

Orchestras Confront Global Pandemic

It all happened so quickly.

Just a few months ago, no one beyond a few scientists had ever heard of a dangerous new virus. But in early January, reports began emerging from the Chinese city of Wuhan about the outbreak of a novel (because new) coronavirus (named for its spherical, spiky shape). It appeared to cause a brutally virulent flu—a terribly sad situation in a distant country. Then COVID-19, as the disease caused by the virus is called, spread quickly, with often fatal results. The virus leapt borders: toward the end of January, cities across Asia were being hit. A very few weeks after that, the localized epidemic metastasized into a global pandemic; millions carried the virus; thousands perished. At this writing, the United States leads the planet in the number of cases, with nearly 600,000 people testing positive. (China and India each have four times the population of the U.S. but at press time report only a fraction of cases compared to the U.S.) The pandemic upended the global economy and hammered healthcare systems.

Orchestras have not been exempt. The widening effect of the virus on orchestras paralleled its global spread. In late January, the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra was one of the first to cancel concerts. As cities in Asia went into lockdown, ensembles including the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra cancelled concerts, then the rest of their seasons. In Europe, La Scala, La Fenice, the Paris Opera—enduring landmarks of classical music—shut down. The earliest direct impact on American orchestras was the cancellation of international tours by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, and San Francisco Symphony.

Soon, American orchestras of all sizes were responding with alacrity, motivated by ethical concern for the health of musicians, staff, and audiences. As stay-at-home recommendations became legal mandates and limits on public gatherings shrank from 500

people to 100 to no more than ten, orchestras shifted from postponing individual concerts, to cancelling concerts a few at a time, to shutting down the remainder of their seasons. Suddenly, as “social distancing” became critically important to limit the spread of COVID-19, one of the most beautiful things that humans

do—come together in groups to make music—had become one of the most dangerous.

Concert halls, performing arts centers, and conservatories nationwide closed, due to safety precautions and governmental restrictions, and the rare and sobering sight of shuttered concert halls became commonplace. But the music did not stop. Orchestras and musicians, recognizing that one of the safest ways to share their collective art is online, livestreamed concerts without in-person audiences, performed from musicians’ own

homes, posted chats by music directors, hopped on social media, and made educational resources and archival recordings available. Youth orchestras and music schools went virtual, with instruction and coaching delivered digitally. Orchestras rushed to make their music available to anyone anywhere—usually free of cost. These generous acts may take a financial toll down the road, as they do not generate income.

Orchestras are taking multiple approaches, tailored to their own situations, to the loss of box-office revenue imposed by the pandemic. Some have furloughed musicians, administrators, concert-hall workers; some are paying musicians for cancelled concerts; some have committed to paying everyone for the remainder of the season; still others have reduced salaries across the board while maintaining benefits including health insurance.

A few months ago, no one knew about coronavirus. Now it has spread nearly worldwide and disrupted modern society in unprecedented ways. As they have before, orchestras are finding innovative ways to keep the music going—even as they confront extraordinary challenges.



A New York Philharmonic Facebook post in mid-March epitomized the situation at orchestras nationwide due to the pandemic. The iconic plaza in front of David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center was soon closed to the public.

League Resources

Find information and resources concerning the pandemic from the League of American Orchestras throughout this issue of *Symphony*. In addition, the League is posting updates about coping with the pandemic as a service to the orchestra field. These resources include information about the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security package; discussion groups and one-on-one consultations for League members; webinars led by experts on key topics; guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and other authorities; and more. Visit [the League’s coronavirus preparedness site](#).

Simon Woods Named League's Next President and CEO

The League of American Orchestras announced on April 3 that Simon Woods, a highly experienced and forward-looking leader in the orchestra field, has been named President and CEO of the League, effective September 1, 2020. Woods will guide the League in fulfilling its mission: to advance the experience of orchestral music, support the people and organizations that create it, and champion the contributions they make to the health and vibrancy of communities. He succeeds Jesse Rosen, who has served as President and CEO since 2008. Rosen announced in June 2019 that he would step down from his position at the League, and a Recruitment and Selection Committee of the League's Board began a national search in fall 2019. The League plans to recognize Rosen's successful tenure with events that will be scheduled after the COVID-19 pandemic passes.

Woods will work closely with the League's staff and board to sustain and grow the organization's programmatic excellence, its support for its members, and the prominent role it occupies in national arts advocacy. He will be a leading voice for the League's 1,700 institutional and individual members—including orchestras across the 50 states and around the world—ensuring that the League empowers them with knowledge, perspective, and resources to navigate a rapidly changing environment.

Woods brings 32 years of experience in the field of orchestral music to the League. He is currently Interim Director of the Grand Teton Music Festival, having served as CEO of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association (2018-19), President and CEO of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra (2011-17), Chief Executive of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra (2005-11), and President and CEO of the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra (2004-05). He was Vice President, Artistic Planning and Operations, for the Philadelphia Orchestra from 2002 to 2004, having joined the orchestra in 1997 after almost a decade as a classical CD producer at EMI Classics in London. Woods has a Bachelor of Arts in music (musicology, conducting, composition) from the University of Cambridge, Clare College, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Conducting from the Guildhall School of Music, London.

A long-time advocate for new music, Woods has been responsible for dozens of commissions of new works that have gone on to win prestigious awards. He has championed diversity and equity and has worked to create systemic change from the inside of the organizations he has run. A strong believer in the importance of community relationships, Woods has led programs focusing on access for young people, homelessness, prisons, and native tribe partnerships.

Passionately committed to the professional development of the orchestra leaders of the future, Woods has for two decades contributed to the League's professional development programs. He is director of the League's signature annual immersive training program, Essentials of Orchestra Management.

"We are thrilled that Simon will become our President and CEO, given his passion for orchestral music, his track record of advancing the League's mission, and his vision for change as orchestras pursue deeper engagement with their communities," said League Board Chair Douglas Hagerman. "In this time of pandemic and all of its challenges, Simon brings to the table not only strong, steady leadership, but also personal qualities that will nurture our organization and its members—qualities such as listening, integrity, and humanity. Simon will extend and embolden the critical work that Jesse Rosen has started."

"I am truly humbled to take on this critical leadership role," said Woods. "Orchestras have been at the center of my life since I first played clarinet in my local youth orchestra many years ago. They have given me my career, many of my friendships, and an undying sense of wonder about the magic that happens on stage when great musicians come together as one. We are deep into one of the most challenging periods that our world has ever experienced, but I have tremendous faith in our long-term prospects as we re-invent our art form, build authentic relationships with our communities, and reflect the vibrant cultural mix of the country on our stages and in our halls. Our field has never been more dynamic than it is today, and my pledge is to champion that dynamism and tirelessly support the amazing people—onstage and off—who make it possible."



Craig T. Mathew and Greg Gruffi/Mathew Imaging

League Provides Essential Resources and Assistance to Orchestras During Pandemic

The League of American Orchestras is working tirelessly to help the orchestra field navigate the pandemic crisis. The League's activities on this front are guided by three imperatives: help orchestras address immediate hardship with real-time tactical support; unite our community and leverage its collective strength; hold fast to our vision for vibrant and civically engaged music-making and organizations.

As a health and safety precaution, League staff began working from home on March 16. All staffers remain available at their regular email addresses; find a staff contact list with phone number and email addresses at americanorchestras.org/about-the-league/staff-directory.html. The address for general inquiries is member@americanorchestras.org.

Here is a partial list of recent League activity to support orchestras during the pandemic. Visit americanorchestras.org for the most current information on these and other League programs and resources.

Advocacy: The League remains at the forefront of advocacy on Capitol Hill for federal relief for orchestras and musicians as well as advocating about other issues of importance to orchestras. The League is constantly updating its online federal assistance page to provide the latest information on available forms of federal relief, and members can ask Congress to support further essential aid through the League's talking points and action center.

Webinars on federal relief: Two free League webinars are now available on demand to guide viewers through specific questions about how various forms of federal relief apply to orchestras and their workforces. The webinars feature expert attorneys and are moderated by Heather Noonan, the League's Vice President for Advocacy.

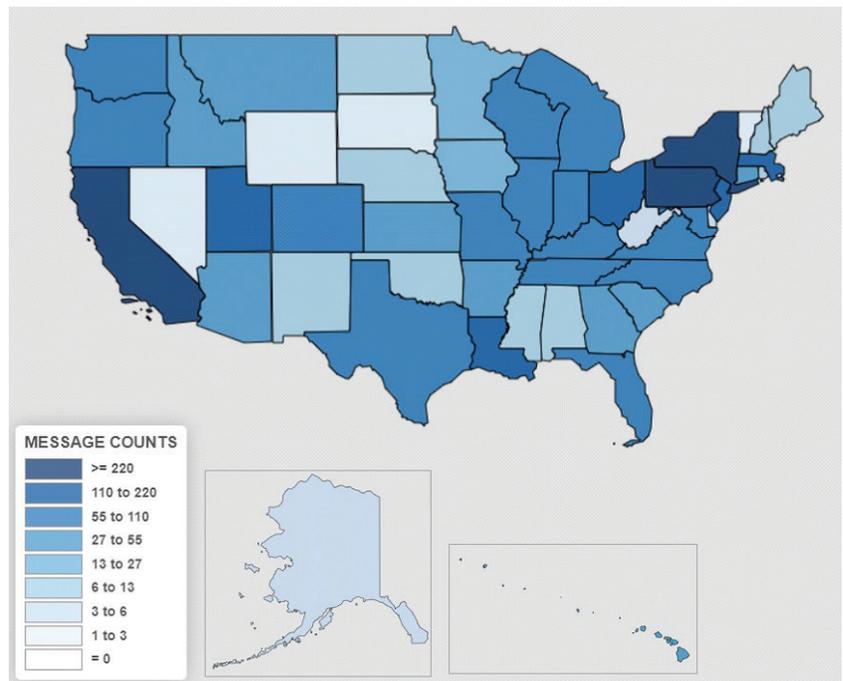
Individualized legal assistance on federal relief: The League offers member orchestras individualized technical assistance on the COVID-19 federal relief opportunities, from qualified legal experts at the Pryor Cashman law firm. This is available for a deeply discounted rate that is subsidized by the League.

Executive 1:1 consultations: In addition to offering peer group calls among members, the League has assembled a group of experienced leaders from a variety of orchestras to be available to executive directors of member orchestras for free one-to-one consultations. These leaders, who have volunteered to help and have worked through crises before, are eager to support other orchestra executive directors through the challenges of the pandemic.

National Conference: Due to the pandemic, the League has cancelled its annual in-person Conference and transformed it into an extended online event that is free for all members. *Global Stages | Local Stories* will take place in May and June. The League will provide an array of online resources, webinars, and virtual gatherings designed to deliver the information orchestras need to navigate the global pandemic and its aftermath; to continue advancing the imperatives of equity, relevance, innovation, and creativity; and to unite and inspire the orchestra community.

Fundraising webinars: The League organized two free webinars to help orchestras raise contributed support amid the current crisis. *Fundraising in This Time of Crisis* and *Maintaining Donor Relationships* took place in April; recordings will be available.

Symphony Spot website: The League has created SymphonySpot.org, a new website to spotlight the creative ways that orchestras are providing music online during the era of social distancing. Symphony Spot features web streams, archival recordings, and educational resources from more than 100 orchestras, venues, and soloists who are members and friends of the League. League members wishing to be added to the directory should visit the site. The site links to members' donation pages and social-media channels.



Thanks to advocacy by the League, this spring orchestras in all 50 states contacted more than 400 members of Congress to stress the vital importance of government assistance to orchestras during negotiations over COVID-19 federal relief. This map shows the number of messages sent by League-member orchestras to legislators in each state.

Opening the Shell

In February, the San Diego Symphony announced that its new permanent outdoor concert venue, The Shell, is slated to open on July 10. The Shell—the name reflects its shape as well as the venue’s waterfront location—replaces the orchestra’s longtime Bayside Summer Nights venue, located at the same Embarcadero Marina Park South site. The 13,000-square-foot covered stage boasts improved acoustics from the old structure, with a Meyer Sound Constellation System and terraced seating. The flexible space can hold from 2,000 to 10,000 guests for smaller events or large shows. The



Courtesy, San Diego Symphony

Artist's rendering of The Shell, the San Diego Symphony's new, year-round outdoor concert and events venue, currently scheduled to open on July 10

mances by the orchestra with pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet and cellist Alisa Weilerstein; a Broadway program conducted by Rob Fisher, hosted by Chita Rivera and Len Cariou; and a San Diego Symphony concert featuring vocalist Jennifer Hudson.

The San Diego Symphony's first season at The Shell will range from classical concerts led by Music Director Rafael Payare to Broadway, jazz, and R&B performances. The inaugural summer series at the Shell runs from July 10 through Oct. 1, with a three-day opening weekend including classical perfor-

Cello Leader

British cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason was just eighteen when he jumped into public consciousness, dazzling millions of TV viewers with music by von Paradis, Fauré, and Schubert at the 2018 wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. But the cellist, now 21, is having an equally outsized impact on music education and increasing diversity in the classical music field, both in his home country and around the world. In the U.K., he's ambassador for a nonprofit that supports music education for elementary-school children in London, and this winter, he visited students in the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's OrchKids program, the orchestra's free after-school education initiative launched by Music Director Marin Alsop in 2008. At Baltimore's Mary Ann Winterling Elementary School, Kanneh-Mason led a class for 75 cellists, with activities including a group improvisation by Kanneh-Mason and the students. During the same visit, Kanneh-Mason made his Baltimore Symphony Orchestra debut with Saint-Saëns's Cello Concerto No. 1 at the Music Center at Strathmore and Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, on a program that included Dvořák's Symphony No. 7 and Florence Price's *The Oak*.



Rosie Constantine

Cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason (seated, sixth from right) leads a group class with cello students at Baltimore's Mary Ann Winterling Elementary School, January 2020.

Orchestra + Thorchestra

Thorgy Thor—the self-taught cellist, conservatory-trained violinist and violist, and drag performer whose real name is Shane Thor Galligan—is spending a lot of time performing with orchestras. Thorgy's unusual hybrid concert career was launched following a 2016 appearance as a contestant in season eight of the TV competition show *RuPaul's Drag Race*, a stint that included a well-received violin performance. Over the last few years, Thorgy's concert dates billed as "Thorgy Thor and the Thorchestra" have included performances with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra,



Charlotte Symphony Orchestra

Backstage at the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra's January 20 concert (left to right): vocalist Aryssa Burns; guest performer Thorgy Thor; Associate Concertmaster Joseph Meyer; Resident Conductor Christopher James Lees.

San Francisco Symphony, and, most recently, two January dates with North Carolina's Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, led by Resident Conductor Christopher James Lees. Thorgy notes that programs typically include everything from Tchaikovsky and Copland to Lady Gaga and Madonna: "I studied at Hart Conservatory and Purchase Conservatory of Music. Drag was always a very large part of my artistic expression, so it was only a matter of time before it all came together."

2020 Avery Fisher Career Grants

Usually the winners of the annual Avery Fisher Career Grants are announced at a celebratory in-person event that includes live music-making by the honorees. This time around, due to health precautions during the coronavirus pandemic, the announcement was broadcast on NYC classical station WQXR, with previously recorded performances by each honoree along with short interviews. But there was still plenty of excitement during the March 25 broadcast, which was hosted by Elliott Forrest and also streamed on WQXR.org. This year's recipients are Stella Chen, violinist; Zlatomir Fung, cellist; and Rachell Ellen Wong, Baroque violinist. This marks the first time a Baroque violinist has been awarded a Career Grant. The Avery Fisher Career Grants give professional assistance and recognition to talented instrumentalists and chamber ensembles judged to have potential for major careers. Each recipient receives an award of \$25,000 to be used for career advancement. Some *Symphony* magazine bragging rights: cellist Zlatomir Fung was profiled in *Symphony*'s Winter 2019 issue, and violinist Stella Chen was profiled in the Winter issue of *Symphony*, which came out in February.



Stella Chen



Rachell Ellen Wong



Zlatomir Fung

Denver Philharmonic's New Looks

The saying goes, you look as good as you feel. Audiences at Denver Philharmonic Orchestra concerts have always been encouraged to wear whatever is comfortable—and those rules now extend to DPO musicians, too. This winter, the orchestra introduced a gender-neutral dress code allowing multiple options for musicians. Traditionally, symphony dress codes have two categories of acceptable concert dress: men and women. The updated rules use more gender-fluid language when outlining musician dress-code options, which include tuxedos, trousers, blouses, and long-sleeved dresses. “We started thinking about updating it after DPO bassist Xadie James Antonio asked if they could dress following our women’s dress code last May,” said Executive Director Valerie Clausen. “We pledged to update our dress code this season.” Antonio stated, “As a gender-queer, nonbinary person, I was thrilled. It is very affirming to be able to express myself in a way that fits the person I am. This very slight change in language has a huge effect on transgendered individuals and sets a precedent for other similar organizations to do the same.”

Musical America's 2020 Winners

Guitar took center stage in December, when Sharon Isbin received Musical America's 2020 award for instrumentalist of the year. Other 2020 winners were Joan Tower as composer of the year, Danish String Quartet as ensemble of the year, baritone Peter Mattei as vocalist of the year, and Austria's Salzburg Festival as festival of the year. Radio journalist Annie Bergen served as emcee at the December event at Carnegie Hall's Weill Terrace Room, with *Musical America* features editor Sedgwick Clark presenting the recipients with their awards. It was the 59th year of Musical America's annual awards event; the first winner was Leonard Bernstein, in 1961. Musical America is publisher of the annual *Directory for the Performing Arts* and the daily news site MusicalAmerica.com.



Richard Termine

Winners of Musical America's 2020 awards (left to right): guitarist Sharon Isbin; baritone Peter Mattei; composer Joan Tower; Salzburg Festival Artistic Director Markus Hinterhäuser and President Helga Rabl-Stadler (front row); and Danish String Quartet members Fredrik Øland (violin) Asbjørn Nørgaard (viola), and Fredrik Sjölin (cello).

ACO Salutes Musical Movers and Shakers

At its 2020 gala and fundraiser on March 4, American Composers Orchestra in New York City celebrated three people who have effected change in the American musical landscape. This year's honorees, in photo from left: countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo, who had just wrapped up an acclaimed run in the title role of the Metropolitan Opera production of *Akhnaten*; Yolanda Wynn, music director of the Harlem School of the Arts; and League of American Orchestras President and CEO Jesse Rosen, whose long association with the ACO includes serving on its board of directors. American Composers Orchestra is dedicated to the creation, performance, and promotion of orchestral music by American composers.



American Composers Orchestra

National Alliance for Audition Support: Increasing Diversity at U.S. Orchestras

To advance diversity, equity, and inclusion at American orchestras by expanding the numbers of emerging Black and Latinx musicians, in 2018 the League of American Orchestras, Sphinx Organization, and New World Symphony joined forces to launch the National Alliance for Audition Support (NAAS). An unprecedented nationwide initiative, NAAS offers Black and Latinx musicians a customized combination of mentoring, audition preparation, financial support, and audition previews. Now in its second year, NAAS has already made a substantial difference in the lives of hundreds of musicians of color and dozens of U.S. orchestras. Here's an update.



Emilia Mettenbrink, shown at a NAAS Audition Intensive, won a section violin position with the Minnesota Opera Orchestra in April 2019.

- Nineteen musicians won 22 auditions in orchestras.
- Twelve musicians were placed on substitute lists or won fellowship positions with orchestras.
- Five musicians won one-year contract positions with orchestras.
- 138 musicians have received NAAS support since 2018; support includes NAAS grants and/or participation in NAAS Audition Intensives.
- Since August 2018, 261 NAAS grants have been awarded to 107 musicians, totaling \$254,595.93. The grants enable musicians to take part in auditions, pursue substitute or short-term playing opportunities, or repair their instruments.
- In two years, the number of Orchestra Partners providing financial contributions to support the program has nearly doubled, from 41 to 74.
- In 2018-19, 68 musicians participated in five NAAS Audition Intensives for strings, low strings, and winds and brass, hosted by the New World Symphony.

The National Alliance for Audition Support is made up of The Sphinx Organization, the lead program and fiscal administrator; the New World Symphony, America's Orchestral Academy; and the League of American Orchestras, representing 700 orchestras. NAAS is supported by a four-year grant of \$1.8 million from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as well as contributions from orchestras across the U.S. The Alliance is also grateful to the American Federation of Musicians, the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians, and the Regional Orchestra Players Association for their participation and support.

League Webinar: How to Use Audience-building Research from Wallace Foundation

Orchestras are always on the lookout for ways to build audiences and connect with more communities. The Wallace Foundation has published numerous articles and case studies on audience development through its Building Audiences for the Arts initiative, with more to come. How can orchestras take advantage of this wealth of information? On March 18, the League of American Orchestras presented a free webinar on utilizing Wallace resources hosted by Rachel Roberts, associate professor of Music Leadership at the Eastman School of Music. She shared insights and strategies, and explored Wallace research about performing arts groups that successfully brought in new audiences. Nearly two hundred orchestra administrators attended the hour-long webinar—everyone from executive directors and youth orchestra directors to marketing and development staff. One viewer weighed in: "Great webinar today! Awesome information, a lot to think about." The webinar is available at americanorchestras.org/wallacewebinar. Visit the audience-building resources at the Wallace Foundation section of americanorchestras.org.

File This!



"I've admired Dan Kamin's work for many years. He has a unique talent for physical comedy and wonderful feel for music."

— Ted Wiprud, Director of Education, New York Philharmonic

"Engaging and delightful shows for symphony audiences of all ages."

— Don Reinhold, Executive Director, Wichita Symphony

"Dan is absolutely THE BEST artist you would ever want to work with—his shows are terrific and his residencies really build your audience."

— Delaware Symphony

Check out the file on Dan at www.dankamin.com

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