



At a 2019 performance, Aspen Music Festival and School Music Director Robert Spano leads the Aspen Festival Orchestra in Mahler's Symphony No. 2 with vocal soloists and choristers from the Colorado Symphony Orchestra Chorus, Seraphic Fire, and students of the Seraphic Fire Professional Choral Institute.

Festivals on the Move

Summer music festivals are continuing to adapt and change with the times, two years after the COVID-19 pandemic began. As live, in-person concerts resume, festivals nationwide are taking to heart the lessons learned and implementing fresh approaches to concerts, rethinking audience access, and expanding the range of the music they play. What's ahead?

By Steven Brown

At the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music in California, musicians and audiences share an up-close-and-personal experience. Open rehearsals offer listeners a window into the creative process. When the musicians call it a night, they stay with host families in the community. "It's an extension of the festival family," Executive Director Ellen M. Primack says. "People who host musicians feel like they have the best experience of the festival. They make new friends. They understand more about a musician's life."

COVID-19 turned that coziness into a liability. In the summers of 2020 and 2021, before vaccinations had yet to become widespread, Cabrillo's musicians had to stay away: putting them into hosts' homes would have been too risky for everyone, so the festival moved into the

virtual realm. This summer, the festival will at last bring composers, performers, audiences, and host families back together. "We have a whole task force working on spreading the word in our pool of hosts," Primack says. "We're looking forward to that."

Even for festivals that returned to in-person performances last summer—taking advantage of outdoor venues' relative safety—this year will still bring pandemic-era firsts. The Boston Symphony Orchestra's Tanglewood Festival, the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Hollywood Bowl concerts, and the California-based Music Academy of the West's professional training programs will return to full-length seasons after last summer's shortened ones. The Boston University Tanglewood Institute, after shrinking its student roster the past two

summers, will fill it out again. Chicago's Grant Park Festival, which focused last summer on music that could be performed by a reduced, socially distanced orchestra and chorus, will again marshal full-strength groups.

But some festivals still confront changing dynamics in their regions. The super-hot housing market in Aspen, Colorado, put the kibosh on the Aspen Music Festival's plans to build back this summer to a full-sized student roster. Before the pandemic, a portion of the students typically found rental quarters on the open market, but the city's population influx squelched that option. So the festival had to drop 80 student slots—leaving a final tally of 480—and eliminate its all-student Aspen Philharmonic Orchestra.

The Britt Music and Arts Festival in

southern Oregon returns this summer to a full-sized orchestra and schedule. But its 60th-anniversary edition will serve notice that pandemics aren't the only larger-than-life forces we face: the festival, based in a hillside amphitheater, will abandon its usual late-summer time slot and shift six weeks earlier, trying to finish before wildfire season.

"For the past nine years, we have had to deal with forest-fire smoke at our venue," says Donna Briggs, the festival's recently retired president and CEO. (The festival's new president and CEO, Abby McKee, begins in the job on May 1, 2022.) "Unfortunately, there have been multiple occasions when we've had to either cancel shows altogether or move them into a school auditorium, which is not ideal—moving 90 musicians and the audience at the last minute. We hope this new arrangement is going to solve that problem."

Underrepresented Voices

Starting the Britt Festival in mid-June also created an opportunity: the opening weekend coincides with Juneteenth, and incorporating that into the festival is "a natural evolution," Briggs says. Music Director Teddy Abrams and the Britt Festival Orchestra will mark Juneteenth with a program devoted to music of living and historical Black composers including Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, Valerie Coleman, and Tyshawn Sorey. The following weekend, bass-baritone Davóne Tines will join the festival orchestra in his multi-composer song collection *Reflections and Prayers*.

The pandemic, serendipitously, may have helped pave the way for

music festivals to feature creators and performers from long-neglected groups. By forcing music organizations to throw out long-set schedules, the pandemic made them "rethink everything" just as Black Lives Matter and other social-justice movements put the spotlight on diversity and inclusion, says Grant Park Music Festival President and CEO Paul Winberg. "That gave us an opportunity to double down on highlighting works of people who have too long been ignored," Winberg says. Concertgoers' response to these works at Grant Park has signaled that "audiences' ears are open now more than ever," he continues. "They say to me, 'I'm so proud that we're doing this,' or, 'I'm so glad that I came to this concert and you did this work. I didn't know anything about this composer.'"

This summer's Grant Park fare includes the premiere of a work the festival commissioned before the

By forcing music organizations to throw out long-set schedules, the pandemic may have helped pave the way for music festivals to feature creators and performers from long-neglected groups just as Black Lives Matter and other social-justice movements put the spotlight on diversity and inclusion.

pandemic: the Violin Concerto No. 2 by jazz pianist and composer Billy Childs. Conductor Jonathon Heyward will lead a program including Dvořák's Symphony No. 8, and the festival orchestra will perform with mariachi and gospel groups. Widening the lens, Winberg says that



Britt Festival President and CEO **Donna Briggs** says, "For the past nine years, we have had to deal with forest-fire smoke at our venue." The festival will shift to earlier dates this summer, in hopes of avoiding wildfire season.

works by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) or women composers will figure into 63 percent of the festival's roughly 200 concerts.

The Hollywood Bowl also will feature a wide range of conductors and artists. Finland's Dalia Stasevska will lead the Los Angeles Philharmonic in a program including Dvořák's *New World*

Symphony, and Colombian American conductor Lina Gonzalez-Granados will helm a program featuring Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherazade*. Both programs will open with music composed by women. Joseph Young will guest-conduct the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Carlos Simon's *Portrait of a Queen*, which weaves in the spoken word to look at Black history in the United States. Pianist Isata Kanneh-Mason will join Polish conductor

Marta Gardolińska and the LA Phil in Clara Schumann's Piano Concerto. Those will come amid Bowl programs featuring the LA Phil and Music and Artistic Director Gustavo Dudamel and the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra led by Thomas Wilkins, its longtime principal conductor.

During the Boston Symphony Orchestra's opening weekend at Tanglewood in rural Lenox, Massachusetts Music Director Andris Nelsons will lead the BSO in Duke Ellington's *New World A-Comin'* rhapsody for piano and band, spotlighting pianist Aaron Diehl, and the U.S. premiere of Helen Grime's Trumpet Concerto. Later in the festival, a concert performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* will feature the BSO and a cast made up mostly of singers of color. JoAnn Falletta, music director of



Aspen Music Festival and School artist-faculty member Timothy Adams Jr. and members of the AMFS Percussion Ensemble perform Adams's newly composed *Ode to Breonna* last summer.



Joy Neuman

The Britt Festival Orchestra and Music Director Teddy Abrams perform with narrator Bruce Campbell.



Adriane White

Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music Executive Director **Ellen Primack** says the festival is focused on “making our orchestra more relevant—to be a catalyst for conversation and dialogue.” Cabrillo is in an area that has been ravaged by wildfires and this summer will present the world premiere of Scott Ordway’s *The End of Rain*, fourth in a series of commissions on the environmental crisis.



Music Director Cristian Măcelaru and the Cabrillo Festival Virtual Orchestra gave the world premiere of Stacy Garrop’s *The Battle for the Ballot*, commemorating the centenary of the 19th Amendment, online in 2020. The work will receive its in-person premiere at this summer’s Cabrillo Festival.



Cellist Seth Parker Woods will perform in the Britt Festival’s Juneteenth celebration this summer, which will feature music by Valerie Coleman, Tyshawn Sorey, Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, Adolphus Hailstork, and Julius Eastman.

the Buffalo Philharmonic, will make her BSO debut leading a program of Roberto Sierra, Respighi, and Tchaikovsky, and the podium roster also includes conductor Karina Canellakis and Anna Rikitina, the BSO’s assistant conductor.

“We’re embracing the idea that engaging with artists with a range of life experience makes what we do more interesting and more relevant,” says BSO President and CEO Gail Samuel. This extends into making Tanglewood “more fluid around genre,” she adds, citing Diehl in Ellington and concerts by multi-instrumentalist/vocalist Rhiannon Giddens—heading up the Silkroad Ensemble—and jazz singer Cécile McLorin Salvant.

The Cabrillo Festival has long championed the cause of diversity, under conductor Marin Alsop, who led it from 1992 to 2016, and now under Cristian Măcelaru, music director since 2017. The festival has continued to focus on “making our orchestra more relevant—to be a

catalyst for conversation and dialogue,” Primack says. Cabrillo is located in an area that was ravaged by wildfires in 2020. This summer, the vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth will join Cabrillo’s orchestra to premiere Scott Ordway’s *The End of Rain*, fourth in a series of commissions on the environmental crisis.

Tech Still Matters

The Cabrillo Festival will also include the live-performance premiere of the one work premiered at the festival in 2020: Stacy Garrop’s *The Battle for the Ballot*, a celebration of the centennial of the 19th Amendment recognizing the right of women to vote. The lockdown summer’s virtual performance was just one example of technology providing a lifeline for festivals whose musicians and audiences were shut away.

“We had been doing no online programming at all” before the pandemic, Primack says, but a “herculean” effort enabled Cabrillo to mount a mini-festival

virtually. For *The Battle for the Ballot*, 60 of the orchestra’s far-flung musicians recorded their parts individually on audio and video, syncing to a click track. Then a tech-savvy percussionist, Svet Stoyanov, combined everything into a video made available on demand. The result was “so artful and so beautiful and intimate,” Primack says. “You get to see the individual players. There’s something magical about them, both individually and as an ensemble.”

The Music Academy of the West—which in pre-pandemic years presented 200 summer concerts and other offerings in Santa Barbara, California—couldn’t bring its 2020 fellows and faculty to Santa Barbara, so it connected them virtually, wherever they were. To make sure no students were shortchanged because of technology, the academy sent them all iPads, cameras, tripods and microphones, plus WiFi hotspots for whoever needed them, explains Chief Artistic Officer Jamie Broumas. It supplied instruments



Aspen Music Festival CEO **Alan Fletcher** (with patrons at Benedict Music Tent in 2021) says the festival's streamed concerts during the pandemic "were reaching people in Hanoi and Capetown and Buenos Aires ... We will absolutely continue a streaming program."



"The initial impetus for streaming was about connecting with our existing audience," says Boston Symphony Orchestra President and CEO **Gail Samuel**. "The question I want to build out is, how can it help us connect with new audiences? Are there ways to use the virtual space to provide different access?"



Grant Park Music Festival President and CEO **Paul Winberg** says the pandemic forced music organizations to "rethink everything" just as Black Lives Matter and other social-justice movements raised issues of diversity and inclusion: "That gave us an opportunity to double down on highlighting works of people who have too long been ignored."



The Grant Park Orchestra and Music Director Carlos Kalmar perform at Millennium Park's Pritzker Pavilion in Chicago.



Mask on, mask off: The pandemic has forced last-minute changes in safety precautions at festivals, as these photos of the Grant Park Chorus—taken earlier and later during the 2021 Grant Park Music Festival—demonstrate.



A pre-pandemic performance by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Music Director Andris Nelsons, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, and vocal soloists. This summer, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus will give its first in-person concerts since 2019.

to percussionists in Italy and New Zealand, and it arranged practice space for pianists who couldn't work in their apartments. Zoom made it possible for musicians to perform together. "We had a steep learning curve, but we pulled it off," Broumas says. "I'm so proud of 2020." The whole exercise, she adds, complemented what the Music Academy calls its Innovation Institute, which teaches the

young musicians to marshal electronic and social media as springboards to their careers.

Aspen, like the Music Academy, mounted a virtual mini-festival—including both teaching and concerts—in 2020, then maintained some virtual offerings after in-person activities resumed in 2021. While President and CEO Alan Fletcher says Aspen's

streamed concerts may offer "a very different musical experience" than, say, the Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall, it's still "a fresh, exciting one," he says. "We were reaching people in Hanoi and Capetown and Buenos Aires, who probably will never come to Aspen," Fletcher explains. Closer to home, he adds, the streams have become "really important to people who know us but no longer come up to Aspen. The letters and cards I've gotten from those people are so emotional. We will absolutely continue a streaming program." Chicago's Grant Park festival, which largely relied on archival material for its virtual offerings, hopes to add new videos as its home, Millennium Park's Pritzker Pavilion, beefs up its equipment, Winberg says.

Festivals are taking a variety of approaches to virtual programming as live, in-person concerts again become the norm. "People are desperate to go into a live setting," the Music Academy's Broumas says. Because direct contact between musicians and audiences is so important to the Cabrillo experience, Primack explains, the festival will limit itself to live streams of open



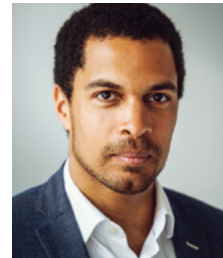
Phil Channing

The Music Academy of the West Festival Orchestra performs at the Santa Barbara Bowl.



Moshe Burman

"We had a steep learning curve, but we pulled it off," says **Jamie Broumas**, Music Academy of the West's chief artistic officer. "I'm so proud of 2020." The Academy couldn't bring its 2020 fellows and faculty to Santa Barbara, so it connected them virtually.



Rich Coburn won a Music Academy of the West Alumni Enterprise Award in 2021 for his BIPOC VOICES project, an online library with orchestrated vocal works by Black, Indigenous, and other composers of color.

rehearsals. The Britt Festival will focus on educational material offered virtually throughout the year, Briggs says.

Tanglewood will stream some concerts this summer, the BSO's Samuel says, "but that will continue to evolve. The initial impetus for streaming was about connecting with our existing audience. The question I want to build out is, how can it help us connect with new audiences—people in the community who maybe don't feel like they're engaged with us yet? Are there ways to use the virtual space to provide different access?"

Multiple Approaches

During the pandemic, summer festivals, just like year-round groups, have navigated through unfamiliar technologies, changing health mandates, and plain old uncertainty. The Los Angeles Philharmonic didn't get the go-ahead for an in-person 2021 Hollywood Bowl season until February or March that year, recalls Daniel Song, the orchestra's chief operating officer. "We had to scramble and just book whatever we could," Song says. "It became kind of a race—which artists were available when. Everybody was trying to just fill dates in the calendar and see how things landed."

The need for adaptation and new solutions went far beyond that. Like

restaurants and other businesses across the country, the Bowl struggled to find people for food service and other roles, Song adds. When a vaccine mandate created the need for additional staffers, Los Angeles County's Parks & Recreation Department—the Bowl's owner—pointed toward some workers whose seasonal jobs were ending. "We got a good cadre of county lifeguards to come and do our vaccine verification," Song says.

Going into summer 2022, the Los Angeles Philharmonic's staff feels "ready for anything," Song says. The Bowl will celebrate its 100th season with the likes of a Richard Wagner night conducted by

Dudamel, who will lead a phalanx of big-voiced singers in Act 3 of *Die Walküre*; also planned are the world premiere of a commissioned concerto for *cuatro* by Gonzalo Grau, with soloist Jorge Glem, and Orff's *Carmina Burana*.

The Grant Park Music Festival will revel in the return of its full-sized orchestra and chorus, with Artistic Director Carlos Kalmar conducting such works as Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 9 and Benjamin Britten's Spring Symphony. The Tanglewood Festival Chorus will return to its namesake setting, where it hasn't been heard since 2019. Last year, there were no singers, student



Foran Song

Concertgoers arrive at the Hollywood Bowl for a concert in 2021.



Dealing with the exigencies of the pandemic at the Hollywood Bowl last summer, says **Daniel Song**, the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s chief operating officer, “We’ve become more unified. After our world was rocked in the way it was, we all came together—our musicians, our board, our donors, our staff. We came together to be able to get through it.”

or professional—for fear of superspreader risk among grouped vocalists—but this year it is bringing them back in force with programs including Brahms’s *A German Requiem* and Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Tanglewood’s Vocal Arts Program will resume.

Festivals also will take advantage of discoveries they made during last year’s scaled-back programs. Musicians at Tanglewood appreciated the “more relaxed feeling” of a schedule that was less jammed than usual, Samuel says, and that led the festival to leave “some space” this year. “Do we have to be going every single night?” Samuels asks.

After cutting its student body way back last summer, so it could limit student housing to one person per room, Aspen discovered some benefits, Fletcher says. “Our piano program used to be about 60 young people,” he recalls. “When we cut it to 20 for last summer, the piano faculty said, ‘We love this. We can give them multiple lessons a week. We can give chamber music with strings to every pianist.’ So we said, ‘OK. Let’s go with a smaller piano program.’” While the city’s real-estate squeeze forced the festival to make a last-minute reduction in this summer’s student count, the vocal program will nevertheless build from last year’s 15 to 60, enabling it to stage Verdi’s *Falstaff* with Welsh baritone Bryn Terfel.

Fletcher and other leaders repeatedly credit the legions of people who enabled the festivals to survive the lockdowns: donors who maintained or increased their contributions; the lawmakers behind the federal CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act),

which helped make up for lost revenue; staffers who made and re-made plans as circumstances changed; musicians who performed in their living rooms and wrestled with the challenges of onstage social distancing; and the audiences who have welcomed them back.

“While we didn’t have the normal numbers of concerts last year, the [Hollywood Bowl] audiences were at 100 percent,” the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s Song says. Within the orchestra’s own

operation, he adds, “I think we’ve become more unified. After our world was rocked in the way it was, we all came together—our musicians, our board, our donors, our staff. We came together to be able to get through it.” **S**

STEVEN BROWN is a Houston-based writer specializing in classical music and the arts. He previously served as classical music critic of the *Orlando Sentinel*, *Charlotte Observer*, and *Houston Chronicle*.

PSO

PORTLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

JUST \$10!*

STUNNING CONCERTS
WORLD CLASS MUSICIANS
FILMED BY GRAMMY
AWARD-WINNING PROFESSIONALS!

*Plus Applicable service fees



CHORALART

ST MATTHEW PASSION

AVAILABLE ON DEMAND:
WED, APR 20, 2022 – FRI, MAY 20, 2022
Eckart Preu, *Music Director*
ChoralArt Singers
USM Chamber Singers
Portland Symphony Orchestra Youth Festival Chorus
Gene Stenger, *Evangelist & tenor arias*
Kevin Deas, *Jesus*
Nola Richardson, *soprano*
Teresa Buchholz, *mezzo-soprano*
J.S. BACH: *St Matthew Passion*



FLORES

PACHO FLORES PLAYS MÁRQUEZ

AVAILABLE ON DEMAND:
WED, MAY 25, 2022 – FRI, JUN 24, 2022
Josep Caballé-Domenech, *guest conductor*
Pacho Flores, *trumpet*

PALOMAR: *Danza, Cantiga y Finale*
MÁRQUEZ: *Concierto de Otoño*
SHOSTAKOVICH: *Symphony No. 6 in B minor*



KALER

SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE

AVAILABLE ON DEMAND:
WED, JUN 29, 2022 – FRI, JUL 29, 2022
Eckart Preu, *Music Director*
Ilya Kaler, *violin*

TANAKA: *Water of Life*
PROKOFIEV: *Violin Concerto No. 2 in G minor*
BERLIOZ: *Symphonie fantastique*

PORTLANDSYMPHONY.ORG | 207.842.0800

Dates, programs, and artists may be subject to change