



For the New World Symphony's *Miami in Movements*, composer Ted Hearne and filmmaker Jonathan Kane sought input from people from all over Miami. Miamians submitted photos, video, and conversations about traffic, the climate, nature, politics, and more for the work, which premiered in October 2017 at the New World Center in Miami Beach.

Gregory Reed

# Crowdsourcing a Symphony

by Jennifer Melick

On screens over the orchestra stage, peaceful photos of a sunrise over swampy grassland give way to video of noisy seagulls, goats, a peacock being chased by a dog, some chickens standing in heavy rain. An image of sunset is accompanied by a sweet but unsettling solo violin passage, and a cruise liner drifts by in the distance. Now, multilayered voices feather over each other, all saying the word “Miami.” Next, a blast of live Cuban-style street music: the orchestra onstage in almost Ivesian competition with trumpets and percussion wailing away in the balcony. A big string

crescendo swells and holds aloft a chord, as we see footage of schoolgirls playing in a building courtyard. It’s a poignant image: these girls could be from yesterday, or 100 years ago.

In fact, all these sounds and images are from the Miami of today, and they are not a message from the local tourism industry or chamber of commerce. This is *Miami in Movements*, a new full-length symphonic work made with input crowdsourced from Miami’s residents. Created by composer Ted Hearne and filmmaker Jonathan Kane, the piece—performed with video and still images timed to the music—was



Gregory Reed

Left to right: Filmmaker Jonathan Kane, New World Symphony Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas, and composer Ted Hearne at the world premiere of *Miami in Movements*, created using input from Miamians.

## From Miami to Orange County, composers and orchestras are gathering input directly from the public to crowdsource new music. The end result: world premieres with material from members of the community.

premiered in Miami Beach by Florida's New World Symphony in October 2017, led by Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas. The piece was repeated in February 2018.

Crowdsourcing a symphony—using artistic input from the public—has really caught on during the past few years. Crowdsourced compositions have been gaining steam, much as the term “crowdsourcing” itself has entered the wider vocabulary, embracing everything from funding (Kickstarter, GoFundMe) to information websites (Wikipedia) and computer code (Linux). *Miami in Move-*

*ments* is the culmination of Project 305, an initiative spearheaded by the New World Symphony, MIT Media Lab, and Knight Foundation. For the project, Miami residents—the number 305 refers to the city's area code—could submit audio and video clips about their city through apps, with some clips becoming source material for both the musical composition and the accompanying video and photos. The inclusion of video was a natural choice for the New World Symphony, whose high-tech home at the New World Center includes multiple permanent screens in the concert hall in addition to the giant Wallcast

screen on the outside of the building.

Far from the traditional cliché of a composer working in ivory-tower isolation to create a new symphonic masterpiece, crowdsourcing involves frequent, in-depth interaction between composer, orchestra, and community. In October 2015, California's Pacific Symphony performed the world premiere of Narong Prangcharoen's 20-minute *Beyond Land and Ocean*, a symphonic portrait of Orange County that Prangcharoen wrote during his three-year Music Alive residency at the orchestra. (For more on Music Alive, visit <https://www.newmusicusa.org/our-work/grants/>.)

He met hundreds of people, and the final composition included depictions of the area's freeways, mariachi music, endless sunshine, and music from Japan and Vietnam, where many county residents are originally from. At the Seattle Symphony, there was crowdsourcing of a different sort during sound sculptor Trimpin's three-year Music Alive residency in 2015. He conducted a workshop with participants in Path with Art—a nonprofit for members of the city's homeless community—who designed and built an instrument made out of found, broken, and retired objects that resonate to make sound. The Akron Symphony's crowdsourced *Sounds of Akron* by composer Clint Needham in 2016 featured the orchestra performing with a local steel pan ensemble and electric guitarist.

### New Community Bonds

Crowdsourced projects require a lot of energy and time, but what is the point of them? As it turns out, just about everyone involved seems to agree that the process itself can be ample reward. Crowdsourcing—inviting the community help create a new symphonic score—forges a very different relationship between an orchestra and its hometown. Says Victoria Rog-

**Ted Hearne, composer of the New World Symphony's 2017 *Miami in Movements*, “really took to heart” the reason for the commission, that “something like 70 percent of Miamians feel like they don't have enough connection.” One of the piece's themes is Miami's fragmented pockets of culture.**

ers, vice president for arts at the Knight Foundation, which has supported multiple crowdsourced symphonies, it's part of involving people in the creative process, using technology to facilitate that process, and using the arts to tell stories and “connect us to place,” as she puts it. The New World Symphony's *Miami in Movements* fulfilled her organization's goal of making cities places where, she hopes, residents are “not just consumers but makers of art.”

For composers and orchestras, crowdsourcing often provides a way to pursue connections they have been yearning for, whether that is creating closer bonds

between orchestras and their home cities' residents, having a once-in-a-lifetime performance of mammoth proportions, or bringing healing to marginalized city residents such as prison inmates. While the end artistic creation takes place in a concert hall, much of the important work in these projects takes place in schools, libraries, prisons—or even a van equipped with a mobile recording studio.

The motivations and results of these crowdsourced projects are as different as the cities themselves. One thing they have in common: multiple in-person visits to the city by each work's creators. They all use tech in one way or another, but the tech is merely a tool with the broader goal of bringing together people in real life through the orchestra. The biggest name on this front is composer Tod Machover, a professor of music and media at the MIT Media Lab who directs the Media Lab's Opera of the Future group. In 2012, Machover and Opera of the Future launched the City Symphony project, in which he composed crowdsourced portraits of Perth, Australia; Lucerne, Switzerland; and Edinburgh, Scotland. That was followed by a burst of Machover city symphonies, all involving tech help from the MIT Media Lab. The first one in North America was the Toronto Symphony Orchestra's *A Toronto Symphony: Concerto for Composer and City*, in 2013. The Detroit Symphony Orchestra's *Symphony in D* followed in 2015, and just this month the Philadelphia Orchestra premiered *Philadelphia Voices*, to be performed not only in Philadelphia but also Carnegie Hall.

The Akron, Detroit, Miami, Philadelphia, and Toronto city projects all have used apps to gather input from a wide swath of city residents. In Miami, the app was released in English, Spanish, and Creole. But these projects go beyond just tech: in Detroit, there were, in addition to electronic sound submissions, educational workshops using Machover's software program Hyperscore to allow young people to compose their own musical portraits of Detroit. In Philadelphia, jazz trumpeter and composer Hannibal Lokumbe is in the midst of his three-year Music Alive residency at the Philadelphia Orchestra, where he is currently working on *Healing Tones*, a full-orchestra oratorio to be premiered in March 2019. For the project, the



During his three-year Music Alive residency at the Seattle Symphony, sound sculptor Trimpin (at left) used crowdsourcing to create musical instruments. At workshops with participants in Path with Art, a nonprofit for members of the city's homeless community, Trimpin and program participants designed and built an instrument made out of found, broken, and retired objects.

composer—who goes simply by Hannibal—has shuttled frequently between his home in Texas and Philadelphia, with the orchestra arranging meetings between the composer and city residents everywhere from schools to prisons.

### Ted Hearne, Jonathan Kane, and “Miami in Movements”

The New World Symphony’s Project 305 “is a really cool initiative,” says composer Ted Hearne. The project was launched in early 2017 with public information sessions in Miami’s Liberty City, Little Havana, and South Miami. Through the Project 305 app, Hearne and co-creator Jonathan Kane received video and audio submissions—about a thousand of them. The two were struck by “how so many people from different parts of Miami posted so much wildlife, so much traffic,” says Hearne. Though there were “really great sounds and sights,” says Hearne, they had to avoid repetition. Audio submissions of music presented a different challenge: balancing the music samples against the live-orchestra sound that would be part of the

**Much of the important work in these crowdsourcing projects takes place outside the concert hall, in places like schools, libraries, and prisons.**

eventual composition. But for Hearne, the biggest challenge was not creating too superficial a portrait of Miami. Hearne says he envisioned a “directed portion of the app” involving interviews that would address larger concerns of Miami residents—perhaps unsurprising, given that many of Hearne’s compositions have tackled complex, thorny themes such as Chelsea Manning/WikiLeaks (*The Source* oratorio) and the 2010 U.S. Supreme Court Citizens United decision (*Sound from the Bench*, a cantata).

Hearne and Kane decided to drive a van outfitted with recording equipment around the city to video-record hourlong conversations with city residents. During one week, they conducted 50 interviews in parts of town where they felt they hadn’t gotten enough submissions. They would ask questions like, “Where are you from?” and “What are your impressions of the



In 2015, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra premiered Tod Machover’s *Symphony in D*, created using contributions from Detroit students (pictured with Machover, above) and other Detroit residents. Machover has composed multiple crowdsourced “city symphonies.”

city?” They would “play the neighborhood game,” rattling off the names of Miami’s many neighborhoods to see how many each person recognized. Most people, they say, recognized surprisingly few neighbor-

hoods, which turned out to be one of *Miami in Movement’s* themes: Miami’s fragmented pockets of culture. Hearne, who lives in L.A., says he and Kane, a Miami native, “really took to heart” the reason



The Akron Symphony’s crowdsourced *Sounds of Akron* by composer Clint Needham in 2016 featured the orchestra performing with a local steel pan ensemble and electric guitarist. Above: Marketing materials for *Sounds of Akron* included a countdown clock and video message about the project from the composer.



MIT Media Lab

Composer Tod Machover (left) delivers the manuscript of *Philadelphia Voices* to Philadelphia Orchestra Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin. The orchestra premiered *Philadelphia Voices* in April 2018.



MIT Media Lab

While working on *Philadelphia Voices*, composer Tod Machover traveled throughout Philadelphia to crowdsource material for the piece. Here, Machover participates in a jam session with the Sister Cities Girlchoir, one of several choral groups who performed at the Philadelphia Orchestra's premiere of *Philadelphia Voices* in April.

## Music Alive

Several of the scores in this article are products of Music Alive, a national three-year composer-orchestra residency program of the League of American Orchestras and New Music USA. Music Alive supports in-depth, multifaceted relationships between composers, orchestras, and communities through transformative residencies. In addition to Hannibal Lokumbe at the Philadelphia Orchestra, other 2016-19 Music Alive composer residencies currently underway include Lembit Beecher at the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, Anna Clyne at the Berkeley Symphony, and Stacy Garrop at the Champaign-Urbana Symphony Orchestra. Launched in 1999 as a joint program between Meet The Composer (now New Music USA) and the League of American Orchestras, Music Alive has been a steward and partner in a multitude of projects that foster strong working relationships between American orchestras and accomplished composers across the country. Music Alive is made possible through a lead grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation with additional support from The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts, The Amphion Foundation, and The ASCAP Foundation Bart Howard Fund. For more on Music Alive, [click here](#).

for the commission, which was that “something like 70 percent of Miamians feel like they don’t have enough connection,” Hearne says. The two visited the Miami Circle, a prehistoric structure believed to have been built by Tequesta Indians, now on the National Register of Historic Places. They went to the Little Havana, Liberty City, Goulds, and other neighborhoods. Most crowdsourced parts of the final composition came from submissions, says Kane, but some of the video conversations are from the van interviews, and are shown in *Miami in Movements* straight documentary-style, with no music. Other themes of *Miami in Movements* include Miami’s fragile ecosystem and rich immigrant history.

“Jonathan and I thought a lot about the relationship of the orchestra to the city,” Hearne says.

“Plus, Miami has this huge tourism aspect—to the detriment of artists and other Miami residents. And the effects of gentrification spread out because of that. Those are all Miami-specific, but they are things you see in almost every American city with an orchestra.”

### Tod Machover and “Philadelphia Voices”

In mid-February Tod Machover had just finished writing *Philadelphia Voices*—his sixth, and largest-scale, crowdsourced city



MIT Media Lab

Philadelphia Orchestra Vice President for Artistic Planning Jeremy Rothman (at right) with CBS Philly reporter Vittoria Woodill, share a selfie in support of the Philadelphia Eagles, who won the 2018 Super Bowl. Philadelphia’s sports teams, museums, restaurants, and people provided source material for Tod Machover’s symphonic portrait of the city, *Philadelphia Voices*, premiered by the orchestra in April 2018.

symphony to date, and was arriving in Philadelphia to meet with Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Jeremy Rothman, the orchestra’s vice president for artistic planning, explains that the *Philadelphia Voices* project “came out of a confluence of many things. We had a moment here musically with Yannick when we did the Bernstein *MASS* [in 2015], where we brought a lot of community performers on the stage. It’s the nature of that work. And this light bulb went off for us. We thought, we have to do this more often, bring people

together to make music. But there aren't a lot of pieces out there like this. When we were at Carnegie Hall, where Yannick was receiving the 2016 Musical America award for Artist of the Year, Tod Machover was receiving Composer of the Year. We had seen some of Tod's work, and when Yannick and Tod got together in New York, we said, we should do it in Philadelphia! It took off from there."

*Philadelphia Voices* is part of the orchestra's "very conscious decision to take on community commissions, works that would be specifically written to incorporate the voice, the spirit, the performance of all variety of members of the Philadelphia community," says Rothman. The commissions also fit nicely into the orchestra's HEAR (Health, Education, Access, and Research) campaign launched in 2016 to connect musicians and neighborhoods through multiple programs. Rothman says when he first visited the MIT Media Lab, he was "blown away by what they do there, and by all the ways that technology can enhance people's experience with music, whether that's people who have disabilities, or physical or hearing impediments—all the different ways that technology can interface with music and human experience." He says "how you learn about yourself, how you perceive sound, how you make sound—this should be informing the 21st-century experience with music.

That was very much was a part of dipping our toe into a very different realm."

One of the inspirations for *Philadelphia Voices* is Americans singing together on Benjamin Franklin Parkway during the Pope's 2015 visit, during which the Philadelphia Orchestra performed. For *Philadelphia Voices*, Machover focused on incorporating voices of the city's immigrant communities by asking a group of new U.S. citizens what they thought about their new country. Members of the public were invited to upload sounds using the free apps that Machover and the MIT Media Lab created. At Philadelphia's Museum of the American Revolution, Machover invited visitors to record their answers to the question "What does democracy mean now?" The huge list of community partners for *Philadelphia Voices* ranges from the Curtis Institute of Music, the Franklin Institute, and Pat's King of Steaks restaurant to the University of Pennsylvania and the Mummies Museum. Machover made other in-person meetings, including a visit with Philadelphia-based poet Jake Winterstein, whose quest to travel every block in the city by bike involves stopping

**As he gathers material for *Healing Tones*, composer Hannibal Lokumbe's focus has been on "healing communities that are experiencing trauma and divisiveness," he says.**



and asking people questions like, "When life is difficult, what do you do to feel better?" Another day, Machover recorded the sounds of cheesesteaks being made. Quite possibly, *Philadelphia Voices* will incorporate sounds from the city's raucous parade celebrating the Philadelphia Eagles' 2018 Super Bowl win.

Sounds submitted through the app, as well as in-person contributions, will be part of the final composition, which Machover promises will be a "musical sonic portrait of Philadelphia, what it feels like, sounds like." And that will probably be a big noise at the April 5 premiere of *Philadelphia Voices* at the Kimmel Center, with the full Philadelphia Orchestra plus the Sister Cities Girlchoir, Commonwealth Youth Choirs, and the Westminster Choir.

### **Hannibal Lokumbe and "Healing Tones"**

The Philadelphia Orchestra has performed several works by Hannibal Lokumbe. In 2015, the orchestra performed his *One Land, One River, One People* oratorio for orchestra, vocal soloists, and mixed chorus, which Hannibal has described as a "spiritatorio." In 2017, during the first season of Hannibal's three-year Music Alive residency, the orchestra premiered his *Crucifixion Resurrection: Nine Souls a Traveling* at Philadelphia's historic Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, marking the second anniversary of the attack on Mother Emanuel African Meth-



Left to right: Philadelphia Orchestra violinist William Polk, cellist John Koen, and Assistant Principal Viola Kerri Ryan; vocalist Tulivu-Donna Cumberbatch; and composer Hannibal Lokumbe listen to a question from an inmate at the Philadelphia Detention Center, March 2017.



Jessica Griffin

As part of his three-year Music Alive residency at the Philadelphia Orchestra, composer Hannibal Lokumbe traveled to the Broad Street Ministry, which helps the city's less fortunate. With him (not in photo) were a quartet from the Philadelphia Orchestra: Principal Second Violin Kimberly Fisher, Assistant Principal Viola Kerri Ryan, violinist William Polk, and cellist John Koen.

odist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. Hannibal's *Healing Tones* oratorio is set for a March 2019 premiere.

During Hannibal's Music Alive residency, he is spending a lot of time visiting schools and prisons, not just exchanging artistic ideas but also focusing on heal-

ing. Philadelphia Orchestra Vice President of Artistic Planning Jeremy Rothman explains, "If you go with Hannibal into a school, or frankly even when he's just walking down the street, you can't go more than a block without him stopping and talking to people, trying to make their

day better and brighter, and trying to hear about their experience. If you walk out the door with Hannibal, you know it's not going to be a straight line! Allow a few minutes in your day. And it's inspiring."

Hannibal has tackled a wide range of topics and issues in his previous compositions. These include string quartets connecting the struggles of Fannie Lou Hamer—the American voting-rights activist and co-founder of Mississippi's Freedom Democratic Party—and Anne Frank. Last year, a string quartet from the Philadelphia Orchestra accompanied Hannibal to the Philadelphia Detention Center to perform the Anne Frank and Fannie Lou Hamer quartets. Hannibal's prison visits always include in-depth discussions, and before the string quartets were performed, Hannibal and the inmates discussed parallels between the Holocaust and African slave ships. Hannibal also invited the inmates to participate in the piece by creating a hissing sounds, "having the inmates make the sound of air, which would symbolize the air that the ashes from the crematorium were flowing on." Quartet members reported to Hannibal that it was one their most meaningful musical experiences. "The skill and the passion that the musicians put into the work itself was so

**Don't miss a *single note!***

*subscribe to*

**symphony**

**With vibrant photographs and timely articles, *Symphony* is transforming the way America thinks about its orchestras.**

**Hear from the conductors, musicians, and people on the inside who are making innovative choices, provoking change, and electrifying the orchestral world.**

**To subscribe, visit [americanorchestras.org](http://americanorchestras.org)**

**symphony**

astonishing,” he says, and Hannibal remembers that some of the prisoners wept.

Hannibal recalls one inmate’s highly emotional reaction after reading a letter from the inmate’s daughter—a moment he plans to include in *Healing Tones*. He and the inmates had been discussing his 2017 *Crucifixion and Resurrection*. As they discussed how that piece applied to them as individuals, one inmate “for two and a half hours wept uncontrollably—a grown man in prison,” Hannibal recalls. “To my mind, he was resurrecting in front of our very eyes. We sat quiet for two hours, watching him be renewed. And in the end, in turn, we ourselves began to weep. I said, ‘This speaks to the fact that I see you as moral beings, and my only purpose in coming here is for you to see that yourselves, because once you see that, you will never be the same.’ I wonder how many people in the halls of justice in our land, in the hall of government, have ever gathered together in this circle and wept for the well-being of the nation and of the world.”

Hannibal describes *Healing Tones* as a “hymn for the city.” As he gathers material for the piece in Philadelphia, Hannibal’s focus has been on “healing communities that are experiencing trauma and divisiveness,” he says. The final composition will have three movements, or veils, as he refers to them. Veil 1 is subtitled “The Tones of Peace,” Veil 2 “The Tones of War,” and Veil 3 “The Tones of Healing.” In addition to orchestra and choir, *Healing Tones*’ two main performers will be “a male that sings the part of the Shaman, and a woman entitled Eternal Mother,” explains Hannibal. (Hannibal’s great-great-grandmother was a Cherokee shaman.)


*Philadelphia Voices* will also incorporate another of Hannibal’s in-person experiences in Philadelphia, with a woman using a portable oxygen tank who was “making these extraordinary sounds,” he says. “I hear sounds as parables. Obviously, she was struggling to breathe, but even given that, she was humming these prayers—it sounded like a prayer to me. That tune will be in ‘Tones of Peace.’ She was in such peace when she was humming—it was a Slavic language, but you could tell through the tones and rhythms that they were prayers. It was as though she had come to cherish each breath that she took. That had a very powerful impact on me. I gave

thanks for my ability to breathe unencumbered after that, and I still do to this day.”


Hannibal adds, “For some 40 years I was looking for a situation like this that now exists in Philadelphia. I was always looking for an orchestra that had a conductor and an administration that could see the importance of playing in a prison, or playing in a homeless shelter, or playing other places outside of their wonderful, com-

fortable halls. In Philadelphia, the stars aligned. And that is one of the reasons we were able to do so much well-needed, well-appreciated work. My grandfather always said, if you live long enough, you will see certain things come to pass. This is one of them.” **S**

JENNIFER MELICK is managing editor of *Symphony*.



**CARNEGIE HALL**  
Weill Music Institute



**SUMMER  
MUSIC  
EDUCATORS  
WORKSHOP**  
FOR K-12 EDUCATORS

**EARLY  
REGISTRATION  
ENDS  
APRIL 30**

**“This was the most important event of my professional career.”**

—Zenda Swearingin, Choral Director and Fine Arts Chairman at J. H. Workman Middle School in Pensacola, Florida

**SESSION 1**  
**YOU ARE WHAT YOU PLAY**  
JULY 11-14, 2018

**SESSION 2**  
**DARE TO CREATE**  
JULY 25-28, 2018

Join music educators from across the country at Carnegie Hall this summer for two distinct weeklong workshops on how day-to-day teaching practices can reinvigorate students’ creativity and musicianship.

Lead support for Music Educators Workshop is provided by the Brooke Astor One-Year Fund for New York City Education.

**carnegiehall.org/MusicEducatorsWorkshop | 212-903-9803**