It’s not just Lollapalooza. Big crowds have been turning out for orchestra concerts outdoors, which continues to be one of the safer environments for live music. On Independence Day weekend, the South Carolina Philharmonic (1) drew a sellout crowd of 5,000 at Segra Park, usually home to the Columbia Fireflies minor-league baseball team. Music Director Morihiko Nakahara conducted music by John Williams, excerpts from West Side Story and Hamilton, plus Tchaikovsky’s 1812 Overture and Sousa’s Stars and Stripes Forever—with fireworks. Kentucky’s Owensboro
Symphony (2) performed a free concert before an estimated 3,000 listeners; the event was dedicated to first responders and medical personnel working throughout the pandemic. On Owensboro’s riverfront, Music Director Troy Quinn led the full orchestra as it performed together for the first time in 15 months, joined by country music singer/songwriter Lee Greenwood. At New York City’s “WE LOVE NYC: The Homecoming Concert” in Central Park in August, Marin Alsop led the New York Philharmonic (3) in Bernstein’s Candide Overture, tenor Andrea Bocelli sang, and pop diva Jennifer Hudson sang Puccini’s “Nessun dorma”—before thunderstorms shut things down. Chicago’s Grant Park Music Festival (4) reported that the Jay Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park was filled to near capacity for most of its concerts this summer. The Boston Landmarks Orchestra (5) celebrated its 20th summer season at the DCR Hatch Memorial Shell on the Esplanade with a free concert led by Music Director Christopher Wilkins featuring music by Beethoven, Gershwin, James P. Johnson, Jules Massenet, Nkeiru Okoye, Florence Price, and William Grant Still. In September, crowds turned out to hear the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (not pictured) give its annual concert on Art Hill in Forest Park, led by Music Director Stéphane Denève. At Tanglewood, the Boston Symphony’s summer home in Lenox, Massachusetts, events included a sold-out Boston Pops’ (6) Independence Day concert at the Shed with Late Show bandleader Jon Batiste (in photo) and singer Mavis Staples, led by Keith Lockhart. The Fourth of July concert, for a COVID-19-reduced capacity crowd of 9,000—normally 18,000—marked the Boston Pops’ first show for an in-person audience in over a year.

New in Detroit: Anne Parsons Way

How do you get to Anne Parsons Way? Eighteen years leading the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, that’s how. In June, longtime DSO President and CEO Anne Parsons was recognized by the City of Detroit with the addition of a secondary street name, Anne Parsons Way, to the existing Parsons Street next to Orchestra Hall. At the unveiling ceremony, DSO trumpets Stephen Anderson and William Lucas performed a fanfare, and there were remarks by DSO Board Chairman Mark Davidoff, City of Detroit Director of Arts and Culture Rochelle Riley, DSO cellist Haden McKay, and Parsons herself. Parsons retires from the DSO in 2022. Under her leadership, the DSO hired Leonard Slatkin (2008) and Jader Bignamini (2020) as music directors; improved its financial outlook; and expanded its digital initiatives. Parsons led the DSO in developing a comprehensive diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy and a Mission and Values Taskforce, and the DSO added programs including the new Detroit Neighborhood Initiative, a community-driven process to create musical experiences throughout the city, and Detroit Harmony, which will provide an instrument and music education to students and create jobs through workforce partnerships.

Seven New Board Members at League

Seven new board members have joined the Board of Directors of the League of American Orchestras. The newly elected board members, to serve three–year terms, are: Carmen Amalia Corrales (trustee, incoming board secretary, co-chair of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra); Chris Doerr (board member, treasurer, past board chair, Jacksonville Symphony); Afa S. Dworkin (president and artistic director, Sphinx Organization); Gary Ginstling (executive director, National Symphony Orchestra); Lina González-Granados (Sir Georg Solti Conducting Apprentice, Chicago Symphony Orchestra; conducting fellow, the Philadelphia Orchestra); Andrea Kalyn (president, New England Conservatory of Music); and Robert Naparstek (president, Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra and Music School). Current League Board Member Howard Palefsky (board member and immediate past chair, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra) has been elected treasurer.
New Views, New Sounds

Several long-planned concert halls and orchestral spaces opened recently. The San Diego Symphony’s new year-round outdoor venue, the Rady Shell at Jacobs Park, opened with an August 6 gala performance led by Music Director Rafael Payare. With many people hesitant to return to indoor venues during the pandemic, and with San Diego’s mild climate, the orchestra opted to perform at the Shell through the fall, instead of returning to the Jacobs Music Center. The Los Angeles Philharmonic’s new Judith and Thomas L. Beckmen YOLA Center, a home for the LA Phil’s Youth Orchestra Los Angeles in the Inglewood neighborhood, opened for classes this fall after a planned August grand opening was postponed due to the COVID-19 surge. The 25,000-square-foot building is dedicated to the 14-year-old YOLA music education program and is the fifth YOLA site, joining sites in South LA, the Rampart District, Westlake/ MacArthur Park, and East LA. Music at Menlo’s new Spieker Center for the Arts in Atherton, California opened to the public in July. The building includes a 384-seat hall and administrative offices for the festival, co-founded in 2003 by cellist David Finckel and pianist Wu Han. The festival previously had presented concerts at venues including St. Mark’s Church (Palo Alto) and Menlo-Atherton High School. In August, the Brevard Music Center’s new 400-seat Parker Concert Hall welcomed audiences; the hall overlooks Lake Milner and hosts a chamber series this season. Parker joins Brevard’s existing open-air, 1,800-seat Whittington-Piöhl Auditorium. Parker will house Brevard student programs and serve as a year-round resource for western North Carolina.

Community, Collaboration, Climate Change

A year ago, the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra launched Floods of Fire, a collaborative composition project that draws on the cultural heritage of a spectrum of communities in South Australia to explore the impact and process the trauma of the devastating fires and floods that hit the country in 2019–20. Floods of Fire is a partnership of the orchestra with members of diverse communities, local arts groups, and musicians from a broad range of cultural backgrounds—and they participate in workshops with composers including Julian Ferraretto, Hilary Kleinig, Adam Page, Luke Harold, Grayson Rotumah, Jakub Jankowski, Zhao Liang, and Belinda Gehlert. Conductor Luke Dollman and Chris Drummond, artistic director of Adelaide theater company Brink Productions, are linking the varied narratives, visions, and approaches to artmaking. Audiences get a look at the project during the ASO’s Festival of Orchestra in November—although Floods of Fire’s value may reside as much in its meaning for its co-creators as it does for viewers.

Wallace Foundation Launches $53M Initiative for Arts Groups of Color

In August, the Wallace Foundation announced a five-year, $53 million initiative focusing on arts organizations of color as part of its efforts to help foster equitable improvements in the arts. The initiative will examine how arts organizations of color, facing strategic challenges, leverage their community orientation to increase resilience and sustain relevance. Wallace invited eligible arts organizations to apply for support, and invited researchers to submit proposals for studies associated with the initiative; grantees will be announced at a later date. The foundation will select 10 to 12 organizations, with budgets between $500,000 and $5 million, in the visual and performing arts, literary and media arts, and community-based organizations focused on artistic practice. Each selected organization will receive five years of funding totaling approximately $2 to $3 million to develop and pursue projects that address their own strategic challenges and will participate in peer learning and research to advance knowledge in the nonprofit arts field. Visit www.wallacefoundation.org/ArtsOpenCall to learn more.
Facilitating U.S. Artist Visas and International Travel

Beginning in March 2020, international travel for many musicians and other artists came to a standstill, with so few live performances taking place due to the pandemic. Throughout this time, the League has been responding to the challenges that have sprung up in a variety of ways, not just on behalf of orchestras but of all U.S. arts organizations. These efforts include advancing COVID-specific policy requests to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the U.S. Department of State, meeting with agency staff to convey the unique and particular needs of the arts, and advising stakeholders how to navigate the current climate for obtaining travel waivers for the many artists flying from or through dozens of travel-restricted countries. With the 2021 return to live performances and announced plans by the Biden Administration to reduce COVID-19 travel restrictions, the U.S. artist visa process will be ramping up, along with all manner of other sectors petitioning for other types of visas. In response to the need for more specific, up-to-the-minute guidance on visas and international travel, the League recently co-presented a free webinar; ongoing news and assistance is publicly available at https://www.artistsfromabroad.org/, which has a dedicated news page on COVID-related visa news and international travel.

Putting Women Composers on the Map

Spanish musicologist Sakira Ventura has created an interactive map featuring more than 500 women composers—and counting. The map, at https://svmusicology.com/mapa/?lang=es, has photo icons representing each composer, overlaid on a world map; users can click on a picture to learn more about that composer. Included are composers from the past, such as Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s often overlooked sister Maria Anna (Nannerl), Hawai’i’s Queen Liliuokalani, and the ninth-century Byzantine-Greek composer and hymnographer Kassia. Given classical music’s historical timeline, many composers are in Western Europe, but the map includes composers from a wide geographic range. Living composers include Alma Deutscher (U.K.), Tawnie Olson (Canada), Elena Kats-Chernin (born in Uzbekistan, now based in Australia), Juhi Bansal (India), Eleanor Alberga (Jamaica), and Gabriela Lena Frank (U.S.). Ventura’s goal: to give these composers their due. As she told the Guardian newspaper in August, “If I’m putting together a map of female composers, it is because these women don’t appear anywhere else.” She plans to continue adding to the map/database.
Afghanistan National Institute of Music Closes, as Taliban Resumes Power

It’s hard to believe that less than a decade ago, young musicians from the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) were making a splash with an international tour, including performances at the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall, and the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The co-educational school—based in Kabul and founded in 2010 by Dr. Ahmad Sarmast and a symbol of gender equality in Afghanistan—closed its doors abruptly in August after the Taliban resumed power in the wake of the U.S. withdrawal of military forces. Many citizens fear they will be attacked or punished by the Taliban, given its history of punishment for those who practice nonreligious music. After more than a month of efforts on their behalf by many organizations around the world, in early October 101 students, former students, faculty and relatives of those who went to the school fled, arriving first in Qatar and eventually in Portugal, which has granted them visas. Many others have been unable to leave, with women, girls, journalists, musicians, and all those who helped the Americans during the war at particular risk. The League of American Orchestras is among American arts organizations actively engaging in an international effort to support music rights for the people of Afghanistan; draw attention to their plight with hashtags including #StandWithANIM; #MusicIsAHumanRight; #SupportANIM; #FriendsOfANIM; #AfghanWomen; #AfghanMusic; and encouraging people to donate to the official U.S.-based nonprofit supporting the Afghanistan National Institute of Music here, with all donations going toward securing the safety of the school and student body.

Made in Vermont

This summer, the Vermont Symphony Orchestra’s VSO Jukebox Quartet presented free concerts at breweries around the state to keep the music going during the pandemic. At Lawson’s Finest Liquids in Waitsfield, July 13, 2021.

The Vermont Symphony Orchestra’s Jukebox Quartet performs at Lawson’s Finest Liquids in Waitsfield, July 13, 2021.

The Score

The Score

The Score

The Score

The Score

MUSICAL CHAIRS

Tour and the launch of Curtis’s artist management initiative.

MATTHEW LODEN is now dean of Rice University’s Shepherd School of Music, after serving as CEO of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

The Greensboro Symphony Orchestra in North Carolina has named HEATHER LOFDAHL as music director of the Greensboro Symphony Youth Orchestra.

DOMINIQUE LUECKE has been hired as executive director of the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra in Wisconsin.

The Wichita Falls Youth Symphony Orchestra in Texas has selected MATTHEW D. LUTTRELL as music director.

Florida’s Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra has elected MELODY LYNCH as its new board president.

Pennsylvania’s Lancaster Symphony Orchestra has named SARA MALE, who has played cello in the orchestra for a decade, as board chair.

JESSICA MOREL has been appointed music director of the Greater Princeton Youth Orchestra.

The American Pianists Association has selected CURTIS L. JONES as executive director.

The Dayton Performing Arts Alliance, the parent organization of the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra, Dayton Ballet, and Dayton Opera, has appointed PATRICK J. NUGENT as president and CEO.

EMER OLIVAREZ has joined the Southwest Florida Symphony in Fort Myers as grants and communications manager.

The Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra has appointed SARA PARKINSON as executive director.

The Alabama Symphony Orchestra has selected MARK PATRICK as executive director.

DAWN POSEY has been chosen as the Bellingham (WA) Symphony Orchestra’s new concertmaster.

Louisiana Philharmonic Music Director CARLOS MIGUEL PRIETO has added the post of artistic adviser of the North Carolina Symphony, while the Raleigh-based orchestra seeks a permanent music director.

The University of North Carolina School of the Arts, located in Winston-Salem, has appointed SAXTON ROSE as dean of the School of Music.

EMMA SCHERER has joined the Santa Fe Symphony Orchestra and Chorus as executive director.

Michigan’s Grand Rapids Symphony has announced the one-year appointment of YANIV SEGAL as conductor of the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony.

Canada’s Calgary Philharmonic has selected MARC STEVENS as CEO and president; Stevens previously was general director of the National Arts Centre Orchestra.

The Waterbury Symphony Orchestra in Connecticut has appointed HEIDI STUBNER as executive director.
Remembering 9/11

Orchestras around the country marked the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks with concerts and other tributes. On September 11, the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, in collaboration with the Western New York Families of September 11 and the American Red Cross, Western New York Chapter, presented “American Resilience: 20th Anniversary Commemoration to 9/11 Heroes,” conducted by John Morris Russell. The concert at at Kleinhans Music Hall included George Walker’s Lyric for Strings, Copland’s Fanfare for the Common Man, and the Largo from Dvořák’s Symphony No. 9. Charleston, South Carolina’s Colour of Music Festival—which brings together classically trained musicians, composers, and performers of African descent together to showcase Black classical artistry—performed a free concert marking the 20th anniversary of September 11, conducted by Julius P. Williams. The Dallas Symphony Orchestra’s concert at Meyerson Symphony Center featured music by American composers including Samuel Barber, Aaron Copland, Augustus Hailstork, Charles Ives, and John Williams, and ticket proceeds from the concert benefited Carry The Load, a Dallas-based organization honoring members of the military, veterans, first responders and their families. Music Director James Blachly led Pennsylvania’s Johnstown Symphony Orchestra in an hour-long outdoor concert on September 11 at the Flight 93 National Memorial; on September 10, an ensemble from the Johnstown Symphony provided music as part of a luminaria ceremony at the national park. On September 11 at California’s Del Mar Surf Cup Sports Park, David Chan led saxophonist Branford Marsalis, soprano Gabriella Reyes, and the Mainly Mozart All-Star Orchestra, which comprises principal players from multiple U.S. orchestras, in a concert benefiting the National Conflict Resolution Center. Music Director Gianandrea Noseda led the National Symphony Orchestra’s free concert at the Kennedy Center on September 10, which featured the commissioned world premiere of James Lee III’s An Engraved American Mourning, included the “The President’s Own” U.S. Marine Band and mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard. On September 11 at the Sandy Promenade in Sandy, Utah, Connor Gray Covington led the Utah Symphony’s concert at the annual Utah Healing Field’s 9/11 ceremony presented by the Colonial Flag Foundation.
A Place for Us

Director Steven Spielberg’s film of *West Side Story*, based on the 1957 Broadway musical, was slated for release a year ago, but the pandemic halted that. Now the film—featuring Leonard Bernstein’s iconic score performed by the New York Philharmonic and led by Gustavo Dudamel—will open in theaters this December and appear on Disney Plus. The musical—book by Arthur Laurents’ music by Bernstein, lyrics by Stephen Sondheim—transposed Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* to Hell’s Kitchen in New York City, which seethed with racial conflict. Conceived, directed, and choreographed by Jerome Robbins, a frequent Bernstein collaborator, the musical revolves around turf wars between rival gangs: the Sharks, recent immigrants from Puerto Rico, and the Jets, a White gang whose members loathe the new arrivals. Tony Kushner (*Angels in America*) adapted Laurents’s script, and Justin Peck choreographed the film—with a nod to Robbins’s original dances. Unlike the 1961 film, this *West Side Story* features Puerto Rican and Latinx actors, plus one notable return: Rita Moreno, who won an Oscar for her Anita in the 1961 film, appears as Valentina, a new character.

Youthful Summer Sounds

This summer, Carnegie Hall’s three National Youth Orchestras of the United States of America ensembles—NYO-USA, NYO2, and NYO Jazz—once again convened in person, after an all-digital format in 2020. The musicians—208 musicians, representing 40 U.S. states—met for a monthlong residency at Purchase College, SUNY, with COVID-19 health protocols in place, for private lessons and master classes led by faculty made up of esteemed jazz artists and principal players from American orchestras. The residency was capped by a live-streamed performance by the three ensembles on July 24, in place of a tour. Carlos Miguel Prieto, music director of the Louisiana Philharmonic, served as conductor for NYO-USA; Mei-Ann Chen, music director of the Chicago Sinfonietta, led NYO2; and Sean Jones returned as artistic director and bandleader of NYO Jazz. Repertoire included Hindemith’s *Symphonic Metamorphosis after Themes by Carl Maria von Weber*, Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 6 (“Pathétique”), Anna Clyne’s *Sound and Fury*, and a commissioned piece from young composer Molly Joyce. The jazz ensemble's performance will be released as an album this fall. The National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America is free to all participants; in addition to the original NYO-USA ensemble (ages 16-19) launched in 2013, Carnegie Hall added NYO2 (ages 14-17) in 2016, and NYO Jazz in 2018. Since the program’s inception, the ensembles have performed in concert halls in 15 countries in Europe, North America, South America, and Asia.

Shuttered Venues Grants Enter Supplemental Phase

As the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) continues to implement the Shuttered Venue Operators Grants (SVOG) program, eligible applicants are now being invited to accept supplemental grant awards. More than 300 orchestras have received essential COVID-19 relief funding through the initial round of SVOG awards, and the League has been at the forefront of advocacy efforts to both support the program and to help orchestras navigate the application and compliance procedures. To qualify for a second grant, entities must demonstrate a minimum 70% decline in earned revenue in the first quarter of calendar year 2021, compared to the same quarter of calendar year 2019. The SBA is also working on the details of the steps that grantees will need to complete when closing out the initial and supplemental grant reporting process and will issue further information when it is available. The League remains in frequent dialogue with the SBA regarding the Shuttered Venues program and keeps orchestras informed regarding all forms of federal assistance through its COVID-19 Relief Resource Center at https://americanorchestras.org/learn/covid-19/federal-assistance/.
Met Milestone

It was a milestone that was a long time coming: In September, Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* became the first work by a Black composer to be performed at the Metropolitan Opera since the company was formed in 1883. The season-opening performance was also the first at the Metropolitan Opera House since the pandemic began in 2020. *Fire* had its world premiere in 2019 at Opera Theatre of St. Louis; the composer, best known for scoring multiple Spike Lee films, is also composer of 2013’s *Champion: An Opera in Jazz*, about boxer Emile Griffith, also premiered in St. Louis. *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, with a libretto adapted by Kasi Lemmons from Charles Blow’s 2014 memoir of the same name, centers on Blow’s upbringing in segregated rural Louisiana, where he was molested when he was young; themes include racism, violence, and the abuse of power. The score features a jazz quartet embedded within the orchestra. The performance, staged by Camille Brown and James Robinson, featured baritone Will Liverman as adult Charles and seven-year-old Walter Russell III as Char’es-Baby (young Charles); Latonia Moore sang the pivotal role of Billie, Charles’s mother; and Angel Blue sang the multiple roles of Destiny/Loneliness/Greta. The audience in the house responded with thunderous applause; the performance was also livestreamed for outdoor audiences in Manhattan’s Times Square and Marcus Garvey Park in Harlem. Blanchard has stressed in interviews that while he may be the first Black composer to have a work performed at the Met, he is far from the first one qualified to do so, citing Scott Joplin and William Grant Still as past examples. The second opera by a Black composer to be staged at the Met will come in 2023, after only a two-year wait: Anthony Davis’s 1986 opera *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, in a production by Robert O’Hara that will first make its debut in spring 2022 at Detroit’s Michigan Opera Theatre.

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