

Contact: Nichole Fehrman
Director of Marketing and Communications
nfehrman@americanorchestras.org
646 822 4027

The League of American Orchestras' 81st National Conference to Gather Over 1,000 Orchestra Professionals in Baltimore, MD this June 1-3

Conference Highlights Include:

- Opening Session Keynote by Duke University's Vice Provost for the Arts **Deborah Rutter**
- The presentation of the League's highest honor, the Gold Baton Award, to both the **Sphinx Organization** and to orchestra leader **David Hyslop**
- **Host orchestra Baltimore Symphony Orchestra** performing a powerful reflection on America at 250 **conducted by Music Director Jonathon Heyward**, featuring Cécile McLorin Salvant in a tribute to the American Songbook and the world premiere of a Billy Childs commission for flute and clarinet with orchestra performed by brothers Demarre and Anthony McGill
- An exclusive preview of "**The Declaration Project**," featuring performances and conversation with pianist and NPR host Lara Downes and jazz musician and composer Arturo O'Farrill
- Expanded content for **Orchestra Board Members** and **Artistic Administrators / Artist Managers**
- **Multiple performances by other Maryland-based orchestras**, including the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Chamber Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Youth Orchestra, the OrchKids Symphonic Wind Ensemble, and the OrchKids Brass Band

New York, NY (April 21, 2026) – Orchestra administrators, musicians, conductors, board members, and volunteers from across the country will gather in Baltimore this June for the field's largest annual event: **[The League of American Orchestras National Conference](#)**. Hosted by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the Conference will take place June 1-3,

2026, at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront, with additional performances at Joseph Meyerhoff Hall.

“The orchestra field loves to come together each year for important conversations about the future, and Baltimore is the perfect location,” says League President and CEO, Simon Woods. “It’s a place of reinvention, a place where heritage and modern vibrancy come together, and a place where our delegates will find great energy for the vital topics of the day, including financial sustainability, youth engagement, audition practices, and the impact of AI. We’re looking forward to another momentous gathering with the help of our great hosts!”

“Hosting this year’s Conference in Baltimore is both an honor and an opportunity to help lead the conversation about the direction our industry is headed,” said Mark C. Hanson, President and CEO of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. “Baltimore is not only this year’s host city, but a community that embodies reinvention and artistic vitality. As orchestras explore sustainable futures, deepen youth engagement, and reimagine their role in the 21st century, there’s no better place to come together and experience that energy firsthand.”

The Conference **Opening Session** at Joseph Meyerhoff Hall on **Monday, June 1 from 4:15-5:45pm**, will feature a keynote by Duke University’s Vice Provost for the Arts Deborah Rutter on audience development and transformation. The League’s highest honor, the Gold Baton Award, will be presented to the **Sphinx Organization**, accepted by Afa Dworkin, President and Artistic Director, and Aaron Dworkin, Founder and Strategic Advisor. Mark C. Hanson, Jonathon Heyward, and Simon Woods will present opening remarks, and attendees will also hear three performances by young musicians: the Baltimore Symphony Youth Orchestra, led by Principal Conductor Christopher Cicconi, the OrchKids Symphonic Wind Ensemble, conducted by Jonathan Villegas, and the OrchKids Brass Band.

During the **Closing Luncheon** on **Wednesday, June 3 from 1:00-2:30pm**, the League will hold its Annual Meeting and present a second Gold Baton award to David Hyslop, former CEO of the Minnesota Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, and Oregon Symphony Orchestra and interim CEO of an unprecedented 14 orchestras across the country. The 81st National Conference concludes with a preview of “The Declaration Project,” featuring pianist and NPR host Lara Downes and jazz musician and composer Arturo O’Farrill in performance and conversation.

A **Tech Fair** on **Monday, June 1 from 8:30am–12:30pm** will showcase technology offerings in the areas of marketing, data management and CRM, ticketing, online program notes, audience engagement apps, in-hall concert technologies, and more.

League Conference sessions are broken into two types: **Constituency Meetings**, which are closed-door meetings for peers in similar roles at member orchestras, and **Open Sessions**, which are open to all Conference attendees. This year's Open Sessions include four formats:

- **Insight Sessions**—panels and presentations on major topics for the orchestra field
- **Critical Conversations**—short presentations followed by facilitated open discussions for attendees
- **Business Perspectives**—sessions from industry partners delivered from their specific place of expertise
- **Workshops**—hands-on, actionable trainings where attendees can learn and practice skills

Also this year, an expanded new convening for orchestra board members, the **Orchestra Board Member Forum**, will feature personalized content from strategic fundraising to healthy leadership, along with the launch of a new edition of the League's **Effective Governance Guide**. The 2026 Conference also includes a first joint meeting bringing together **artistic administrators and artist managers** for guided conversations and shared insights.

During the week of Conference, local orchestras and guest artists will present five inspiring performances:

- **Baltimore Chamber Orchestra** Concert, **"The Best of Baltimore,"** on May 31, 7:30pm at Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, with Robert Moody, conductor (*open to the public*)
- **Baltimore Symphony Youth Orchestra, OrchKids Symphonic Wind Ensemble, and OrchKids Brass Band**, at the **Opening Session** on June 1, 4:15pm at Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall (*open to delegates and members of the press*)
- **Annapolis Symphony Orchestra** Concert, **Shostakovich Symphony No. 5**, on June 1, 8:00pm at Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, including a performance by Annapolis Symphony Academy's Orion Youth Orchestra (*open to the public*)

- **Baltimore Symphony Orchestra** Concert, **“Aspects of America,”** on June 2, 7:30pm at Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall with Jonathon Heyward, conductor; Cécile McLorin Salvant, vocalist; Anthony McGill, clarinet; and Demarre McGill, flute (*open to the public*)
- Pianist and NPR host **Lara Downes** and jazz musician and composer **Arturo O’Farrill**, **“The Declaration Project,”** at the **Closing Session** on June 3, 1:00pm at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront (*open to delegates and members of the press*)

In addition to major Conference events on June 1-3, **Pre-Conference Seminars** will take place on Sunday, May 31 and Monday, June 1, providing 3-hour deep dives on a variety of topics.

The full Conference schedule and overview can be found on the League of American Orchestras’ Conference website, along with Conference registration information: leagueconference.org.

Members of the media interested in Conference access or interviews, please contact Nichole Fehrman directly: nfehrman@americanorchestras.org.

Members of the media interested in tickets for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra concert may contact Whitney Brown at wbrown@BSOmusic.org.

Conference hashtag: #Orch2026

The **League of American Orchestras** champions the vitality of music and the orchestral experience, supports the orchestra community, and leads change boldly. The only national organization dedicated to orchestras and their communities, the League supports the field through advocacy, research, convenings, leadership development, artistic programs, and grants. Founded in 1942 and chartered by Congress in 1962, the League includes nearly 25,000 musicians, conductors, orchestra staff, board members, volunteers, and business partners working within our membership of 1,600 world-renowned orchestras, community groups, summer festivals, student and youth ensembles, conservatories and libraries, businesses serving orchestras, and individuals who love symphonic music. Visit americanorchestras.org.