is now home to the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra had previously performed at the Marcus Performing Arts Center’s Uihlein Hall, which it shared with other arts groups. The center’s original opening in fall of 2020 was delayed due to the pandemic. Restoration and renovation began in 2017, when the MSO acquired the theater, which had gone unused since the 1990s. Renovation required the changes you would expect—improved acoustics, lighting, electrical wiring, new seats—and then some: a newly installed HVAC system got an upgrade during the pandemic with advanced air purification features. The theater’s 625-ton wall had to be moved back 35 feet for the larger stage the orchestra needed. And repairs had to be made after a flood in May 2020. In February, the orchestra presented its first chamber concerts in the new space, socially distanced and streamed, with a fuller schedule planned for the fall. The MSO’s season-opening concert in October will feature Music Director Ken-David Masur, pianist and artistic partner Aaron Diehl, and the world premiere of Eric Nathan’s *Opening* plus works by Gershwin, James B. Wilson, Ellington, and Stravinsky.
Music for Meditation

Meditation and music intersected this spring at three Ohio orchestras, which together commissioned a piece by Brian Raphael Nabors to be premiered in classrooms. The initiative was a partnership with Mindful Music Moments, a program by the Well, an organization that uses classical music in schools to promote calm and focus through mindfulness. The Cleveland Orchestra, Columbus Symphony Orchestra, and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra recorded movements of Nabors’ new work. The 12-minute piece was influenced by feedback from K-12 students who participate in Mindful Music Moments and told Nabors what they thought the piece should sound and feel like. The four-movement work for string quartet—one movement for each city, plus a fourth movement incorporating ideas from all three—premiered in schools in May and on the orchestras’ Facebook pages on June 10. The Facebook premiere also featured a short film by Cincinnati filmmaker Asa Featherstone documenting the process. Joan Katz Napoli, the Cleveland Orchestra’s senior director of education and community programs, told the Cleveland Plain Dealer, “This is exactly the time when we need something like this. My hope is that this creates a daily habit that kids will carry into adulthood.”

Oregon Symphony, In the Studio

It’s been a tough year to introduce a new music director—and to give a proper farewell to a departing one. In April, the Oregon Symphony rolled out “Studio125,” a comprehensive digital hub that includes “Classical Sessions: Carlos@18,” a biweekly series honoring the eighteen-year legacy of Carlos Kalmar, whose final season as music director occurred during the pandemic season of 2020-21. The channel features newly released musical content along with archival concerts, interviews, stories, and more. Also included are “Essential Sounds,” a seven-episode series honoring essential workers during the pandemic; “Symphony Storytime” for families and educators; and short performances recorded from Oregon Symphony musicians’ homes and communities. Among the archived concerts at the site is Gabriel Kahane’s 2018 emergency shelter intake form, an oratorio about homelessness and housing insecurity. The drive to produce more digital content stems from a patron survey about digital content, with more than 90 percent of respondents saying they expected online programming to play a role in their cultural lives going forward. The orchestra says “Studio 125” will serve as an Oregon Symphony community hub, with footage from events and programs.

Now Available: Videos from League’s 2021 Conference

Nearly 1,400 orchestra professionals gathered online from June 7 to 17 for the League of American Orchestras’ 2021 National Conference, Embracing a Changed World, a powerful and inspiring two weeks packed with new perspectives, provocative discussions, performances, and meaningful connections—all delivered virtually. If you missed the Conference, the good news is that all keynote and elective sessions were recorded and are available on demand at the Conference platform until August 2. Register for access to the videos, transcripts, and presentation files at https://leagueconference.org/. Want to keep the learning going? One way that League members can continue to connect with peers is in a dedicated Conference League360 group. After you sign up for the League360 group, check settings to make sure you receive emails in either real time or as a daily digest. And though it might seem early, now is the time to save the dates for next year’s League Conference, in-person in Los Angeles, June 1-3, 2022.
Symphony at the Park

Parks continue to be popular destinations for music-lovers eager to hear their hometown orchestras in live performance. On April 28, the Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra presented an outdoor pops concert for a socially distanced audience of more than 400 people at the recently opened Lowcountry Celebration Park at Coligny in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Music Director John Morris Russell led physically distanced HHSO musicians in the “Symphony Celebration!” concert, which featured music by George Gershwin, Dizzy Gillespie, Scott Joplin, and Astor Piazzolla; performers included vocalist Kimberly Hawkey, pianist Assaf Gleizner, and saxophonist Daniel Dickinson. The concert had many of the hallmarks we’ve come to expect at events during the pandemic: no intermission, audience members seated on the lawn individually and in “pods,” masks required when not within one’s own pod, hand-sanitizing stations, and guests bringing picnics and sitting in their own lawn chairs. Symphony CEO Alan Jordan described the event as a “great success. We know people are eager to gather and enjoy live music again, and we will make that possible in a safe and responsible way.”

Instrumental Connections

One unfortunate side effect of school closures during the pandemic was a decrease in enrollment in school music programs. This spring, five Connecticut orchestras created “Pick Your Instrument CT,” a free music-education initiative to increase enrollment in school music programs. The Eastern Connecticut Symphony, Hartford Symphony Orchestra, New Haven Symphony Orchestra, Stamford Symphony Orchestra, and Waterbury Symphony Orchestra added free recorded, live, and online programs to encourage students to join their school’s instrumental ensembles. Designed for students and teachers, the site includes videos by orchestra musicians about each instrument; webinars and live, virtual open houses to learn about instruments; an instrument selection toolkit in English and Spanish; and “For Kids by Kids,” an online portal where students can submit their own videos about music. New Haven Symphony Orchestra Education Director Caitlin Daly-Gonzales said, “As schools went virtual last spring, many students lost connection to their school’s music departments... Teachers couldn’t use their normal recruiting methods like in-person instrument demonstrations and open houses for parents and students. This felt like a problem that orchestras could help solve and it was wonderful to see orchestras across Connecticut orchestras quickly jump into action.”

Boston Pops’ Virtual “Thanks, Mom”

The Boston Pops launched its first-ever all-virtual season on May 6 with a program celebrating music by and about women, led by Pops Conductor Keith Lockhart. “The Boston Pops Celebrates Mother’s Day: Honoring Women” included Joan Tower’s Fanfare to the Uncommon Woman No. 3, music from My Fair Lady, and music by Rachel Bruerville, Maurice Ravel, and William Grant Still. Also on the program were orchestral arrangements of music by Carole King and ABBA, the first movement of Clara Schumann’s Piano Concerto with soloist Tanya Gabrielian, and the final movement from J.S. Bach’s Concerto for Two Violins, played by Boston Pops violinist Ala Jojatu and her daughter, Maria Jojatu. The Quincy, Massachusetts-based band the Dropkick Murphys performed the song “To Our Darlin’ Mothers.” The concert joined other newly recorded Boston Pops performances at the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s BSO NOW web portal in May and June: “A Tribute to John Williams,” “An Evening with Chris Thile and the Stars of Tomorrow,” and “The Roots of Jazz: American Voices.”
Outdoor concerts have not gone away: the Philharmonic launched the second iteration of its Bandwagon concerts this spring. Last summer and fall, musicians performed throughout the city’s five boroughs from a pickup truck; this time around, Philharmonic musicians and community groups are performing from a mobile shipping container.
Musicians Helping Musicians

This spring, musicians from the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra performed together at the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas, led by DSO Music Director Fabio Luisi, who was the Met’s principal conductor from 2011 to 2017. The concert featured 100 musicians—from each orchestra—in Mahler’s First Symphony, for a reduced audience of 400 people, and the event benefited the MET Orchestra Musicians Fund and the DFW Musicians COVID-19 Relief Fund. It was the first time many of the Met musicians had the opportunity to perform for a live audience since the COVID-19 shutdown in March 2020. While in Dallas, visiting musicians also worked with the DSO’s Young Strings music education program in masterclasses and workshops. In the Dallas Morning News, DSO President and CEO Kim Noltemy said the concert came together in “a mere five days.” The DSO offered the concert online for free for two weeks on its NextStage portal and also issued limited-edition NFTs of the concert with unlockable exclusive, behind-the-scenes footage to raise additional funds for the MET Musicians Fund and the DFW Musicians COVID relief fund.

Restarting Stages in NYC

New York City was hit hard early on in the pandemic, so it seems fitting that healthcare workers were the first to be treated to a performance by New York Philharmonic musicians on Lincoln Center’s campus in honor of World Health Day on April 7. The outdoor event kickstarted the launch of Restart Stages, an initiative that includes 10 new outdoor performance and rehearsal spaces as well as other open-air civic venues to help restart the performing arts sector and contribute to the revival of New York City. Leah C. Johnson, Lincoln Center’s Chief Communications, Marketing & Advocacy Officer, spoke at the launch, where officials included NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio and Lincoln Center President and CEO Henry Timms. A Lincoln Center-commissioned installation by Basil Twist featured puppeteers, who greeted audience members with “sheep” on the Illumination Lawn. The project was financed with support from the Lincoln Center Board of Directors and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation as part of the SNF-Lincoln Center Agora Initiative, a collaboration that reimagine and reactivates public space.

Corrections

The following are corrections to an item about the Santa Rosa Symphony’s youth ensembles that appeared on page 5 of the Spring Issue of Symphony. Santa Rosa Symphony Music Director Francesco Lecce-Chong was a guest soloist, playing harpsichord, at a May concert by the Young People’s Chamber Orchestra; he did not conduct the concert. The young musicians did not participate in the actual creation of the redwood violin, made by a local luthier, that was played at the concert. After the Spring Issue of Symphony went to press, the Santa Rosa Symphony announced that Gwendolyn Przyjazna, a member of a SRS youth ensemble, would compose a concertino for violin and strings for the redwood violin to premiere at a Young People’s Chamber Orchestra concert, played by Co-concertmaster Aedan Seaver.

Information about the Peninsula Music Festival in the paid advertiser listings of summer music festivals in the Spring Issue of Symphony was incorrect. Below is the correct information.

Wisconsin Peninsula Music Festival
Door County, WI
October 1 to August 21
In Person
The Symphony Series • A Chamber Music Series • Recital Series
Experience world-renowned conductors, acclaimed guest artists, and the eighty musicians of the Festival Orchestra from around the world.

Festival Artistic Direction: Christoph Ptack
Festival Conductors: Rune Bergmann, David Danzmayr, Yaniv Dinur, Marcelo Lehninger, Ward Stare
Festival Artists: Oliver Herbert, cellist; Susan Self, flute; Inna Faliks; Stewart Goodyear; Peter Jablonski; Antonio Wu, piano; Bella Hristova; Rachel Barton Pine; Simone Porter; Angelo Xiang Yu, violin.

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