



2022 Top Professionals of the Year

The Resilient Warriors

musical
america
SPECIAL REPORTS

december 2022

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FOUNDER, CEO AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
THE VIOLIN CHANNEL

Introduction



Our annual *Top Professionals of the Year* issue is my favorite of the Musical America Special Reports. We profile people whose names you won't see in lights (with rare exceptions), but who toil behind the scenes to make their organizations, their causes, their departments work.

This year's Pros were chosen out of a field of over 100 nominations—the biggest number yet—submitted in response to questionnaires we posted via social media links and emailed to our various lists earlier this fall. Given the political, financial, and health crises of the last half-decade, we wanted to recognize the leaders who have dealt with the pandemic and its aftereffects through game-changing innovation or sweat equity, or both.

To name a few: Anthony Blake-Johnson, who took over as president and CEO of the Chicago Sinfonietta in May of 2020, has already achieved industry accolades for instituting the “pay what you can” model for concerts. Kate Sheeran, executive director of the Kaufman Music Center since 2019, helped her middle school students create the children's book *Who is Florence Price?*, since published by G. Schirmer. Dancer dana bella [sic] created a new BFA program at the Peabody Institute; lawyer Brian Goldstein guides presenters through sticky foreign-artist visa issues; pianist/teacher Polly van der Linde put together videos of 64 different pianists playing Ukrainian repertoire to raise money for refugees; Deborah Sandler Kemper launched a new resident artist program as general director of the Lyric Opera of Kansas City.

Forgive me for getting carried away here, but each of these individuals exemplifies the kind of leadership that keeps the wheels on the performing arts as we continue to navigate the rough terrain of the 21st century.

Regards,

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2022 Top Professionals

The Resilient Warriors of the year

Our annual Top Professionals of the Year were chosen from over 100 nominations by their peers. These are the people whose names you won't see in lights but who toil behind the scenes to keep the performing arts vital through innovation, determination, sweat equity, or all three.



DANAH BELLA

Professor and Chair of Dance

[Peabody Conservatory at Johns Hopkins University](#)    

When Covid hit in 2020, danah bella was in the second school year of leading a new BFA program as chair of dance at the Peabody Conservatory of Johns Hopkins University. Suddenly, all the

students went home and classes were online.

"We had students dancing in their living rooms while the faculty taught over Zoom," said bella, who worked with colleagues

to provide students with portable dance floors with an attachable ballet barre. "The floor was absorbent enough for them to jump on it and not injure themselves. It made the students feel like Peabody wanted to take care of them during a difficult time."

The virtual studio is far from ideal for dance instruction, but it has one useful asset. "When we were online we were able to have master classes with guest artists in South America, Europe, and Asia," bella said. "It was really meaningful to connect with somebody that far away. We still do it with some lectures and dance classes."

Bella describes her modern dance company, [danahbella Danceworks](#) (now on



Refine your artistry, create opportunities, and lead the way in a changing world.

Peabody Conservatory congratulates chair of the dance BFA program **danah bella** being named one of the 2022 Professionals of the Year by *Musical America*.



peabody.jhu.edu
667-208-6600

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hiatus), as being “focused on reclaiming evocative movement as social practice,” and that applies as well to her vision for the new Peabody program, which includes coursework around issues of race, class, and gender as they relate to dance. Enrollment this year comprises 35 dance students, with most hoping to perform professionally.

“Peabody is a great place for someone with a passion for dance but who also wants to become a citizen artist with an interest in areas other than dance,” bella said, noting that students at the conservatory

may have dual majors in dance and other disciplines at Johns Hopkins. “In our first cohort of graduates, the class of ‘22, one woman got a dual degree in dance and natural sciences. And now we have more dancers pursuing dual degrees, which in many conservatories is not possible.” —John Fleming



JENNIFER BOWMAN

Director of Community and Learning

    [Houston Grand Opera](#)

Jennifer Bowman is learning that you can go home again. Twenty-four years ago, she left her hometown of Houston to go away to school, first to Dartmouth College to major in music and Peabody Conservatory to study voice and arts administration, and then to take arts management jobs on the East Coast. They included several positions at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, where she had a five-year tenure as director of music education, developing initiatives with the National Symphony Orchestra, Washington National Opera, and jazz, hip-hop, and chamber music programs.

In spring 2020 the pandemic shut down the Kennedy Center, and Bowman was furloughed along with much of the administrative staff. “Once the pandemic hit and I was not working, I had to think about how do I pivot, how do I adapt,” she said. “I realized that I had been away from my family in Houston for a long time; my mother and aunt and uncles, my brother and his two young

boys, my friends from high school, and that I wanted to be closer to them at this time of my life.”

After the furlough ended Bowman went back to work at the Center, but this past June her wish came true. She returned home to become director of community and learning at Houston Grand Opera, whose performances she had attended while growing up in the city. “It’s exciting for me to bring back all the experience I’ve had in the arts and put it into practice here,” she said. “I want to bring as many people to the table as I can.”

Bowman inherited a strong lineup of outreach projects for the 2022–23 season, including HGO’s 74th world premiere, *Another City*, an opera about homelessness by composer Jeremy Howard Beck and librettist Stephanie Fleischmann, to be staged in March at a downtown church that serves the unhoused; and *Monkey and Francine in the City of Tigers*, a children’s opera by composer Kamala Sankaram and librettist David Johnston that is touring to schools, libraries, and community centers. —John Fleming



REBA CAFARELLI

Managing Director

[Third Coast Percussion](#)    

Throw Reba Cafarelli a curve ball, and she'll still hit a home run.

In fall 2019, after more than 15 years as a Chicago-based arts administrator, Cafarelli became managing director of one of the city's most dynamic ensembles, Third Coast Percussion. When the Covid pandemic exploded, she scrambled to shift the quartet's performances online.

The players and Production Manager Colin Campbell immediately formed a Covid bubble so they could safely record together. And, thanks to the high-tech component already built into their live performances, Third Coast was already a few steps ahead of the game.

"We had high quality HD cameras," said Cafarelli, "because the ensemble uses them during tours to show the audience interesting overhead angles during performances. We never would have imagined when we bought them, however many years ago, that they would come into play like that. And Colin is a really skilled audio engineer. He immediately said, 'I can learn how to do all that.'"

Cafarelli had learned to love a good pivot in earlier jobs. In 2016 she was director of Chicago's inaugural Ear Taxi Festival, working with composer Augusta Read Thomas to create six days of sprawling, invigorating concerts featuring 350 musicians and 54 world premieres. She first discovered her thirst for a challenge a decade earlier, however, while working at University of Chicago Presents, the school's long-established professional concert series.

"We took on the Contempo series," she said, alluding to the distinguished contemporary concerts established by composer Ralph Shapey in 1964. "In the past, the University's music department had handled all the logistics." But she was eager to jump in—all in. "I just immediately was excited to be working with live composers, having them there on campus, having eighth blackbird and Pacifica Quartet premiering all this incredible new music.

"I love the idea we're creating music people will listen to and study in the future. They will understand and interpret the world through the art we're making now. I find that really exciting."
—Wynne Delacoma

PHOTO: Mario Loreda

GEOFFREY JOHN DAVIES

Founder, CEO and Editor-in-Chief

   [The Violin Channel](#)



"I felt this calling to just keep going," said Geoffrey John Davies, founder of The Violin Channel, an online site he launched in 2009. "I look back on all the risks I took, and I think 'God, that was stupid. No wonder my parents were worried.' But I always had this feeling it was going to grow into something."

Starting out as a Facebook page, that "something" is now the sleekly designed Violin Channel, a website that claims more than 2 million viewers a month. It's a place to livestream the finals of a violin competition in Europe or read about the "VC Artist of the Month." Thanks to the channel's proven track record

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and relationships with major institutions like Lincoln Center, when the Covid pandemic arrived, it was uniquely poised to help string artists shift to online performance. With financial help from the Alphadyne Foundation, the channel launched Vanguard Concerts, a series of 10 concerts featuring soloists and ensembles, in fall 2020. A second 10-concert season followed last year, and season three is in the works.

“We worked extremely closely with each of the artists,” said Davies, “to really create a résumé piece for them. They were all paid

full fees, plus they own 50 percent rights on all the footage. They had a huge amount of input into creating the look, the repertoire, and all the visual elements.”

Performances were filmed at Merkin Hall on New York’s Upper West Side.

“These were made with TV quality—seven cameras, interesting angles, well shot,” he said, “and we’re looking into TV broadcast opportunities. These were made specifically to be a digital, online experience; they were not just a recorded concert.”

Davies is proud to have created and recorded a permanent, positive event especially during a very bad time.
—Wynne Delacoma



ANTHONY DAVIS

Composer

Distinguished Professor of Music

[University of California, San Diego](#) 

Anthony Davis’s *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* drew good notices for its 1986 premiere by New York City Opera. But it was not staged again in full until last May, when [Detroit Opera mounted a newly revised version](#) by the composer and his cousin, librettist Thulani Davis. With Davóne Tines in the title role, the company gave three powerful, nearly sold-out performances in the 2,700-seat Detroit Opera House.

“I didn’t think it would take 36 years for a major revival, but I did think it would have a life afterward eventually. I was always optimistic about that,” Davis said of *X*, his first of eight operas. “And I thought it was so timely about what is happening now in America, with George Floyd and everything else.”

The innovative score has a nine-member jazz ensemble as part of the orchestra. “When I wrote it, the idea of incorporating improvisers into the orchestra was really unusual,” Davis said.

“The only precedent was Duke Ellington’s collaborations with orchestras. I was interested in doing it because Malcolm was around music all the time. He knew the history of jazz, so telling his story through music was inspiration for the opera.”

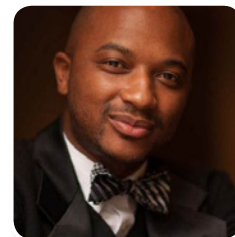
X will be widely seen. There were performances by Opera Omaha in early November, and it will be staged by the Metropolitan Opera during the 2023–24 season. Also on the agenda are productions at Lyric Opera of Chicago and Seattle Opera.

Davis, who teaches composition at the University of California, San Diego, is known for politically charged works. [He won the 2020 Pulitzer Prize in music](#) for *The Central Park Five*, his opera about the wrongful conviction of five Black and Latino men for the rape of a white woman. *You Have the Right to Remain Silent*, a concerto that evokes the time the Black composer had a scary encounter with a white cop, is being championed by soloist Anthony McGill, principal clarinet of the New York Philharmonic, who will perform it with the Boston Symphony Orchestra in March. —John Fleming

PHOTO: Keven Kennedy

ANDRE DOWELL

Chief of Artistic Engagement

 [Sphinx Organization](#)


One of Andre Dowell's duties with the Sphinx Organization is to manage the Sphinx Virtuosi, a professional chamber orchestra of Black and Latinx musicians. His approach to booking the group has changed over the years. "We used to have conversations with presenters who would say we needed to play at least one Mozart or Beethoven piece, because people wouldn't come to a concert without a recognizable name on the program," said Dowell, who joined the organization fulltime in 2009 and oversees career guidance for more than 850 Sphinx alumni. "But now it's our music by composers of color that people come to hear."

Sphinx, celebrating its 25th anniversary, is renowned as an advocate for diversity in classical music, both through its training programs and through its alumni's repertoire choices. In October, the Virtuosi played an eight-city tour that concluded in São Paulo, Brazil—its first international performance—where every piece on the program was by a Black or Latinx composer.

"We had two pieces by Jessie Montgomery, pieces by Valerie Coleman and Michael Dudley, and three pieces by Ricardo Herz, a Brazilian violinist-composer," Dowell said.

The National Alliance for Audition Support (NAAS) is another program with which Dowell is closely involved. It is a Sphinx collaboration with New World Symphony and the League of American Orchestras that prepares musicians of color to audition for symphony orchestras and bring diversity to these still overwhelmingly white organizations. NAAS has 114 partner orchestras; as of September, 80 artist participants had won 115 auditions and/or placements.

"During the pandemic a lot of people ended up retiring from orchestras, so there are a lot of openings, which is great for our musicians," Dowell said. "The turnover is also an opportunity for orchestras if they want to diversify...they can take our guidelines and work them into their own audition process."
—John Fleming

**PORTIA DUNKLEY**Founder, Music of the Unsung America, [New Canon Chamber Collective](#)Owner, [Teeny Violini](#) 

PHOTO: Kenneth Lamor

Portia Dunkley is a double bass player, strings instructor, owner of a mobile music education program for children, called Teeny Violini, and founder of the South Florida concert series Music of the Unsung America that celebrates Black composers. In 2021, she founded the New Canon Chamber Collective, an orchestral and choral ensemble made up of musicians of color.

With a bachelor's degree in double bass performance and a master's in arts administration from Florida State University,

Dunkley marvels that for all her education she wasn't taught about Black composers. That changed when she participated in the [Sphinx Organization's LEAD](#) (Leaders in Excellence, Arts & Diversity) program, designed to empower Black and Latinx arts administrators.

"Sphinx opened a door for me," she said. "It inspired me to get a grant from the [Knight Foundation](#) in Miami to develop a program to spotlight work of African American composers."

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Music of the Unsung America and New Canon put on half a dozen performances during the pandemic. In collaboration with the American Composers Forum, programming included several notable new works by emerging Black composers, such as Michael R. Dudley Jr.'s *Elegy: For Those We Have Yet to Lose*."

Raised in Miami's Overtown neighborhood, Dunkley has a multicultural background—her mother is Bahamian and her father is Haitian—that is reflective of South Florida's wildly diverse demographics, with a large immigrant population from all over the Caribbean and Latin America. But she doesn't really see the community as a melting pot.

"There is not a lot of overlapping of cultures here—everybody has their own space," Dunkley said. "I would love for New Canon to be a bridge between cultures, from the classical music of the African American composers we've been playing to Afro-Cuban jazz and salsa, the kompa music of Haiti, the calypso you hear in the Bahamas, and every other sort of music that bubbles up here." —John Fleming

PHOTO: Fred Hatt

MARTIN T:SON ENGSTROEM

Founder and Director

    [Verbier Festival](#)



As a concert organizer, artist manager, A&R executive at Deutsche Grammophon, and consultant, Martin T:son Engstroem has worked with some of the world's most famous classical musicians.

He has always kept an eye out, however, for young artists ready to launch professional careers. In 1994 he founded the Verbier Festival and Academy in Switzerland, which brings artists ages 13 to 30 together every year for two weeks of public concerts, master classes, and other events. When the Covid pandemic hit, the festival raised more than one million Swiss francs (approximately the same in U.S. dollars) to help more than 300 young artists survive the concert-hall shutdowns.

"I established the Verbier Festival as a networking platform for young musicians," said Engstroem. "From the beginning, I've always thought every profession needs a network, like a young budding lawyer or doctor. We have 300 students every year, and I try to follow them at different stages in their careers. I try to keep in touch. Wherever I can help, I try to help."

Help was crucial in March 2020. "It was apparent the whole profession of traveling musicians had a problem," he said. "Especially those between 18 and 25, those who had moved away from home, who had signed leases for an apartment, who had bought an instrument and needed to make monthly payments. We managed to help 300 musicians. Some we paid up to \$10,000, others \$1,000 – \$1,500. That \$1,500 went pretty far in Venezuela and some other countries. But elsewhere—in America, Switzerland—you needed more.

The Verbier Festival celebrates its 30th anniversary next summer. Despite worries about inflation, Covid, and the war in Ukraine, Engstroem is planning a full, vibrant season and a return to capacity audiences.

"We are probably spending more than we should," he said with a rueful laugh. "We are pretending it will be a beautiful summer and people will show up." —Wynne Delacoma



JAN FELDMAN

Executive Director

[Lawyers for the Creative Arts](#)   

Even before the Covid pandemic struck in March 2020, Chicago-based Lawyers for the Creative Arts was a trusted friend in need to the city's artists and small arts organizations.

"One of our donors called us 'the Red Cross for the arts,'" said Executive Director Jan Feldman, who has headed the 50-year-old organization since 2014. Trained as a commercial litigator, he served on the nonprofit LCA board for a decade before taking the top administrative post. LCA's staff is small, but it has organized a network of hundreds of pro bono lawyers willing to work with artists and arts groups on legal issues.

"Normally our work is a steady flow," Feldman said, "800 or so people or organizations each year that come to us for legal help of one kind or another. It's very broad-based."

When arts activity of all kinds ground to a halt due to Covid restrictions, he expected those typical requests to drop off. He was wrong.

"It was remarkable," he said. "The arts community continued to come to us for legal help, to start new businesses and write

new contracts. None of that seemed to stop. But on top of all that, there was this tremendous demand for [help with] Covid-related commercial problems."

Feldman shifted all of LCA's usual conferences and group presentations to the internet and added new ones related to the pandemic.

"Interruption insurance, we did a program on that," he said. "Estate planning—what if people get sick and die? We ended up rolling out all kinds of assistance programs to help organizations apply for loans and grants."

As the pandemic eases, those kinds of questions are disappearing. But Feldman is still inspired by the way artists forged new ground early in the pandemic.

"It was amazing that folks continued to produce art," he said. "There was a hopefulness about it that I found quite moving."
—Wynne Delacoma

KATHRYN GINSBURG

General Manager

    [Detroit Symphony Orchestra](#)



When Kathryn Ginsburg joined the staff of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in fall 2011, she was fresh out of graduate school and the orchestra had just returned to concertizing after a bitter, six-month strike.

DSO staff, musicians, and board were rethinking operations from top to bottom. The orchestra plunged into digital media, becoming the first to present a regular webcast series. It started performing regularly outside of Orchestra Hall, its home in

downtown Detroit. And, most crucially, everyone involved agreed that orchestra's internal culture had to change.

"It was trying to build trust and have more transparency among the different constituencies," said Ginsburg. "It was critical then, and it's been even more critical in the past couple of years."

Ginsburg was promoted this past February from DSO senior operations and orchestra manager to general manager. Over the

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years she has been involved in myriad facets of the orchestra's operations, from contract negotiations to planning tours.

Since January 2020, the changes hitting the DSO have been non-stop. A new music director, Jader Bignamini, was appointed that month, just before the pandemic hit. Post pandemic, in early March 2022, a new president and CEO succeeded Anne Parsons, the respected, longtime DSO chief who died later that same month. New staff was hired; in-house personnel were promoted. Seven successful auditions brought new musicians onstage, including a new concertmaster and principal bassoon.



BRIAN GOLDSTEIN

Partner

[GG Arts Law](#) 

Arts and entertainment lawyer Brian Goldstein hears one question repeatedly from U.S. clients who want to engage foreign artists. "They ask me, 'Before we commit to this, what do you think the chances are that we can get this artist into the United States, and how difficult is it going to be?' For example," he continues, "let's say it's a Russian musician, but he doesn't live in Russia, and the client wants to know if it is worth it to consider booking him, and how much is it going to cost."

Goldstein's response: "Be prepared for problems and delays."

"It always comes down to convincing someone in a government cubicle that it's in the U.S. national interest for the Metropolitan Opera or the New York Philharmonic or any other performing arts organization to get this person an artist visa," he says.

At least 50 percent of his business at GG Arts Law involves assisting presenters with negotiations to obtain visas for foreign artists. It's always been a challenge, he says, "but the pandemic

Ginsburg firmly believes that the orchestra's drastic, post-strike reorganization helped it survive Covid shutdowns and head-spinning artistic and administrative change. Having been the first American orchestra to stream its regular subscription concerts live, it had long experience in the digital realm and knew how to reach new audiences. Most importantly, its staff members, from administrative to artistic, knew how to work together.

"It's been a perfect storm of crazy over these past couple of years," Ginsburg said. "The most important thing is the relationship and culture we've built over the past decade. We had to rely heavily on that because everyone had to be so flexible and understanding. I don't know how I, in this role, would have made it through without all the work we had done leading up to this time." —Wynne Delacoma

turned what was already an unpredictable, illogical, expensive, and political process into a quagmire. We're still dealing with all the repercussions of that. Thankfully, with Covid at least diminished this year, the business came blasting back, but the immigration system is still a mess."

Goldstein worked pro bono to aid the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra, which last summer toured a dozen cities in Europe and the U.S. in the name of what Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky called "artistic resistance" to the Russian invasion. Proceeds went to Ukrainian relief. GG Arts Law expedited the non-U.S. artist visas needed for three concerts at Lincoln Center and the Kennedy Center and a PBS broadcast.

"The Ukraine project was near and dear to my heart," Goldstein said. "Knowing that I played a small part in making it happen felt great." —John Fleming

PHOTO: Darya Golubina

Christina Jensen's public relations firm was founded in 2007 to promote classical musicians, and eight years later she expanded its scope to include artist management services, an addition that turned out to be valuable during the pandemic. "In the past few years it has been very good for our business to be versatile in what we're able to offer," Jensen said. "I feel like being on the management side has offered us the opportunity to have a deeper relationship with artists."

On a roster of about 20 artists and organizations, longtime Jensen clients include the American Composers Orchestra, pianist Simone Dinnerstein, Sony Masterworks, composer Lisa Bielawa, the American Contemporary Music Ensemble, and conductor Donato Cabrera. While she provides conventional press and PR, Jensen also collaborates on the development of projects, such as pianist Sarah Cahill's "The Future Is Female," a program featuring more than 70 compositions by women.

"One project that really stretched me was being managing producer for *The Day*," Jensen said of an evening-length music/



BLAKE-ANTHONY JOHNSON

President and CEO

[Chicago Sinfonietta](#)



Since its first concerts in 1987, the Chicago Sinfonietta has codified diversity and equity into its mission and programming. Under President and CEO Blake-Anthony Johnson, appointed in May 2020, the orchestra continues to ensure that it reaches Chicagoans of all walks of life without barriers.

Recently named one of *Crain's Chicago Business's* "40 Under

CHRISTINA JENSEN

Founder and President

[Jensen Artists](#)



dance work performed by cellist Maya Beiser and dancer Wendy Whelan, choreographed by Lucinda Childs with music by David Lang. It premiered in 2019 at Jacob's Pillow and toured to major venues, with a hiatus due to Covid. In an email, Jensen summarized what she and her small staff did:

"Being managing producer for *The Day* entailed grant writing; assembling the commissioning consortium of presenters; creating the budget, and managing all the spending via Maya Beiser's company, Islandia Music, which was the production company; finding and setting up development workshops to create the work; booking the performances; contracting the designers and production team as well as the artists; creating the marketing language and materials; and servicing the dates alongside the production manager (travel, itineraries, load-in schedule, etc.)."

Jensen Artists was able to keep its staff intact during the pandemic. "I did not have furloughs or lay off anyone or reduce anybody's hours," said Jensen, who received relief funding from the Small Business Administration. "We were able to do that by pivoting to online work. I was very grateful to the artists who stuck with us." —John Fleming

40" ("40 incredible individuals who are both wildly accomplished and poised to do even bigger things"), Johnson last season implemented a pay-what-you-can ticketing model for all concerts. The move has earned high praise, with acknowledgements from *The New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune* and imitators throughout the country—Lincoln Center has adopted a similar system

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THANK YOU



JAMES M. KENDRICK

ASCAP PUBLISHER BOARD MEMBER

JIM, YOUR PASSION, LEADERSHIP AND VISION HAVE HELPED BUILD A STRONGER FUTURE FOR MUSIC CREATORS.

Congratulations on being named one of Musical America's Top 30 Professionals of the Year.

WITH DEEP APPRECIATION, YOUR FAMILY AT



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for some of its concerts, including last summer's Mostly Mozart series. Johnson and the Sinfonietta take immense pride in leading the field. "Innovation is an endless process that our team has displayed from the very beginning of my tenure," he says.

Johnson has also greatly expanded Chicago Sinfonietta's outreach. The group recently launched its [RASA \(Rehabilitation and Student Achievement\) Project](#), which provides year-round education and entertainment to students in Chicago's juvenile correctional facilities. It also revamped its [Freeman Fellowships](#) (named for founder Paul Freeman) in orchestral playing, composition, conducting, and administration and launched an online portal to connect alumni. "The success of our Fellows, and the sheer reach of their work," says Johnson, "has challenged us to use technology to support them and their work."

PHOTO: Kirsten Beckerman

Major funders are starting to take notice. In July 2022, the Sinfonietta won its fourth Mellon Foundation grant in a decade—this time, \$1 million to support ongoing community partnerships. It was also the only classical music institution to receive a Wallace Foundation grant this year. Johnson, recently named as a Daniel Burnham Fellow of Leadership Greater Chicago for his "esteemed civic leadership," knows that the Sinfonietta can continue to change classical music for the better: "Leading innovation and excitement among and beyond our field is our history but also our future." —Emery Kerekes



KRISTIN JURKSCHAIT

Executive Director

  [Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship](#)

In a recent email, conductor Marin Alsop frankly described the Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship as a "mom and pop" operation before Kristin Jurkscheit arrived as executive director in 2019.

Its founding couple, however, was hardly small time. In 2002 Alsop and Japanese textile magnate Tomio Taki established a fund to provide modest grants for rising female conductors. Today, 30 women have won Taki awards. Many have appeared with major orchestras, and 19 hold music director posts.

There is no doubt that Jurkscheit has greatly expanded the fellowship's reach. Alsop's life partner and a former horn player, she earned an Executive MBA at Johns Hopkins University before joining the Taki Fellowship. During the pandemic, when concert life shut down, Jurkscheit organized regular Zoom sessions for Taki fellows, helping them learn more about the field from guests ranging from major conductors to orchestral librarians. This past July she worked with the Ravinia Festival to host a weekend titled Breaking Barriers focused on the challenges facing female

conductors. More than a dozen Taki fellows attended the panels and master classes, and three of them conducted the Chicago Symphony along with Alsop, who is Ravinia's chief conductor. To celebrate Taki's 20th anniversary, Jurkscheit is overseeing a [year of concerts around the world](#) featuring Taki winners.

It's no secret that women are woefully underrepresented on the world's classical music podiums, outnumbered by men 10 to 1, according to some estimates. But, Jurkscheit argues, exact data is also woefully missing. With an MBA's belief in hard data, she hopes to gather precise statistics that can be analyzed to pinpoint positive trends and missed opportunities.

The need is glaring.

"We usually have 50 applicants in our fellowship years," said Jurkscheit. "The last round we had 141. It was crazy. And 70 percent were in the 31–50 age range and at a very high [talent] level. It speaks to how women of a certain generation who didn't have a community are still looking for opportunities." —Wynne Delacoma



ANDREA KALYN

President

[New England Conservatory](#)

Andrea Kalyn came out of the pandemic feeling optimistic. “In the worst of circumstances, we learned that we can create change,” said Kalyn, a musicologist and pianist. Kalyn is the 17th and first female president of the New England Conservatory, founded in Boston in 1867. [Her tenure began in 2019.](#)

“I think the theme since March 13, 2020—a date I’ll never forget, when we sent everybody home—is change on every front,” she said. “For decades, we have been talking about the need for radical change in how we prepare the 21st-century musician, and Covid was the opportunity for that change, a fulcrum to the future.

And we really seized the opportunity. We tried to use this time, both through necessity and choice, to change the way we teach. In the end, we got to a transformed musical landscape.”

As an example, Kalyn recounts how NEC voice faculty member Ian Howell came up with a solution to mitigate online sound latency, which had made it impossible for musicians to perform together virtually. “Ian and his team worked with Soundjack software to enable online performance in real time,” she said. “By fall 2020, we could have a teacher in one space, a pianist in another, and a singer in a third, all performing together seamlessly.

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CONGRATULATIONS PRESIDENT ANDREA KALYN!

New England Conservatory congratulates President Kalyn on being recognized by Musical America as one of the Top 30 Professionals of the Year for her remarkable leadership.

necmusic.edu

“Through music, we are reminded of our humanity, of our interconnectedness, and of the things we actually have in common.”

– PRESIDENT KALYN



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Remote performance is not [as] critical now, but the creativity in that process was incredible.”

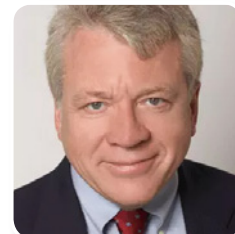
Theory Reimagined is a new program Kalyn cites as another important development. It elevates the teaching of music theory by incorporating extensive technology, composition, and a wide range of repertoire.

“During Covid, the decisions were constant, and we—administration, faculty, students—became comfortable with the [accelerated] rate of change,” she said. They functioned as a finely tuned ensemble of musicians might, “all improvising within a fixed form.” —John Fleming

JAMES M. KENDRICK

Attorney

Alter, Kendrick & Baron



In his long career, Jim Kendrick has worn many a musical hat. He was an oboist who studied at the Manhattan School of Music and the Juilliard School, where he played in Aaron Copland’s 75th-birthday concert in 1975. After receiving a law degree from Rutgers University in 1983, he became an authority on intellectual property, with an emphasis on music. In addition to practicing law, he has been a top-level executive with Boosey & Hawkes and other music publishers. He is a pivotal figure in the work of U.S. foundations that have an important role in funding new music, including the Aaron Copland Fund, the Amphion Foundation, and the Charles Ives Society.

“I have done a lot of things in the music business, but the one thing I’ve never been able to do is take a blank sheet of paper and create something that anyone, including me, would ever want to hear,” Kendrick said. “I’ve always been fascinated with composers.”

The composers with whom he has worked constitute a hall of fame of modern Americana, beginning with Leonard Bernstein. In the early 1980s, Bernstein’s personal lawyer, the late Paul Epstein, hired Kendrick to work in the office overseeing the conductor/composer’s many activities, and that connection continues today. Through the years Kendrick has worked with Elliott Carter, Steve Reich, John Adams, and many other notable American creatives.

Composers took a hit in the pandemic. “For composers, live performance is the gold standard, and that’s what got hammered for more than two years,” Kendrick said. “Short of nuclear war, I can’t imagine anything that would shut things down more comprehensively than Covid did. Nobody ever contemplated such a disaster.”

Kendrick is hopeful that foundations will have more new compositions to consider supporting. “Happily, last year we started to see a reasonable amount of activity come back,” he said. “When we get into this year’s grant rounds, I expect a full slate of activity, although you never know what’s coming down the road.” —John Fleming

**Congratulations
Jim!**

You’re top on our list!



ALTER
KENDRICK
BARON



James M. Kendrick

akblp.com

The Aaron Copland Fund for Music & The Amphion Foundation
Boards of Directors & Staff congratulate

Jim Kendrick

One of Musical America's Top 30 Professionals of the Year

For 30 years, Jim has been an essential part of the work that The Amphion Foundation and The Aaron Copland Fund for Music do, from providing legal counsel and publishing advice to overseeing the programmatic and operational activities of both organizations. These two organizations have collectively distributed tens of millions of dollars to the contemporary music field, due in large part to his thoughtful guidance and prudent judgment. Appointed to the Amphion Board of Directors by Elliott Carter in 1991 and elected Secretary in 1998, Jim has been an invaluable voice in the development of the organization from near its inception. He joined the Copland Fund in 1996 as Secretary before being voted to the Board of Directors in 2003 and Executive Vice President in 2009, where he's served as a steady guiding light through many periods of growth and change.



amphionfoundation.org

The Aaron Copland
Fund for Music 

coplandfund.org



ANDREW LANE

Vice President, Touring and Artistic Management

[Curtis Institute of Music](#)

When Covid abruptly canceled the March 2020 U.S. tour of the Curtis Institute’s then-resident Vera Quartet, Andrew Lane had to think fast. Lane was in his seventh year heading [Curtis on Tour](#), a position from which he has booked students, faculty, and alumni for more than 300 performances across four continents.

Four months later, with Covid still raging, he launched the school’s full-service artist management atelier, undertaking general managerial duties for the Dover Quartet, which formed at Curtis 12 years earlier and is on the faculty. “We began the artist management initiative to support Curtis alumni as they advanced their professional careers,” says Lane who, before Curtis, booked instrumentalists for Opus 3 management. “We have lifelong relationships with these artists, which positions us to nurture and grow their careers at the right time.” Under Lane, the Dover toured Central and South America in October 2020, when international travel was still largely restricted. It offered virtual concerts and master classes that helped to grow the international partnerships Curtis on Tour had forged since 2008, all while satisfying the pent-up wanderlust and musical appetites of pandemic-weary U.S. music lovers, free of charge.

Lane, promoted in July 2021 from Curtis on Tour’s managing director to a newly created VP position, has cemented Curtis as one of few conservatories to embrace artist management. He plans to grow the division further, and with the world reopening, continues to focus on touring. This season, Lane sends premieres by faculty composers

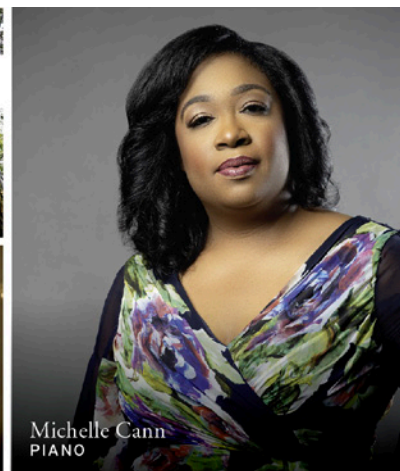
Richard Danielpour and Nick DiBerardino around Europe and the U.S., respectively, and shepherds the Curtis Symphony Orchestra on its inaugural tour of Asia and the U.S. West Coast.

“There is no better way for emerging artists to hone their craft than performing alongside seasoned faculty and alumni on professional tours,” says Lane, who holds an MM in choral conducting from Texas Tech University. “Curtis on Tour is one of the many ways the school prepares students for current and future careers.”
—Emery Kerekes

Congratulations,

ANDREW LANE

Vice President, Touring and Artist Management



The Dover Quartet, Trio Zimbalist, Michelle Cann, and everyone at Curtis Institute of Music congratulate the honorees for *Musical America’s* Top 30 Professionals!



POLLY VAN DER LINDE

Director/Owner

[Sonatina Piano Camps](#)

Two weeks after Russia invaded Ukraine in February, piano teacher Polly van der Linde and some of her students met online to share their thoughts about doing something in support of the Ukrainian people. "I try to cultivate community with my piano family, and our discussion led to a special event," said van der Linde, proprietor of the 53-year-old Sonatina Piano Camps in Bennington, VT. "We decided to do a fundraiser with a concert of piano music by Ukrainian composers."

Van der Linde got to work researching Ukrainian solo piano repertoire. "I didn't know any of this music," she said. "I had stumbled upon some of [Samuel] Maykapar's beginner music here and there, and I knew one or two [Reinhold] Glière pieces. Beyond that, it was all brand new to me. I was stunned by how much great music there was." She ran down scores on the internet, sight-read them to learn their level of difficulty, and made assignments to adult amateur pianists who attend her camps.

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Congratulations, Polly.

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to all of us—through high notes and low ones.



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Your Sonatina and Sonata Family

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On April 23, 2022, the Ukraine Benefit Piano Concert was livestreamed on the Sonatina website: three and a half hours of prerecorded videos of 64 pianists aged 15 to 91, largely amateurs except for several professionals, playing 64 pieces by 11 Ukrainian composers. The shortest work ran 30 seconds, Isaak Berkovich's *At the Edge of the Forest*, and the longest was Vasyl Barvinsky's eight-minute *Fight. Pain. Victory of Love*. Viewed on the Sonatina website

and [YouTube](#), the concert is well played and intelligently presented. The benefit raised more than \$100,000 from almost 700 donors, with proceeds going to *Global Giving: Ukraine Crisis Relief Fund*.

"I was so proud of the pianists—every single one of them came through with flying colors," van der Linde said. "The energy and positivity were so heartwarming. And suddenly I became this Ukrainian piano music expert. I'm the lucky one because now I have this wonderful repertoire that I can recommend to people."
—John Fleming



ROBERT MOIR

Founder

[Robert Moir Artistic Strategies](#) [in](#)

Robert Moir has been deeply involved in his share of music director searches. As a top-level executive with the Pittsburgh Symphony for 26 years, he was a key figure in bringing the orchestra a pair of eminently successful artistic leaders, Mariss Jansons and current Music Director Manfred Honeck. Now Moir is a consultant with a specialty of advising on searches, and managed the process in which the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra named Jonathon Heyward as its [next music director](#), effective in 2023–24.

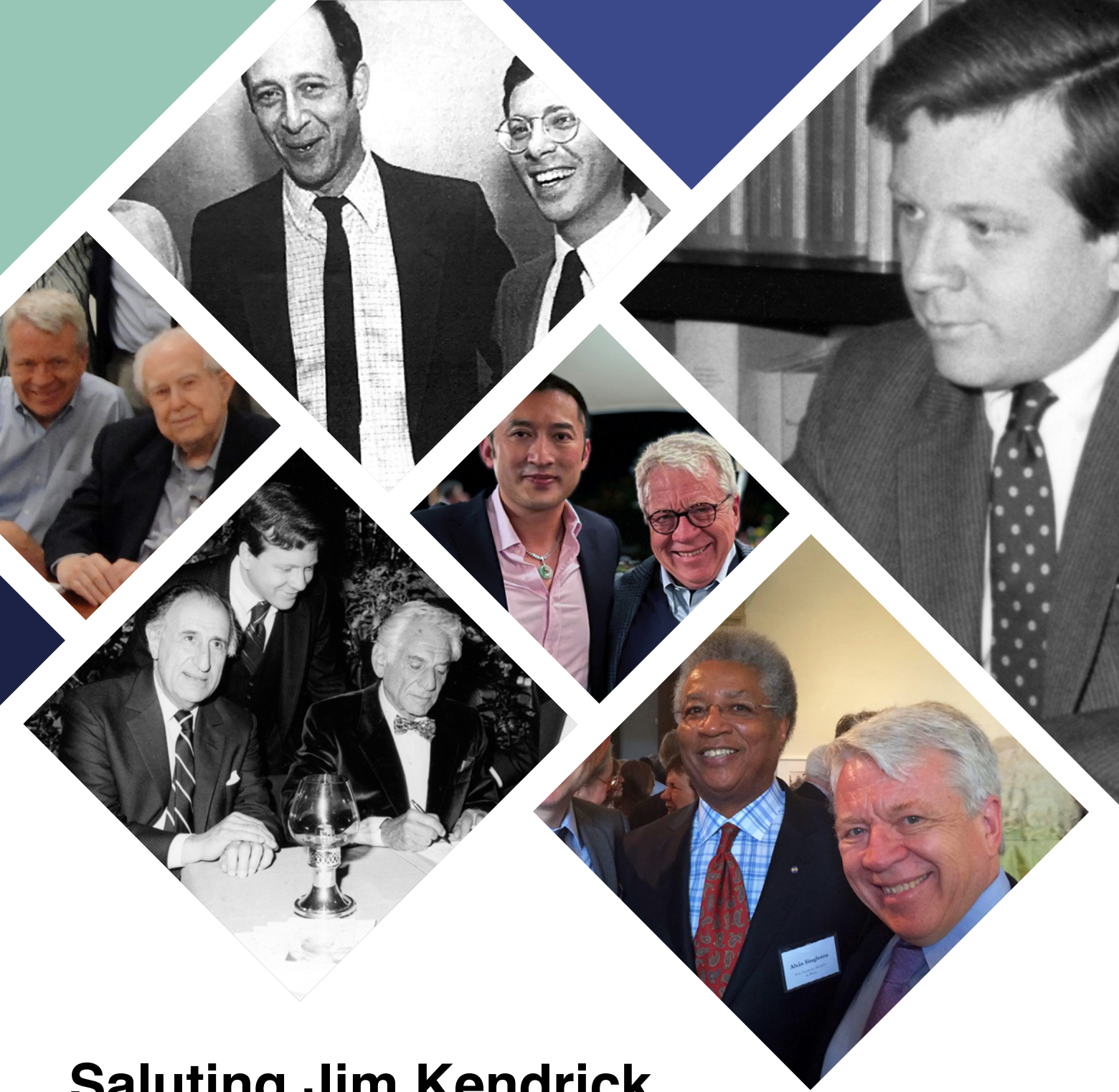
Heyward, just 29 when his appointment was announced in July, is the first music director of color in the 106-year-old BSO's history, and he will be the only Black conductor to lead a major U.S. symphony orchestra. He won over orchestra musicians with his conducting of Shostakovich's rarely performed Symphony No. 15, Op. 141. "The orchestra had never played the piece, and to learn it with a new conductor who knew it well was something special," Moir said. "From the first beat of the first rehearsal, it was tremendously exciting."

Moir's engagement with the BSO began in January 2020, and with the pandemic setting in two months later, the music

director search was a logistical challenge. For months the search committee was restricted in its ability to meet, and with Covid often flaring up members were unable to travel to attend concerts led by potential candidates for the job.

"Obviously it's much more desirable to travel the world to see conductors on their home turf with their own orchestras or guest-conducting other orchestras," Moir said. "But in this case the internet and all the platforms on which to view videos of conductors allowed us to vet each candidate invited to lead the orchestra. We learned that technology can help make a search possible."

Moir urged the BSO to pursue diversity in choosing a music director, since Baltimore's population is more than 60 percent Black. In addition to Heyward, the orchestra performed under two other candidates of color in the 2021–22 season, Ryan Bancroft and Kevin John Edusei. "All three were wonderful conductors, with very interesting programs," he said. —John Fleming



Saluting Jim Kendrick for his tireless advocacy of composers over the decades

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JUSTIN JOHN MONIZ

Assistant Professor of Vocal Performance; Associate Director of Vocal Performance & Coordinator of Vocal Pedagogy, [NYU Steinhardt](#)

  Executive Director, [Hawaii Performing Arts Festival](#)

Since 2019, when Justin John Moniz took over as coordinator of vocal pedagogy at NYU, the department has widened its outreach program and focused on schools in underserved communities, where graduate students put their cross-genre studies in vocal instruction, physiology, and health into practice.

In May 2022, Moniz moderated and hosted the symposium “Paving New Paths: Understanding Trans Identities On-Stage and Off,” for which he was awarded Steinhardt’s prestigious [Faculty Development & Diversity Innovation Grant](#). The groundbreaking forum explored ways to include trans and gender-nonconforming performers in spaces that have a history of intense cis-normativity. “Material that challenges audiences shifts paradigms and serves

to increase empathy within our culture,” says Moniz. “Art has the power to change history, not simply document it.”

In addition to his academic duties, since 2017 Moniz has been executive director of the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival (HPAF). The Festival, which celebrates 20 seasons in 2023, traditionally brings opera and musical theater to Hawaii’s Big Island; recently Moniz added programs to raise the profile of Hawaii’s indigenous culture. His Hawaiian Cultural Initiative, supported by the state government and the Hawaii Tourism Authority, sponsors classes in hula, Hawaiian language and history, and lei-making. The Festival’s 2022 season opened with a tribute to indigenous culture by local performers; all proceeds went to a new HPAF scholarship fund for local high school students to attend future classes at the Festival. —Emery Kerekes



MILICA PARANOSIC

Founder and President

[Paracademia Center](#)    

PHOTO: Rosalie O’Connor

When composer, performance artist, and educator Milica Paranosic founded Paracademia, the New York-based arts mentorship organization she’s run since 2013, she had two primary goals. First, she wanted to help immigrant women artists break down the barriers that she faced as a newcomer to New York’s daunting new music scene. Paranosic immigrated from Serbia in 1994 to pursue a master’s degree in composition at Juilliard. “The biggest mistake I made when moving to the States was trying to ‘correct’ who I was and forget my cultural heritage,” she says. “It kept me from growing. Now I teach: ‘Be you, even if you’re different.’”

Her second mission: encouraging people to recapture the child within. Paranosic says she discovered her penchant for

interdisciplinary performance as a child in Belgrade, but she didn’t have a chance to explore it until she had been in New York for nearly two decades. “As children, we all create art,” she writes in Paracademia’s mission statement. “Then somehow, life teaches us to become ‘serious,’ get a ‘real’ profession, and stop ‘playing around;’ in other words, to break the links to our inner artists.”

Paracademia strives to reawaken and nourish those links, emanating from Paranosic’s own hunger for innovation: “I put intuitive, fluid, inventive, creative, courageous nature above all other principles in my creations.” Of Paracademia’s myriad cross-genre projects, Paranosic is most proud of [Give to Grow](#), which raised funds to purchase computers and other electronic-sound

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media for use at a primary school in the small Ghanian village of Kopeyia. Closer to home, she's overseen several summers of [Make Music Harlem](#), a free block party where children share the stage with professional musicians. She's also furnished several installations of [Secret City](#), a fantastical mini society of dynamic physical and sound art made entirely of upcycled waste and used electronics.

In their newest projects, Paranosic and Paracademia explore societal implications of past stories. Paracademia is incubating Paranosic's new feminist telling of Homer's *Odyssey*, an operatic "manifesto" (in her words) entitled [Penelope and the Geese](#), which

recontextualizes the epic through the lens of Penelope; the piece was a 2020 Discovery Grant recipient from [Opera America's Grants for Female Composers](#) and received its first staging workshop in 2022. Paranosic is also writing a work that examines how female undergarments have shaped modern fashion, sociology, and feminism. And, of course, she continues to provide invaluable mentorship through Paracademia; according to her students, her positive, nurturing energy enables anyone to thrive.
 —Emery Kerkes



LARA PELLEGRINELLI

Scholar and Journalist

When it was published, NPR's 2021 [Equal At Last? Women In Jazz, by the Numbers](#) was the only quantitative report to illuminate the jazz scene's lack of gender parity. The project was the brainchild of journalist, scholar, and critic Lara Pellegrinelli, who, along with a team of seven reporters, analyzed data from the year-end NPR Music Jazz Critics Poll in search of conclusions about the status of women in the world of recorded jazz. On first glance, they seemed to find convincing evidence that the gender gap was shrinking, but upon further investigation, that data proved misleading—in 2019 (the latest year of analyzed data), only 16 percent of core personnel on Top-10-ranked jazz albums were women.

Pellegrinelli has been writing about jazz, new music, and more for NPR since 2008, and her Harvard Ph.D. dissertation has been cited as the first-ever ethnographic study of jazz singing. But she's particularly proud of the 2021 study's impact—it's been cited in *The New York Times* and on *PBS News Hour*,

and it led to funding for further, gender-expansive research from the [Berklee \[School\] Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice](#). "The numbers offer eye-opening, irrefutable evidence...and they have forced a reckoning in classical music and jazz that I hope will continue to gain momentum."

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Congratulations to

Milica Paranosic

for her latest composition

Bubamara
 for solo violin

from her friends at Ancalagon Records

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Pellegrinelli is the resident program annotator for the acclaimed Composer Portraits series at Columbia University's Miller Theater. She's often the first to write about these composers and their new work, encouraging readers to think critically about the music. She has taught music journalism at The New School

and has given program-note workshops nationally. She views the notes as a way into a piece of music, approaching it as a performer might for the first time. "I want to know what kind of connections a contemporary performer—someone who likely comes from a radically different background than the composer—might form. When you approach music this way, it gives you thousands of new stories to tell." —Emery Kerekes



LIZ PLAYER

Founder, Executive and Artistic Director

[Harlem Chamber Players](#)    

For Liz Player, it was a "huge disappointment" in 2020 when Covid shut down the Harlem Chamber Players's largest planned undertaking, a production of R. Nathaniel Dett's rarely performed 1937 oratorio *The Ordering of Moses*. But Player persevered, and two years later the African American composer's biblical epic played to a full house last June at New York's Riverside Church in a stirring concert by a 65-piece orchestra, a 75-voice chorus, four vocal soloists, and dancers from the Harlem School of the Arts.

"That is the piece that has really put us on the map," said Player, clarinetist and founder of the Harlem Chamber Players, in 2008. She says the pandemic delay actually made the performance more relevant. "The story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt after a plague had more weight than it would've before. . . It speaks to Black liberation but also to the community's emergence from the pandemic. I think it was healing for everyone."

Player credits the group's Artistic Advisor Terrance McKnight, a host on classical radio station WQXR, as an important influence. "He has helped us to hone in on Black composers and other composers of color," she said.

Another composer especially embraced by the Harlem Chamber Players is Adolphus Hailstork, beginning with the 2019 premiere of his *Nobody Know*, a concert aria commemorating the 400th anniversary of slaves being brought to America, with baritone Kenneth Overton as soloist. In another premiere, the group streamed Hailstork's work on the Tulsa race massacre, *Tulsa 1921 (Pity These Ashes, Pity This Dust)*, on Juneteenth 2021, with mezzo-soprano J'nai Bridges as soloist. In November, the ensemble released its first album, a collection of Hailstork chamber works. —John Fleming

BENJAMIN K. ROE

President & CEO

    [Heifetz International Music Institute](#)



"The pandemic hasn't been a story of one crazy season and then getting back to normal," said Ben Roe, who has headed the Heifetz International Music Institute for young string players since 2014. "We've had three wildly different seasons in the last three years. We were virtual in 2020, a hybrid program in 2021, and for the

most part fully in-person in 2022. It is our hope that 2023 will be the first 'normal' season for us in four years."

The Heifetz, a six-week summer school and festival held at Mary Baldwin University in Staunton, VA, was well-positioned to pivot to the remote teaching and performance that came with Covid. Roe's

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CONGRATULATIONS



JULIUS P. WILLIAMS



Photo: Peter Dreschel

MILICA PARANOSIC



Photo: Erik Jeppsen

ANTHONY DAVIS

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TOP 30 PROFESSIONALS OF THE YEAR.**

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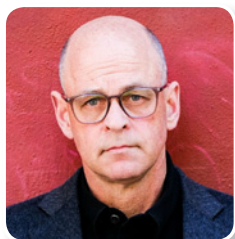
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background is in broadcasting, including stints as a classical music producer with National Public Radio and WGBH in Boston. Tech-savvy Artistic Director Nicholas Kitchen, founding first violin of the Borromeo String Quartet, was an early adopter of playing scores from iPads rather than sheet music.

“Nick and I were able to develop in a very short time the whole idea of taking the Heifetz online and how we could use technology,” said Roe, who developed the Institute’s YouTube channel into a thriving destination for classical music lovers, with more than 54,000 subscribers and 13.4 million views. With opportunities for live concerts diminished during the pandemic, he launched the [Heifetz Ensemble](#)

[in Residence](#) (HEIR) in spring of 2021. The program—which brings selected alumni back to the Shenandoah Valley to perform in local hospitals, senior centers, schools, and other community venues—is still going strong.

Last summer, the Institute (founded in 1996 by violinist Daniel Heifetz, a distant cousin of superstar violinist Jascha Heifetz) had 163 students in the senior and junior divisions; of the 86 in the senior division, 27 were on full scholarship, the most ever in the history of the program. Musicians benefit from the Institute’s innovative [Performance & Communication Training](#) method, with a curriculum that includes public speaking, dance, theater, yoga, and other extra-musical skills to cultivate confidence, expressivity, and stage presence. —John Fleming



GIL ROSE

Artistic Director, [Boston Modern Orchestra Project](#)  

Artistic Director/Conductor, [Odyssey Opera](#)  

PHOTO: Kevin Condon

Gil Rose founded the Boston Modern Orchestra Project 26 years ago with a business model focused on performing contemporary works and making top-level recordings of them. Rose has conducted more than 100 recordings with BMOP and Odyssey Opera, which he also founded, mostly for his independent record label, BMOP/sound. Using freelance players from Boston’s rich music community, he manages to control costs and remain flexible in a way that served his organization well during the challenges of Covid.

“BMOP was conceived so that if times were good we’d do big, exciting things, and if times got tight, then we’d still do good artistic things but at a smaller level,” Rose said. [BMOP was [Musical America’s 2016 Ensemble of the Year](#)] “So, in a sense, BMOP was made for the pandemic.” Although the orchestra did not give a live concert for almost two years, and did only one virtually, it got back

to recording in the spring of 2021 and now has 17 albums awaiting release by, among others, Vijay Ayer, Avner Dorman, Ellen Zwillich, Carlos Surinach, Nancy Galbraith, and Joan Tower.

In September, BMOP/sound released Anthony Davis’s *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, which was presented in a semi-staged concert version with cast members from a [Detroit Opera production](#), including Davóne Tines as Malcolm. It was the first performance and recording in a five-year initiative by BMOP and Odyssey called “As Told By: History, Race, and Justice on the Opera Stage.” Other works in the series are *Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom* by Nkeiru Okoye; *Troubled Island* by William Grant Still; *Frederick Douglass* by Ulysses Kay; and the premiere of *The Bridge* by Jonathan Bailey Holland. —John Fleming



DEBORAH SANDLER KEMPER

General Director and CEO

[Lyric Opera of Kansas City](#)

Since joining Lyric Opera of Kansas City (LOKC) as general director and CEO in 2012, Deborah Sandler Kemper has been nurturing the future of opera, one singer at a time. “There is a gap between graduate programs in the performing arts and the realities of a career,” says Sandler Kemper. “Resident artist programs should help young and emerging artists navigate this gap.” Sandler Kemper launched LOKC’s [Resident Artist](#) program in 2016; last year, the program added a compulsory arts administration module to help develop relevant nonmusical skills. At the end,

the artists build a hypothetical opera company, including budget, board, and season repertoire.

Prior to joining LOKC, Sandler Kemper was general director of Kentucky Opera, where she cast a young Joyce DiDonato in the role of Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at the beginning of her career. Still one of the few women to helm an American company, she remembers from the start that “it was extraordinarily clear that women wanted a more active and visible role in the field.” In 2015, she served as founding chair for [Opera America’s Women’s](#)

[Opera Network](#). The group now includes grant programs for young female stage directors and conductors (in addition to the pre-existing one for composers); a mentorship program; and the Women in Opera database, a hundreds-strong directory of industry women.

Under Sandler Kemper’s watchful eye, LOKC has also brought opera into Kansas City’s schools and communities, part of a massive re-envisioning that happened during the pandemic. “We felt that it was important to begin engaging young people in the performing arts as early as possible, and to encourage the participation of their families as well,” says Sandler Kemper. This school year, they piloted [Opera Unlocked](#), an in-school program for grades three through 12. Students will also attend a special performance of Menotti’s family-friendly *Amahl and the Night Visitors* this winter. “[We want] future generations [to] love the arts and understand their potential to teach empathy and bring people together,” says Sandler Kemper. —Emery Kerekes



LYRIC **OPERA KC**

Congratulations to Deborah Sandler Kemper for another great year at Lyric Opera of Kansas City!

Your inspiring leadership and commitment to excellence continue to move us forward.

From your Lyric Opera Family.



KATHY SCHUMAN

Artistic Director

[Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts](#)    

Kathy Schuman prides herself on keeping pace with the classical music industry. She pushes herself to see several concerts a week, experiencing new sound worlds in addition to those she knows and loves—and when she sees something truly special, she moves heaven and earth to bring it to the Caramoor Center for Music and Arts.

When Schuman joined Caramoor in 2016 as executive producer and VP of artistic programming, she sought to expand the Center's purview. Promoted to her current post four years later, she has made new music a Caramoor priority, with the Kronos Quartet and the Silkroad Ensemble among the 2022 lineup and contemporary works tucked into solo recitals and other chamber concerts along the way. "I encourage all artists to include new or recent works on their Caramoor programs," says Schuman.

She has also brought folk and popular music from around the world—last summer saw bluegrass picnics, Afro-Latin grooves, and a performance from Angélique Kidjo. In recent seasons, she's dedicated herself to rediscovering and championing the

music and stories of composers marginalized due to racism and discrimination. "Expanding the classical music canon is an ongoing priority for me," she says.

The sprawling Caramoor estate contains four distinct outdoor venues, and Schuman sees selecting site-specific work as the best part of her job. "Where else can you program Mozart's *The Secret Gardener* in an actual garden?" she asks. She also spearheaded Caramoor's foray into experiential works, starting with a free presentation of John Luther Adams's *Inuksuit* in her first year. Most recently, she commissioned a site-specific work for 36 percussionists from Bang on a Can's Michael Gordon: *Field of Vision* received its world premiere in the verdant Sunken Garden in summer of 2022. She hints at another special percussion piece for the 2023 season. "We've cultivated a curious audience that wants to be immersed in a work," says Schuman with pride. —Emery Kerekes

KATE SHEERAN

Executive Director

    [Kaufman Music Center](#)



Starting in January of 2021, crowds used to gather in front of an abandoned shop window near Lincoln Center to watch live, socially distanced concerts furnished by New York's Kaufman Music Center. [The Musical Storefronts](#) series, helmed by Kaufman Executive Director Kate Sheeran, offered performances from all corners of the musical map: Mozart from established string quartets, Bacharach from acclaimed jazz crooners, daring electronic sets from NYC's avant-garde up-and-comers. Beyond the media buzz—which

included a spot on NBC's *Kelly Clarkson Show*—Sheeran says the project was a beacon of local joy during bleak days. "We saw people holding hands, dancing with their children, even crying," says Sheeran. "It felt life-affirming during such a dark time. It felt like our city was still here."

In addition to an annual concert season at Merkin Concert Hall, the Kaufman Music Center is the umbrella organization for the Special Music School (SMS), a K-12 public school whose

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curriculum includes intensive music education, and the Lucy Moses School, Manhattan's largest community arts school. One of Sheeran's first projects after joining Kaufman in 2018 was an Artist-in-Residence program, which this season includes Voces8, pianist Aaron Diehl, and the Harlem Quartet. The artists mentor and interact with Center students. "Our students get to know [them] as people and the light gets turned on that maybe one day they too could have a career in music," says Sheeran.

Once a professional-track hornist, Sheeran cut her K-12 teeth as director and dean of Mannes School of Music's pre-college and continuing education divisions. (She served in that

role until 2015, when she became San Francisco Conservatory of Music's provost and dean.) At Kaufman, Sheeran oversees a full curriculum of core academic subjects in addition to musical ones. Her holistic purview prevailed when SMS middle-school English students, upon discovering that there was no children's book about Florence Price, decided to write one. Sheeran helped them secure a publishing deal with G. Schirmer, Price's publisher, and *Who is Florence Price?* was released in November 2021 to national media attention. This in turn resulted in a collaboration with the Philadelphia Orchestra and a family concert in March 2023. "Our students got to see how much power they have in shaping the stories future generations get to hear," Sheeran says. "I am just so proud of them." —Emery Kerekes



MATTHEW SHILVOCK

General Director

[San Francisco Opera](#)    

In September, San Francisco Opera opened its 100th-anniversary season with the premiere of [John Adams's *Antony and Cleopatra*](#), his setting of the Shakespeare tragedy. But during the previous two years and more of the pandemic there had been many times that it looked like the historic season might not take place as planned.

"We were preparing for the centenary—one of the biggest things this company has ever done—while still in the darkest days of the pandemic when we didn't know what we would be allowed to do," said Matthew Shilvock, who has headed the company since 2016. "Once the vaccines came out and we became more confident we were going to be able to move forward, I came to see the timing of the centenary as a gift, even as hard as the work has been to do amidst the protocols we are still following. After coming out of a time of silence, when we got to do opera on this epic scale, it felt like a rebirth."

This is the first SFO season in three years with a full lineup of eight mainstage productions. The offerings include another new opera, [El Último Sueño de Frida y Diego](#) ("The Last Dream of Frida and Diego"), about artists Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, with music by Gabriela Lena Frank and libretto by Nilo Cruz. It's the SFO's first opera in Spanish, as well as the first by a woman composer, to be on the company's subscription series.

For Shilvock, who proposed to Adams five years ago that he write an opera for the centenary, opening night for *Antony and Cleopatra* was memorable. "It was one of those moments you can hold close to your heart your whole life," he said. "It felt like something very special had entered the world. I'm still on cloud nine." —John Fleming



HARRIET STUBBS




[Concert Pianist](#)

In June, British pianist Harriet Stubbs was named on Queen Elizabeth II's Birthday Honors List, recognized for "services to the community in West London during COVID-19." Her services entailed playing 250 brief concerts, heard every evening through the open window of her apartment by neighbors and people gathered on the street.

"I'm so glad my British Empire Medal came from her," Stubbs said. "Her majesty's death was the end of an era, and I feel so privileged to be on her last list."

Stubbs, who divides her time among New York City, London, Los Angeles, and the Cayman Islands, was stuck in London during the pandemic. She ended up staying for a year and a half to perform her free window concerts. "I think people responded because of the variety," she said. "The repertoire was everything from Beethoven to the Beatles, Scriabin to David Bowie. People came to listen even

in the rain and the dark. It was amazing. I felt really invigorated and inspired, because we all got to experience something greater than ourselves at such a desperate time."

One of the most popular numbers Stubbs performed was her arrangement of the Bowie song "Life on Mars," which she intends to include on a 2023 recording whose mix of classical and pop music she describes as "Rachmaninoff meets Bowie." Her first album was *Heaven & Hell: The Doors of Perception*, an homage to poet William Blake that featured Marianne Faithfull delivering a narrative in Stubbs's rendition of John Adams's formidable *Phrygian Gates*.

Also on the pianist's agenda: the Sonic Blue Cayman International Festival, which she began developing before the pandemic. The plan is to give performances on a stage set in the water just off a beach on Grand Cayman, with the festival to debut in January 2024. "We'll have a ballet night, an opera night, a jazz night, a rock 'n' roll night," she said. "I want to combine the ocean and different genres of music." —John Fleming



HOWARD WATKINS

Assistant Conductor, [Metropolitan Opera](#)  

Vocal Arts Faculty, [The Juilliard School](#) 

Graduate Vocal Arts Faculty, [Bard College Conservatory of Music](#) 

Howard Watkins is used to working behind the scenes at the Metropolitan Opera as an assistant conductor, whose job is to assist in the musical preparation of productions, which primarily entails coaching singers. He plays piano for rehearsals and sometimes as part of the Met orchestra. But when the company shut down during the pandemic, Watkins branched out into the spotlight to celebrate music of Black composers and singers, a mission that has continued for him.

"It's terrible that the pandemic happened, but it gave me the pause I needed to be able to explore this music," said Watkins, who has been on the Met's music staff since 1998. "If I had kept going in my usual pattern of doing shows, I wouldn't have had the time, or it wouldn't have come to my attention, to dig into this repertory and be on the front line of getting it out there."

In the wake of the police killing of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement, Watkins was closely involved in

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curating and playing in some top-flight programs. They included a concert of works setting the poetry of Langston Hughes by Black composers Margaret Bonds, Florence Price, George Walker, Robert Owens, and others, at Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie; and a recital of Bonds art songs with bass-baritone Timothy Jones that was livestreamed from the Rienzi house museum in Houston.

For Tulsa Opera, Watkins co-curated and played in *Greenwood Overcomes*, a [concert marking the centennial of the 1921 race massacre](#) in a Tulsa neighborhood called "Black Wall Street." Heard in a national radio broadcast in June, the program featured

Denyce Graves, Davóne Tines, and six other leading Black singers in works by 23 living Black composers, including Carlos Simon, Tyshawn Sorey, Nkeiru Okoye, Tania León, and David Bontemps.

"The idea was not to look back in anger but to express the wonderful things possible from Black composers, Black singers, Black culture," Watkins said. "I liked the positive, hope-filled approach that it represented." —John Fleming



JULIUS P. WILLIAMS

President

   [International Conductors Guild](#)

The Conductors Guild has made some significant changes since January 2019 when Dr. Julius P. Williams became its first African-American president.

For one, the group, founded in 1975, changed its name to the International Conductors Guild, reflecting a membership that now stretches far beyond the U.S. After deep discussions about diversity, equity, and inclusion, it expanded the size of its board. And, since conductors were especially hard hit by the Covid pandemic shutdowns, the Guild completely redesigned the way it connected with its members.

Dr. Williams personally felt their pain. A composition professor at the Berklee College of Music and artistic director and conductor of the Berklee Contemporary Symphony Orchestra, he is also an active guest conductor.

"When the pandemic hit, I was preparing for concerts with the Hartford Symphony," he said. "We rehearsed for three days... then they told us to go home. The college closed. I thought to myself, 'Conductors don't have anything to conduct. What are we going to do?'"

The Guild usually holds one three-day conference a year. Shifting to online meetings, it presented three conferences that first pandemic year. Working with his Guild colleagues, Dr. Williams organized an online series titled Podium Talks featuring conductors including Marin Alsop, JoAnn Falletta, and Iván Fischer. One session focused on Black conductors, another offered a virtual tour of the Library of Congress's Music Library.

The Guild vastly expanded its mentoring program. "Nobody knows what it's like to be out there by themselves more than a conductor," Dr. Williams said with a rueful laugh. "When I took over, I tried to make sure we connected not only with conductors at the major orchestras, but with those in small communities and towns. That seems to be working much better. We have so many younger conductors now." —Wynne Delacoma



Wynne Delacoma is the former classical music critic for the *Chicago Sun-Times* and adjunct faculty member at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. As a freelance, she has worked with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Ravinia Festival, the *Sun-Times*, Musical America, and *Chicago Classical Review*.



John Fleming writes for *Opera News*, Musical America, *Classical Voice North America*, and other publications. For 22 years, he covered the Florida music scene as performing arts critic of the *Tampa Bay Times*.



Emery Kerekes is a writer and arts administrator based in New York City. He is a founding editor and contributor for Which Sinfonia, and his writings have appeared in *Early Music America*, Musical America, *Opera News*, and on his own website, Classical Music Geek.

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