

MUSIC centriCITY

The League's 2019 National Conference will put music, musicians, and composers center stage. And it will tackle the ideas that are most relevant in the orchestra field today, exploring new definitions of excellence and embracing the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion while bringing forward ways to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world.

By John-Morgan Bush

Can you remember the feeling you had during the closing session of the League's 2018 National Conference in Chicago? Do you recall the electricity in the room as Yo-Yo Ma challenged us to work together to solve the challenges the orchestral field faces? Each of us left that session asking how we could redefine what excellence meant in our corner of orchestral life and how we at orchestras can make a difference in the world. After three days of sessions and meetings that sparked conversations and championed progressive ideas, we were all filled with optimism and a renewed energy for the work of orchestras.

When I was charged to be the architect for this year's Conference, my first thought was, how to create that energy and excitement again? What exactly was different about our gathering in Chicago? I realized that the power of Ma's keynote address was not in my personal experience, but rather in the unity we shared collectively as a group of professionals from all parts of the field centered around the art form that we cherish. In short, we were reminded—of what brings us together, what energizes our work, and why we

choose to dedicate ourselves to the work of orchestras.

Growing out of that indelible moment, the League's 2019 National Conference in Nashville will place music, musicians, and composers at the center of our conversations. Their voices and artistry bring creativity, innovation, and—most impor-

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tant—inspiration to orchestras and arts professionals who must continue to adapt to a rapidly changing world. The theme? "MUSIC centriCITY"—a neologism that spotlights the central role music plays in the life of a vibrant city.

Together in Nashville, we will explore

Conference 2019

The League of American Orchestras 2019 National Conference: June 3–5 in Nashville, Tennessee. Hosted by the Nashville Symphony. Visit <https://www.leagueconference2019.org/> for more information and to register.



the new frontiers of "excellence" that last year's keynote speakers, and indeed, our environment, called upon us to pursue. We will continue to embrace the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion that must remain in the forefront of our national conversation. We will hear new perspectives that will energize us and drive change in this important area of growth for the field. These imperatives helped us to assemble a constellation of speakers and presenters whose work illustrates and advances our areas of focus this year.

The Nashville Symphony has proven to be an enthusiastic and constant partner in the planning process and has contributed in so many ways to crafting a memorable experience at the Conference. We've shared productive dialogues with many partners and creative leaders in the field to curate content that will challenge as well as inspire. We've also listened to you, our members, through a new request-for-proposals process, enabling us to align our major objectives and ideas for this Conference with yours, and inviting professionals in the field to share what they've learned with their peers.

Courtesy of Nashville Symphony



The Nashville Symphony hosts the League's 2019 National Conference. On June 3, Music Director Giancarlo Guerrero will lead the orchestra in a concert featuring Jonathan Leshnoff's *Symphony No. 4* (the Nashville Symphony commissioned the work and gave its world premiere in March 2018), Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, and a new multimedia production of Orff's *Carmina Burana*.

ent at the opening session. The Nashville Symphony's *Accelerando* ensemble—an intensive music education program that prepares gifted young students of diverse ethnic backgrounds to pursue music at the collegiate level and beyond—will perform during the Opening Plenary, premiering a new work by Nashville-based composer Christopher Farrell.

The League's Annual Luncheon is an important midway milestone in the Na-

Conference Themes

Speaking with three distinct points of view, the three keynote speakers will illustrate the central content pillars of the Conference of redefining excellence; identity, culture, and collective action; and, of course, music centrality. Through compelling addresses that merge the personal, the artistic, and social consciousness, our speakers will boldly tackle the ideas that are most relevant in our field today.

In the opening session at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center, Nashville Symphony Music Director Giancarlo Guerrero will ignite the Conference as he shares his own journey leading the Nashville Symphony on an exploration of what it means to be an orchestra in the America of today. As a champion of

new music, he has commissioned and performed dozens of works by American composers from an extraordinary array of stylistic influences. Guerrero will explore how musical convictions demonstrate an orchestra's authentic connection to its

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community and reflect an active cultivation of diverse talent. We will be able to see and hear that active cultivation of tal-



Michael Provost

Composer and conductor Tania León will deliver the keynote address at the Conference's closing plenary session on June 5.

tional Conference. It's when we honor the recipients of the Ford Musician Awards for Excellence in Community Service. The Ford Musician Awards celebrate the incredible work that musicians around the country are doing to further their orchestra's connection to the community. Plus, we'll share important information about the League's work with updates from League President and CEO Jesse Rosen and League Board Chair Doug Hager-

Schermerhorn Symphony Center and its Laura Turner Concert Hall, local landmarks, are the home of the Nashville Symphony and the gathering place for a performance and other events at the League's 2019 Conference.



In his address at Conference's opening session on June 3, Nashville Symphony Music Director Giancarlo Guerrero will explore what it means to be an orchestra in the America of today.



Courtesy of Nashville Symphony

man on the development of new and existing programs as well as an overview and news from the field.

This year, the Luncheon keynote speaker is Alex Laing, principal clarinet of the Phoenix Symphony. Recently appointed to the core faculty of the League's *Essentials of Orchestra Management* seminar and an in-demand speaker at national gatherings such as the Sphinx Organization's annual convening and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's Building Bridges Symposium, Laing is a rising thought leader and influencer in the orchestral field.



Jared Platt

Alex Laing, principal clarinet at the Phoenix Symphony and a rising thought leader in the orchestra field, is the keynote speaker at the June 4 League Annual Meeting and Luncheon during the Conference.

Through words and music, Laing will examine the very nature of our art form and the dialogue between musicians and audiences. Laing sees opportunities for orchestras to develop if they tap into more of the creative abilities and ambi-

tions of their musicians, and he imagines a wider range for how orchestras define themselves and their work. Sharing notes from the field and foregrounding his own artistic experience as a black, so-called classical musician, he will unpack some of the fundamental stories we tell about our art form, how those stories impact our structures, and what we conceive of as "the work."

On the final day of Conference, renowned composer and conductor Tania León will deliver the closing keynote address. Her enthusiasm is contagious, and her message will center on the progress our field has made in supporting equity for composers and on her own journey from Cuba to the U.S. She will examine what the field needs to do to continue to progress towards parity and how she overcame professional challenges, and uses new music to celebrate and recognize the artistic vitality of other cultures. Central to the core of her message, León's celebrated work and creative life have promoted equity through the music she creates. The Conference will close on an energetic and inspirational note, with León helping us to understand how to harness the power of new music to celebrate and recognize and rebuild the bridge between the music of North and Latin America and how the interplay of cultures expands creative pos-

sibility. Lastly, we will celebrate the confluence of themes in this year's Conference through the presentation of the Gold Baton Award to American composer Joan Tower—a champion of new music and parity for women composers and performers whose career has left a lasting mark on the American musical landscape.

Finding Inspiration

We hope that delegates will be inspired to look at the musical and creative opportunities for confronting challenges; that they will seek skills in new areas, such as curating, audience engagement, and bridging boundaries with music. We hope that the



Downtown Nashville

simple fact of the extraordinary artistic variety of these three keynote speakers—who are all "classical" musicians—demonstrates how rich a musical experience can be when approached with an inclusive, not exclusive, outlook.

The League's 2019 National Conference takes place June 3-6 in Nashville, Tennessee. The host hotel is the Omni Nashville Hotel. www.omnihotels.com/hotels/nashville. The League has a group rate of \$249/night plus tax (single/double) for June 1-6. Room reservations can be made by calling 615 782 5300 and referencing the "League of American Orchestras" room block. Note: Hotels in downtown Nashville will be sold out during this period due to a Country Music Awards festival—so book your room early.

The League's National Conference is not just a gathering of professionals but, more appropriately, a convergence of all parts of the orchestra world—and we want you to make the most of it. Come to Conference to grow, not just learn. Expand your network, not just for the sake of networking, but so that you have more partners and collaborators who can

help carry out the work that only orchestras can do. Visit our exhibit area, not just to see what's new—but to discover new resources, tools, and services that you can use to enhance your programs and innovate.

So join us in Nashville, not just to convene—but to connect and prepare to rediscover the energy and excitement that

can only happen when we place music at the center of all that we do. **S**

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Conference Highlights

There's a rich panoply of sessions, seminars, concerts, and more at the League of American Orchestras' 2019 National Conference. Here are some highlights.

Pre-Conference workshops are intensive, hands-on half-day seminars on June 3 that offer in-depth learning, practical skills, and fresh insights. They take place in advance of the main Conference, with a separate fee to participate.

Pre-Conference seminars include:

New Strategies for Success in Audience Research and Development will show how audience research and cost-benefit analysis can give orchestra professionals a new understanding of audiences—and how to address audience attrition, churn, and aging. A presentation from The Wallace Foundation will demonstrate how arts groups can utilize cost-benefit analysis, and California Symphony Executive Director Aubrey Bergauer will explain how the California Symphony rethought its audience-development strategy—and doubled the number of tickets sold annually.

Website Tools and Skills for Data-Driven Decision-making: Learn about no-cost website analytic tools—and acquire the hands-on skills to use them. Participants will gain a clear understanding of how to determine whether their organization's website is or isn't performing—and how to improve it in either case. Speaker: Jess Bergson, senior analyst, Capacity Interactive.

Engaging New and Existing Audiences Through Digital Learning Playgrounds: A Design Workshop for Orchestra Professionals:

Orchestras are using social media primarily for one-way communication, rather than as a means of providing sustained engagement with the music and the organization. Via a mini design workshop, participants will discover fresh ways to engage audiences through digital technologies. Speakers: S. Alex Ruthmann, director, NYU Music Experience Design Lab; Andre Kostiw-Gill, founder, Playgrounds.

Conference Sessions, June 3–5:

Building a Race Equity Culture: Transforming Your Organizational Culture Beyond Diversity and Inclusion Towards Racial Equity: Orchestras must confront the lack of equity, diversity, and inclusion in our workforce, and commit to creating a culture of inclusion and equity. This session will engage and support leaders in a bold conversation on the cases, tactics, and tools that will drive action on building a Race Equity Culture. Speaker: Kerrien Suarez, executive director, Equity in the Center.

New Voices: Composers of Today: An introduction to four emerging composers whose unique voices are making an impact. Learn about their orchestral output; how they view their music in an art form responding to social change; and the roles composers play in their communities. Speakers: Reena Esmail, composer; Daniel Bernard Roumain,

composer; Derrick Spiva Jr., composer, Code Switch Composers Collective/Bridge to Everywhere; Alex Temple, composer, lecturer, Northwestern University; Evan Williams, composer.

Philanthropy: New Motivations and Incentives for Giving will focus on emerging trends in giving. Panelists will discuss how the next generations might prioritize their charitable giving, whether changes to tax laws are impacting donors, and what orchestras can do to adapt their fundraising strategies. Speakers: Eric Javier, principal and managing director, CCS Fundraising; Patricia Richards, lifetime board member and past chair, Utah Symphony | Utah Opera.

Walking the Walk: Why Music Education Matters and What Orchestras Can Do will explore the status of arts education in our schools and detail the challenges faced by young musicians from under-represented communities. Whether the goal is to foster a lifelong love of music or support future professional musicians, orchestras can play a part in ensuring these musical journeys get the support they need. Speakers: Jane Best, director, Arts Education Partnership; Walter Bitner, director of education and community engagement, Nashville Symphony; Joy Payton-Stevens, section cello, Seattle Symphony.

For more information and to register for the 2019 National Conference, visit <https://www.leagueconference2019.org/>.