



2019 **PROFESSIONALS**
Movers & Shakers of the Performing Arts of the Year



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ACAPULCO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Introduction



Now in its seventh annual edition, the Musical America Top 30 Professionals Special Report is one of my personal favorites, because it's an opportunity to recognize the often behind-the-scenes individuals who keep the performing arts alive and well and relevant.

We rely on our colleagues and subscribers to tell us who they are, by sending out nomination forms every fall. The huge number of responses is gratifying, but it also makes the job of choosing the "top" that much harder. Plus, we have to consider balance—of geography (too many Manhattanites this year)—and variety.

The Class of 2019 is wonderfully diverse. Artist manager? Check. Publicist? Check. Theater CEO? Check. Competition operations chief? Check. We also have teachers, impresarios, a record producer, directors of education/community engagement, an orchestra CEO, and a diversity manager at one of the top U.S. conservatories. Plus, there are any number of founders to celebrate.

Alexander Lloyd Blake founded Tonicity, a Los Angeles-based choral group that promotes peace, unity, and social justice through choral music. Charles Dickerson founded what is now called the Inner City Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles (ICYOLA), an ensemble of about 100 players, most of whom are African-American. Sara Hoover co-founded the Johns Hopkins Center for Music and Medicine and launched its Rehabilitation Network Clinic for Performing Artists. Veronica Neo is a co-founder of the classical streaming company Primephonic. François Mario Labbé founded Canada's Analekta record label. Rena Kraut launched the Cuban American Youth Orchestra (CAYO) following her trip to Cuba with the Minnesota Orchestra. Andrew Ousley has to his credit the Crypt Sessions, an award-winning concert series in the Crypt under the Church of the Intercession in Harlem.

No matter their claim to fame, each of these individuals deserves major kudos for all they have done—and continue to do—to keep the performing arts robust.

Regards,

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Movers & Shakers

PROFESSIONALS

of the Year

of the Performing Arts

Who are the people who make the business of the performing arts tick? Who fertilize the field with new ideas, new people, who have the smarts and the skills to broaden our horizons? Every year, we ask our readers help us find them: The Top 30 Professionals of the Year.



EDUARDO GABRIEL ÁLVAREZ ORTEGA

Director General and Conductor

[Acapulco Philharmonic Orchestra](#)  

“We have a special venue,” says Álvarez. “We play in a cave. You have to walk a kilometer and a half to get to the concert inside the cave. It’s a magical musical experience.”

Grutas de Cacahuamilpa, one of the largest cave systems in the world, is a national park in northeast Guerrero. The Philharmonic gives performances in a cavern called the “Auditorium” that has a large flat floor and is equipped with seats. “We’ve played repertoire by Mahler, we’ve played some *Carmina Burana*, Mexican music like Huapango, some Beatles and Queen music,” Álvarez says. “The people love it.”

Guerrero is one of Mexico’s poorest states, and it has been plagued by drug cartel violence. The Philharmonic, funded by the state government, was founded by Álvarez in 1998 with a mission “to preserve and promote the musical culture of Guerrero.” It is made up of 90 fulltime professional musicians and plays an average of 80 concerts a year.

“This orchestra is a central part of life here,” Álvarez says. “We play all the classical composers, but we also play folkloric music

from Guerrero.”

Álvarez, born in Mexico City, has enjoyed a long career as an accordion player, violinist, and conductor. He has guest conducted orchestras throughout Latin America and around the world, such as the Moscow Philharmonic, the Rotterdam Philharmonic, and the China National Symphony. One of his proudest achievements was taking the Acapulco Philharmonic on tour to Chicago in 2002.

“We had four concerts in Chicago, where many people from Guerrero now live. They all came to hear us play.” —John Fleming

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STEPHANIE ARRIGOTTI

Producer/Director

[f Western Nevada Musical Theater Company](#)

For nearly 30 years, Stephanie Arrigotti has brought musical theater to Carson City, NV. It's the state capitol, but with a population of 55,000 it is much smaller than Las Vegas and Reno. At Western Nevada Musical Theater Company, Arrigotti produces and directs the shows, designs sets and costumes, makes the backdrops, and handles marketing. With over 106 productions to her credit, Arrigotti has mounted shows that have drawn as many as 7,200 to one, using the Carson City Community Center. Audience members come from 20 states and Canada.

The company is part of Western Nevada College, where Arrigotti is the school's one fulltime performing arts professor who oversees curriculum and the parttime faculty in music, theater, and dance. Cast members are students, and professional actors in the area and often register for a musical theater practicum course to be in a show. Many alumni have gone on to pursue performance careers. To supplement ticket sales, the company rents out costumes and sets.

"You won't find small, charming, or edgy musicals on our season," says Arrigotti, noting that expenses for a big show can run as high as \$170,000. "Only blockbusters can pay the rent." The biggest hits have been *Phantom of the Opera*, *Les Misérables*, *Mamma Mia!*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Mary Poppins*, and *The Little Mermaid*.

"*Phantom* was the hardest thing I've ever done," she says. "I had to pay for structural renovations to the theater to fly the chandelier. I did massive art work for the gilded proscenium. We used every inch backstage to accommodate the set. But it was a watershed moment. It was a beautiful production and showed people what we could do."

WNMTC staged *Matilda* in November, and its 2020 season includes *Once Upon a Mattress* and *Holiday Inn*. Are there any musicals that Arrigotti still dreams of doing? "*Wicked*, if they ever release the rights and I live long enough. And I can't wait for them to release *Come from Away*. I absolutely fell in love with that show." —John Fleming



PATRICIA BARRETTO

President & CEO

[Harris Theater for Music & Dance](#) [t](#) [f](#)

Patricia Barretto became chief executive officer of Harris Theater, Chicago's primary venue for music and dance since September 2017, two years after arriving as executive VP of external affairs. Under her leadership, Harris Theater has surpassed its sales goals for two consecutive seasons.

Born in Mumbai, India, with a BA in English Literature and Sociology, she started her career in the box office at the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in 1995. Her expert eye for programming,

fundraising, and marketing brought her to Chicago from Toronto's Opera Atelier, whose profile she expanded internationally to such stages as the Salzburg Festival and La Scala. "My proudest moment was presenting Opera Atelier at the Royal Opera House at the Palace of Versailles," she says. "We presented Lully's *Armide*."

Harris Theater has an operating budget of around \$10M. "Over the past two years, our presenting work has really focused on representing a multitude of voices and cultures," says Barretto.

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“By taking big risks and expanding our programming we can engage new audiences and expand the palates of the audiences who have been with us since the beginning. The fact we can sell out the Monteverdi 450 project, English National Ballet’s reimagined *Giselle* by Akram Khan, and a rooftop concert by an emerging jazz artist proves that there’s an appetite for diversity among our audiences.”

Barretto is as passionate about nurturing young professionals as she is fostering lifelong patrons of the arts. “Continuing to

embody our identity as a home for music and dance in Chicago means being a destination venue for artists and audiences from around the world,” she says. “We want to be a place where everyone, regardless of income, age, race, ability, or any other identity feels welcome and can see themselves reflected on our stage.” —Clive Paget

PHOTO: © Kenton Waltz, Oh! Creative

STEPHEN MARC BEAUDOIN

Executive Director

  [The Washington Chorus](#)



Stephen Marc Beaudoin was born near Kansas City, MO, and grew up in a household where music and creativity were readily practiced, fostered, and encouraged. “My earliest memories are of my mother singing “Maybe” from *Annie* to calm me during a thunderstorm,” he says.

He’s been executive director of the 160-voice, two-time Grammy Award-winning Washington Chorus since [February 2019](#), coming to the role after 16 years of leadership experience, most recently as executive director of the Maryland Symphony Orchestra where he helped achieve a significant financial turnaround. The Washington Chorus (TWC) presents an annual subscription series at The Kennedy Center and regularly performs with of the National Symphony Orchestra. Its artistic director in this, its 60th season, is Christopher Bell.

Beaudoin is a lifelong advocate of creative expression as an essential tool for social impact and change, a philosophy instilled in him by parents who understood the importance of practical music-making; indeed, he remains a member of TWC’s tenor section. “I’ve never left behind my work or identity as a singer to

work on the administrative side,” he explains. “I consider myself, first and foremost, an artist that advocates for, and collaborates with, other artists. I just happen to raise money, manage budgets, and collaborate with many people under the title of ‘executive director’ to make it happen.”

Holding a degree in vocal performance from New England Conservatory, Beaudoin currently serves on the executive council of the [Institute for Composer Diversity](#), which works to increase representation of historically oppressed and under-represented peoples in classical music. “All great movements for justice have had singing at their center,” he declares. “I believe our world is better when we create together. As the DC region’s leading choral ensemble, The Washington Chorus plays a critical role in fostering a more caring and connected community through singing. I’m inspired by all that’s ahead, including centering a radically just and inclusive point of view and fostering local and global connections through singing together, especially in those communities and countries that we’re told to distrust or despise.” —Clive Paget

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KATHLEEN VAN BERGEN

CEO and President

[Artis-Naples](#)

In August 2017, the board of Artis-Naples came up with an ambitious multi-year plan for its future. Three weeks later, along came Hurricane Irma.

“Nature determined our first project in the plan,” says Kathleen van Bergen, CEO and president of the umbrella organization that is home to the Naples Philharmonic and the Baker Museum.

In November of 2019, the museum reopened after a \$25 million restoration, part of a \$150 million campaign to transform Artis-Naples’s 8.5-acre campus—which also includes two performance halls, the Myra J. Daniels Pavilion, and an education venue—and grow its endowment, valued at more than \$100 million. “We are ready to operate at the full power of our multidisciplinary mission,” says Van Bergen.

Hired in 2011 when the Philharmonic was in precarious financial shape, Van Bergen has overseen the evolution of a true, solidly funded cultural center by combining the orchestra and its lofty across-the-sidewalk neighbor, the Baker Museum, and tuning into the cultural needs and preferences of a community with a vast socio-economic range, from the edges of poverty to skies-the-limit billionaires. With impressive career track records at the Philadelphia Orchestra and St. Louis Symphony,

she lived and breathed the Naples cultural scene for two years before launching a major rebranding to Artis-Naples, in 2013. Since then, she has grown the budget, the endowment, and the programming, hiring both Andrey Boreyko, now in his sixth season as the Philharmonic’s music director, and Baker Museum Curator Frank Verpoorten. She oversees a staff of about 420.

On her watch, thematic programming has become a trademark, such as last season’s “Fashioning Influences,” which combined an exhibit (mounted in galleries in Hayes Concert Hall) by Isabelle de Borchgrave of paper costumes inspired by the Ballets Russes, complemented by Philharmonic performances of Stravinsky’s *Pulcinella* and *The Firebird* ballet scores.

“It’s a fun way to invite patrons into a thematic framework that can be deeper than one or two concerts or an exhibition,” Van Bergen says. “It’s one of the beauties of this organization.”

Artis-Naples also presents visiting orchestras, including the Vienna Philharmonic in a three-year winter residency, 2016–19. In 2020, the Berlin Philharmonic will stop by as part of its first U.S. tour under Music Director Kirill Petrenko. Kathleen van Bergen is a woman with a mission, a vision, and a board to support both. There appears to be no stopping her. —John Fleming

SHANA BEY

Associate Orchestra Personnel Manager

[Los Angeles Philharmonic](#)



Shana Bey started violin at the age of six, studying at a Suzuki Performing Arts Elementary School in her native Houston. As an undergraduate at Loyola University in New Orleans she got her first taste of leadership as concertmaster of the

university orchestra. And at the University of Texas at Austin, she acquired a taste for administration, working as an orchestra librarian while earning her masters in violin performance. A section post with the Austin Symphony Orchestra was

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followed by four years at the Houston Symphony as assistant personnel manager.

“Leaving Houston was hard, since it was the place where I had grown to love orchestral music,” she admits. But when her current position was offered to her, “I knew it was time to take what I had learned and move to LA to explore new opportunities.”

At the LA Phil, Bey works with 106 musicians presenting over 150 concerts and a handful of television and recording projects each year. Her chief responsibility is to oversee the

musicians’ collective bargaining agreement, leaving the players free to focus on artistic matters, but the job is wide-ranging. Bey also works with the Resident Fellows, many of whom are from historically under-represented populations, and is often involved with Gustavo Dudamel’s signature YOLA (Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles) program.

“From putting together an ensemble for a late-night television show at only a few days’ notice to scheduling hundreds of candidates for a national audition,” she says, “each day brings its own special challenges.” All of which she meets happily and head-on. —Clive Paget



ALEXANDER LLOYD BLAKE

Founder and Artistic Director

Tonality  

Tonality is a Los Angeles-based choral group founded in 2016 by Alexander Lloyd Blake to promote peace, unity, and social justice through choral music. Proudly diverse in background, age, and professions, its members sing in a range of languages and musical styles to help unify a fractured and divided community.

“I began singing in choirs in church from a very young age,” Blake relates. “My first choral experience in school was my first engagement with classical music in sixth grade, and I have been hooked ever since. While most of my work is classical, I find that my original passion for singing with others has been the more consistent.”

Holding a PhD in Choral and Sacred Music from USC Thornton School of Music, Blake wears many hats. He is director of classical choirs at the Los Angeles County School for the Arts, chorumaster for the Los Angeles Opera Camp, and principal associate conductor for the National Children’s Chorus, traveling bi-weekly to conduct students in Los Angeles and New York. He is also a freelance conductor and session singer, having sung on films like Jordan Peele’s *US* and Disney’s *The Lion King*.

“As one of few musicians of color in many of my choral settings (with even fewer conductors of color), I felt it was time

to start something that would become more inclusive,” he says. “After that, using these different perspectives to speak on issues of marginalization and social justice was a natural evolution.”

Among Tonality’s achievements to date, Blake cites participation in the Los Angeles March for Our Lives in 2017, performing at the 2018 ASCAP Screen Music Awards, and recording the group’s first album, *Sing About It*. Tonality has commissioned new works around issues like gun violence—including mass shootings, and incidents with police and people of color—and looked at refugees and immigration through the lens of Jesus, Joseph, and Mary as refugees.

Today the group performs in a multitude of venues, from churches and concert halls to schools and in under-served areas in Southern California and beyond. “I hope using choral music as a catalyst for activism and further understanding of social justice issues becomes more widespread,” he says. “I also hope that the steps we have taken to create a truly diverse and inclusive environment for composers, singers, and the audience become the new norm.” —Clive Paget

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PHOTO: © Tod Rosenberg

SYNNEVE CARLINO
Chief Communications Officer

[Carnegie Hall](#)



Synneve Carlino has led the large Carnegie Hall communications team since 2007, overseeing the advancement of the Hall's reputation as a world-class concert venue and leader in the field of music education. She also directs the Carnegie Hall Archives staff, which supports the rich collection of materials documenting the 129-year-old Hall's history.

A native of Stoughton, MA, Carlino grew up playing piano and flute in a town with a strong school music program. "The first time I heard a live orchestra was a free outdoor performance by the Boston Pops; later on, I would grab every student ticket I could to hear the BSO," she says. Entering college to study music, she soon became interested in the business side of things, graduating from Boston University with a degree in public relations and communications. Positions prior to Carnegie include VP of public relations for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and before that management positions with the Pittsburgh Symphony and ALEA III, a Boston-based contemporary music ensemble.

Carlino's tenure has coincided with a time of significant growth in the Hall's activities, including citywide festivals, a free concert series in New York City neighborhoods, a vastly expanded education program, the launch of three new national youth ensembles, and new digital projects, including the digitization of the Hall's historic legacy collections. "The volume of what goes on, and the increasing number of ways information is delivered to the public, means that, no matter how much we accomplish, we always feel there is even more that we can do," she says.

Today, Carnegie hosts over 700 events per year, nearly 200 of them presented and promoted by the Hall. "It's been exciting to see how increasingly versatile the communications team continues to become, whether working with journalists who are music specialists or helping create stories for print, radio, TV, or digital platforms," she says. "Every day I can feel the Hall's history and traditions all around me, and I feel proud to play a role in sharing this place and everything it has to offer with as many people as possible." —Clive Paget



CRYSTAL CARLSON

Director of Operations

[Cleveland International Piano Competition](#)

PHOTO: Gregory Wilson

"I've always loved problem solving," says Crystal Carlson, who has had plenty of opportunity to do just that in her tenure with the Cleveland International Piano Competition. Starting as a temporary administrative assistant in 2011, Carlson rose through the organization to become director of operations seven years later. She oversees all of the Competition's programming, including

concerts and events, education and outreach, as well as the box office and artist management for medalists.

"I've kind of learned every job in the office," she says. "When you work for a small nonprofit, you end up doing everything. It's something different every day. There are so many parts and pieces to the Competition. It gets really, really crazy busy."

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Carlson faced an “extremely challenging” time when the organization was in a top-level leadership transition during the six months leading up to the 2018 CIPC for Young Artists. Without a CEO in place, it was her job to organize and carry out the event involving 25 contestants, an international jury, and all the logistics that go into a two-week competition and festival. “I had to rally the troops, because the staff had to put on the Competition no matter what, and we did it,” she says. “Board members were over the moon at the success of the event.”

Trained as a music theater and opera singer, with a professional studies certificate in vocal performance from the

Cleveland Institute of Music, Carlson has an understanding of what it takes for pianists to thrive in the Competition. “They need to enjoy themselves, and that’s what a lot of contestants miss out on, because they want to be so technically correct,” she says. “When they’re so focused on technique, their personalities don’t come out on stage. I have noticed that those who just roll with the punches—because anything can happen in the Competition—are the ones that do well.” —John Fleming

ADAM CAVAGNARO

President and Founder

 [Promethean Artists](#)



With his company less than a year old, Adam Cavagnaro’s Promethean Artists is already making inroads. “It may sound obvious, but we put artists first, in every decision that we make, both publicly and behind the scenes,” he says. “It’s easy these days for artists—especially young artists—to feel they are powerless in this industry. By putting them at the forefront of every decision, we empower artists to focus on their art.”

Cavagnaro grew up on a farm in southern New Jersey where classical music was in short supply. Drawn to the power of the human voice, however, he earned degrees in classical voice from Manhattan School of Music and Montclair State University. After working with regional opera companies and supporting himself by working in high-end Manhattan restaurants, he decided to quit singing. “I discovered I’m more of a support person naturally and I tend to shy away from the spotlight,” he says. “It seemed natural to fuse my knowledge of the voice and passion for hospitality. Applying that fusion to management was a perfect fit.”

Recognizing that the big agencies were still working on a model established in the 1980s, Cavagnaro started the San Francisco-based Promethean with a small team that notably included both a fitness and a style consultant. The current roster includes Ryan Speedo Green, Sydney Mancasola, Patrick Guetti, and Deborah Voigt. “With Promethean, I have the opportunity to update the management model by applying the principles artists in this century are asking for and, quite frankly, deserve,” he says.

That commitment is typified, for example, by his embrace of the Overture system, online software that holds details of engagements, schedules, fees, contracts, and travel itineraries, and allows artists to access that information in real time. Meanwhile, Cavagnaro—a former VP and artist manager with IMG Artists—has both eyes on the future. “Promethean has big plans, including developing seasonal video biographies for artists and investing in additional technologies that will help facilitate greater communication and transparency for artists,” he says. —Clive Paget

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LESLIE DESHAZOR

Violist, Teacher

As a young violist, Leslie DeShazor found that playing in a symphony orchestra wasn't her thing. "Because I'm more of a free bird, sitting in a section and always having someone tell me how to play doesn't really appeal to me," she says.

Today, DeShazor is one of the busiest, most versatile freelance string players in Detroit, with a résumé that features engagements with jazz, pop, and rock stars (Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Smokey Robinson, Hugh Jackman, to name a few), touring Broadway show orchestras (*Hamilton*, *Hello, Dolly!*), and, yes, symphony orchestras (Detroit, Toledo, Ann Arbor, Flint). She is a member of *Musique Noir*, a female-led string and percussion ensemble whose latest album is *Reflections: We Breathe*.

"My goal was to be as diverse a musician as I could be, and it's really panning out now," says DeShazor, who has a BM in viola performance from the University of Michigan School of Music. "I play almost any style of music, and if I don't know it, I will learn

it as I need to. The biggest challenge is being able to maintain every aspect of my playing, because each style has a different language. The main thing is to keep on top of my scales. Every day, I play scales."

In addition to the viola, DeShazor plays violin, largely because most of her young students start out on violin. She teaches for the Sphinx Organization after-school program and for Detroit Symphony education initiatives that include a youth string orchestra called *Sinfonia*. It rehearses on Saturdays at Orchestra Hall.

"It's kind of my treat at the end of the week because they already know how to play," she says. "We're doing the *Zampa* overture (Ferdinand Herold), a Piazzolla piece, and a contemporary piece for younger orchestras. The kids are happy to be learning them." —John Fleming

CHARLES DICKERSON

Executive Director and Conductor

[Inner City Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles](#)
 [South Side Chicago Youth Orchestra](#)



In 2009, Charles Dickerson founded what is now called the Inner City Youth Orchestra of Los Angeles (ICYOLA) with eight string players and a flutist. Ten years later, the orchestra has about 100 players, most of whom are African-American. It gives up to a dozen concerts a season—Beethoven is a theme in 2019-20—winding up with a performance and fundraiser at Walt Disney Concert Hall.

"We started our own orchestra in the inner city of Los Angeles, and now it's the largest primarily African-American symphony orchestra in the country with a regular season," says

Dickerson. Rehearsals are held Sunday nights; the core group is high-school age.

ICYOLA accepts young artists of all skill levels and includes a number of experienced musicians who act as mentors. These include several top-tier string players of color who are recipients of the LA Orchestra Fellowship, a partnership ICYOLA has with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and the University of Southern California's Thornton School of Music. Designed to cultivate diversity in orchestras, the fellowship program is supported by a \$790,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

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“The fellows obviously increase the quality of our playing,” Dickerson says. “All of the young people in the various string sections aspire to play as well as the fellows.”

Dickerson, who is on the board of the League of American Orchestras, is now spending at least a day a week in Chicago, where he is applying the ICYOLA model to form the South Side Chicago Youth Orchestra, which gave its first concert last August.

“We’ll start slow, but we hope to do the same thing in Chicago as we do in Los Angeles,” says Dickerson, who holds rehearsals at Chicago State University. “I think the way to promote diversity in classical music is to have an orchestra in the heart of the black community and serve the people there. My mantra is that wherever there’s an NFL team, there needs to be an inner city youth orchestra.” —John Fleming



MONICA FELKEL
 Director of Artist Management
 Young Concert Artists  

PHOTO: © Matt Dine

For 30 years, Monica Felkel has worked for Young Concert Artists, a nonprofit organization dedicated to launching the careers of exceptional young musicians from all over the world. As artist manager and director of artist management, she has nurtured an impressive array of young artists including cellist Edgar Moreau, soprano Julia Bullock, and pianist Jeremy Denk. For many in the business, Felkel isn’t just a dedicated professional, she’s an institution.

As a high school violist, Felkel played in the New York Youth Symphony where the music director spotted burgeoning admirative talent. “It may have had more to do with the fact that lots of percussion equipment had to be transported to rehearsals and my mother drove a 1976 Buick Century Station Wagon,” she quips. “When I was applying to colleges, I knew I wanted to do some sort of arts administration program, but they really didn’t exist in the mid-80s. So, I ended up designing my own degree program at Ithaca College.”

Over the past 30 years at YCA, Felkel has implemented new initiatives and provided resources to support young musicians artistically as well as strategically, responding to an industry

where increasingly a performer needs more than a successful debut and good reviews to have a sustainable career. “Artists also need to build a presence on social media, seek out new projects and collaborations, and explore more creative ways to find new audiences and venues—not just in the U.S., but internationally,” she says.

“I am particularly proud of the Orchestra Partners Program we created in 2001, [which] offers a reduced fee to orchestras that have never previously engaged a YCA artist. Through a grant that pays the artist the difference, the artist receives their full fee and the orchestra and its audience get to discover YCA and our fabulous artists.”

Felkel defines her role as listening, advising, and challenging young artists to effectively communicate and build a career. Often that includes some fun details. “Dress shopping with a former violinist for a gala,” is one example she recalls. “By the end of the day we were all just trying on the most ridiculous gowns the stores had and laughing until it hurt. Ultimately that is what has kept me in the crazy business for the past 30 years.” —Clive Paget

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SARAH HOOVER

Associate Dean for Innovation, Interdisciplinary Partnerships and Community Initiatives

[The Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University](#)

Sarah Hoover grew up in Washington, DC, the daughter of one of the Smithsonian Institution's curators of musical instruments. "Our home was full of touring musicians and obscure instruments—ocarinas, clavichord, player piano, Regina music box—you name it!" she explains. She received a BA from Yale and pursued a freelance singing and teaching career, returning to school to earn her DMA in Vocal Performance at the Peabody Institute in 2008.

Since her appointment in 2015 to the newly created role of associate dean for innovation, interdisciplinary partnerships and community initiatives, she has broken new ground at the intersection of performing arts and medicine by co-founding the [Johns Hopkins Center for Music and Medicine](#), launching the [Johns Hopkins Rehabilitation Network Clinic for Performing Artists](#), and developing a unique online initiative called [Playing Well](#) to help musicians better understand how to avoid and recover from playing-related injuries. In addition, she has integrated wellness training into every Peabody student's education by introducing [Peak Performance Fundamentals](#) programming.

"I know how devastating it can be to lose the ability to perform," she says. "By integrating specialized care into the context of training, we aim to reduce the high prevalence of performing arts injuries as well as to reshape a pervasive culture of shame and stigma surrounding injury in the performing arts."

By developing Peabody's pioneering [Breakthrough Curriculum](#), Hoover has helped build a diverse network of community partners across the region and around the country. These immersive experiences, which include programs such as [Musicians-In-Residence](#), [Sound Rounds](#), and the [Young Artist Development Series](#), help students develop critical citizen-artistry skills for 21st-century careers.

"My job is to advocate for the relevance of a precious artistic legacy and to provide pathways for today's students to lovingly interrogate and passionately invigorate this legacy in new (diverse and wider) contexts," she says. "I am especially thrilled with the development of our programs at Johns Hopkins Hospital that bring music to patients, families, and healthcare staff. I think there is tremendous potential to demonstrate the value of the performing arts to clinical and community health endeavors—and to create new jobs for artists in this developing field." —Clive Paget



RENA KRAUT

Executive Director

[Cuban American Youth Orchestra](#)

Rena Kraut founded the Cuban American Youth Orchestra (CAYO) following her first trip to Cuba with the Minnesota Orchestra on its 2015 tour. As a freelancer, she was filling out the clarinet section as well as blogging for Classical Minnesota Public Radio. "I had both my observer and participant antenna up for those five days," she explains. "I felt, as we all did, the excitement of being

part of a cultural olive branch being extended to our neighbors in Cuba, particularly when we performed both national anthems in Havana's Teatro Nacional."

Back home, Kraut obsessed over the idea of getting young people from the U.S. and Cuba to perform together and learn from each other, knowing they had different strengths but a

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shared curiosity and desire to know their neighbors. A lifelong educator but with no previous experience running an arts organization, Kraut established CAYO as a nonprofit in December 2016. By fall 2017 [the first Cuban quartet came to the Twin Cities](#) for a weeklong cultural exchange alongside American students, and by May 2019 Kraut was able to lead a tour to Cuba where 24 American musicians from schools and conservatories across the U.S. worked alongside 47 Cuban musicians from Havana's Instituto Superior de Arte.

Politics are a challenge. CAYO applied for and received visas for their first participants in August 2017, but several weeks later, the U.S. Embassy in Havana stopped issuing U.S. visas for Cuban citizens. "Restrictions on U.S. citizen travel to Cuba have also increased over the last couple of years, although it is still

possible and legal," says Kraut. "We have stayed flexible and keep finding ways to continue the work of cultural diplomacy, a mission more crucial than I could have predicted when I first dreamed of CAYO."

With just two officers but an impressive advisory board headed by Minnesota Orchestra Music Director Osmo Vänskä, CAYO has as its mission to give Americans and Cubans a platform to find common ground, to enable students to reach their potential, and to empower young people to use their talents for the greater social good. "Ultimately, if CAYO is successful, we may play ourselves right out of a job," says Kraut. "If that's the price of building trust and collaboration between two adversaries, it will have been well worth it." —Clive Paget

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CONGRATULATIONS TO FRANÇOIS MARIO LABBÉ

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THE NEW EDUTAINMENT APP USING CLASSICAL MUSIC TO STIMULATE CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT.

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FRANÇOIS MARIO LABBÉ

President

[Analekta](#)



François Mario Labbé founded the Analekta label in 1988. Today, it lays claim to being Canada’s largest independent classical music production company—and the 15th largest in the world—with a catalog that includes hundreds of recordings by more than 200 Canadian musicians.

Born on Canada’s Gaspé Peninsula, Labbé studied communications at the University of Ottawa and started out organizing concerts for the 1976 Montréal Olympics. In 1982 he co-founded Gestion Artistique Mondiale, one of Canada’s most prominent arts management companies, producing over 200 concerts for them each year for eight years. “I was negotiating a record contract with a ‘major’ for Canadian violinist Angèle Dubeau as well as the first digital recording of The Red Army Chorus and the soundtrack of the movie *The Music Teacher* with José Van Dam,” he explains. “The said ‘major’ refused those projects, so I innocently decided to start a recording company.”

First-year sales amounted to 110,000 recordings in North America alone, and by 1990 Analekta was producing 25 to 30 recordings per year with a staff of 10 to 15. Over the years, its roster of artists has included Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal,

Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra, singers Karina Gauvin and Marie-Nicole Lemieux, and violinist James Ehnes.

“The first digital recording of The Red Army Chorus was where it all started,” says Labbé, noting Kent Nagano’s Beethoven Nine and the series of “Portrait” CDs featuring Glass, Pärt, John Adams, Einaudi, and Max Richter as personal highlights.

In recent years Labbé has reinvented the company’s business model to ensure sustainability. Analekta is now a frontrunner in digital distribution and streaming services, developments that have taken the place of more traditional sources while ensuring wider distribution. “It also offers major exposure to our musicians,” he says. “It’s been a total change in our way of operating and a rebirth for our company.”

Recently, Analekta launched internationally a mobile app called [Mazaam](#), described by the company as “a game that accompanies the cognitive and social development of young kids by using classical music.”

Among Labbé’s honors are the Grand Prix Classique from MIDEM in Cannes in both 2002 and 2004, and in 2017 the Canadian Government named him a Member of the Order of Canada for his outstanding achievements in the distribution of Canadian music and promoting Canadian artists outside the country. — Clive Paget



MARIANNE LACROSSE

General Manager and Education Programs Director

Music@Menlo

A Seattle-born, Peabody-trained violist with a passion for community orchestras and volunteer work, Marianne LaCrosse joined Music@Menlo, the acclaimed summer chamber music festival based in Atherton, CA, in 2005, two years after it was

founded by [cellist David Finckel and pianist Wu Han](#). Back then, she says, it felt very much like a Silicon Valley startup; she was part of the team that built the organization from the ground up. Over the years she’s done it all, including un-glamorous tasks like taking

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out the trash and administering first aid to elderly patrons. During her time, the three-week festival has grown to be one of the most popular classical music programs in the Bay Area, attracting over 10,000 visitors each year.

In her dual role, she oversees operations as well as managing both the Chamber Music Institute for around 30 emerging and pre-professional musicians per season and, her personal passion, the Arts Management Internship Program for college students and young alumni. The latter offers experience to 20 or so young people each season; far from being given menial tasks, interns are assigned major projects such as event planning and managing donor events. They are expected to take the ball and run with it, and the atmosphere is invariably fast-paced and intense.

"I can't think of anything more fulfilling than helping a young person discover their true passion," she says. "Many times I've

witnessed the transformation that can take place when a young musician performs on stage for an enthusiastic audience, or when a college graduate who is unsure about their next step in life suddenly sees a new career path in front of them after spending a summer as an intern."

Recognized for her attention to detail, fierce work ethic, and intense passion for classical music, she's been an inspiration to over 300 young musicians and burgeoning arts administrators, especially women, at the start of their careers. "I take pride in getting to know each one of them, from when we first conduct interviews, to spending time with them while they're here, to serving as a job reference after they leave," she says. "Every year, I look forward to the next cohort of interns. They inspire me." —Clive Paget

PHOTO: © Layne Dixon Photography

ASHLEY MAGNUS

General Director

  [Chicago Opera Theater](#)



Now in its 45th season, Chicago Opera Theater (COT) appointed Ashley Magnus as its general director in January 2019. She works alongside Music Director [Lidiya Yankovskaya](#), making COT one of the few major American opera companies led by women at both the artistic and executive levels. In her previous position as the company's general manager of strategy and development, Magnus is credited with a successful multimillion-dollar capital campaign, tripling planned gifts, and growing core annual fundraising by 28 percent.

Born in Oakland, CA, Magnus grew up in southern Indiana where she started piano lessons from an early age. While she sang at school and church, she didn't really come to opera until her undergrad days at the University of Evansville. Taking up an internship with [Utah Symphony | Utah Opera](#), she went on to earn an MBA from the University of Utah, where she focused on business strategy, project management, and building constructive community, individual, and institutional partnerships.

It was the lure of the new that led her to COT. "I had always wanted to be at a company with a focus on unusual and contemporary repertoire," she says. "This organization is unique and excit-

ing in its vision and in the freedom to take risks, particularly within this community and in this Golden Age of American opera."

With its emphasis on new operas for 21st-century audiences, COT operates with a core staff of 15, plus six resident young artists and several production, education, and artistic contractors. The company presents three mainstage operas each season with additional workshops of new pieces. Launched in the spring of 2018, its [Vanguard Initiative](#) mentors two emerging composers, which ensures there's an additional commissioned one-act opera each year.

In her time at COT, Magnus has overseen implementation of a new strategic plan as well as staff and policy restructuring. She cites the recent staging of Jake Heggie's *Moby-Dick*, the largest production in the organization's history, as a highlight. "My larger objectives are for COT to be a destination organization for rarely produced and contemporary works," Magnus says, "for Chicago to be on the forefront of new opera, and for COT to be a sustainable model for the future of opera." —Clive Paget

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AHMAD MAYES

Director, Education & Community Engagement

[Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra](#)

Since 2015, Ahmad Mayes has been director of education and community engagement for the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. “If I could have any job at an orchestra, it would be this one because I feel like it’s a place for experimentation,” says Mayes, who previously worked in administration with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the Youth Orchestras of San Antonio.

Among his responsibilities, Mayes is especially passionate about a partnership between the CSO and the University of Cincinnati College–Conservatory of Music designed to address the lack of ethnic diversity in American symphony orchestras. Begun in 2016, the [CSO/CCM Diversity Fellowship Program](#) offers a two-year mentorship for up to five string players of color a year, funded by multiple grants from the [Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#) that total more than \$2.5 million through 2023.

A fellowship includes a scholarship to the conservatory plus a graduate stipend, paid performance opportunities with the CSO, mentorships by orchestra members, career workshops, and audition preparation. Fellows may also play with the CSO during

the [May Festival](#) and in the pit for the [Cincinnati Opera](#), and during summer they can perform in residence with the [Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra](#).

Among CSO members “we have one African-American in our orchestra and four who identify as Latinx,” Mayes says. The low numbers are much the same at other large orchestras, whose rosters have an average of about four percent players of color. Positions in major orchestras come open infrequently, and when they do, the competition is intense.

The CSO/CCM fellowships have supported 18 musicians so far. Through auditions, three fellows have gone on to achieve placement, either permanent or temporary, in the Nashville Symphony, the National Symphony Orchestra, and the Dallas Symphony. “My dream is to have a fellow someday win an audition with the CSO,” Mayes says. “No matter who you are, winning an orchestra audition is a really hard thing to accomplish.”
—John Fleming

JAZMÍN N. MORALES

Manager

[Center for Innovation and Community Impact](#)

[The Colburn School](#)



Jazmín Morales sees being a “cultural translator” as part of her job as manager of the Center for Innovation and Community Impact. The Center serves all units of the Los Angeles-based Colburn School—the Community School of the Performing Arts, Music Academy, Trudi Zipper—Dance Institute, and Conservatory of Music—and is geared to helping young artists develop

the skills and commitment to serve their communities as they build their careers.

“My father is an immigrant from Mexico who came here on a scholarship to study classical guitar and dropped out of school to take a career in mariachi,” says Morales, who has a B.A. in ethnomusicology from UCLA. “I trained as a classical violinist

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but at the same time played in an all-female mariachi. I learned how to navigate in both the worlds of Western classical music and Mexican folk music. Now I find myself moving between the two worlds and bringing them into convergence.”

Morales cites her work in founding and directing [Fortissima](#), a two-year pilot program at Colburn that brought together female high school-age classical musicians from LA’s Latinx, black, and South Asian communities for training in artistic leadership and development. In 2020, the program will expand nationally to recruit up to 15 young women for a weeklong intensive residency at Colburn along with year-round remote learning, mentorship, and other activities to cultivate a career in classical music.



VERONICA NEO

COO and Co-Founder

[Primephonic](#)  

Veronica Neo is the COO and co-founder of Primephonic, a streaming platform designed to bring classical music into the digital age. Born in Singapore, she has degrees in fashion management and business administration and started out working for a luxury smartphone start-up in Geneva.

“I attended a symphonic concert at the Victoria Hall and saw a beautiful program advertisement from [Pentatone](#) with two call-to-action buttons: ‘Download on iTunes’ and ‘Stream on Spotify,’” she recalls. “A single thought seized me at that moment: Classical music needs a digital future. That became my personal call-to-action.”

As a classical music lover, Neo was never satisfied with listening on Spotify. “It is difficult, if not impossible, to find what you are looking for, recommendations are typically not very inspiring, and the audio quality insufficient for the delicate sound of classical music,” she says.

With that in mind, Primephonic, which Neo co-founded with Simon Eder and Dirk Jan Vinkin 2014, set out to create an easy-to-use streaming service specializing in classical music, with

“Fortissima was inspired by my own experience as a young woman of color studying classical music,” she says. “I felt a sense of isolation from other people who shared my cultural background and experiences. It was important for me to be able to create a network for these girls to empower one another.”

Morales also is closely involved with Colburn’s partnership with [Street Symphony](#), co-teaching a conservatory class on music-making and social justice and performing mariachi monthly at homeless shelters, rehabilitation facilities, jails, and prisons. She is a consultant for leadership and community engagement with NPR’s [From the Top](#), and was awarded a fellowship in the [Sphinx Organization’s](#) inaugural [LEAD](#) (Leaders in Excellence, Arts, and Diversity) program. —John Fleming

daily recommendations that cater to the connoisseur as well as classical music newbies. The company has also initiated some radical programming ideas. For example, during International Women’s Month, Neo instigated a complete takeover of the platform whereby every featured album was music composed or performed by a woman.

Since launching the streaming service in 2018, Primephonic has grown from a team of seven to a team of 35 hailing from 20 different countries with offices in Amsterdam and New York. Within the last year, hundreds of thousands of users have downloaded the app, and as of August 2019 it was available in 154 countries. “It’s not enough to just be as good as the mainstream players such as Spotify and Apple Music,” she reckons. “We have to be even better, creating ‘classical wow’ moments for our users with a fraction of the resources the big players have.”

With CD stores gone and download sites disappearing, Neo sees a “streaming-only” world ahead. “For classical music to stay relevant for the streaming only generation, the genre must fix its streaming problem. That is our mission.” —Clive Paget



ANDREW OUSLEY

Publicist and Presenter

[Unison Media](#) / [Death of Classical](#)

“Hi, I’m Andrew,” proclaims Andrew Ousley on his website. “I produce concerts (mostly in Crypts), promote classical music, opera and the performing arts, play in a rock band, and eat burgers.”

Quirky and unconventional, Ousley attended Brown University where he studied philosophy and fell in love with classical music. A stint as a marketer at EMI Classics in New York City was followed by a year and a half in Australia working for Naxos and a return to New York as a publicist around the time EMI was acquired by Warner Classics.

“After ten years in the record business, I’d come to realize that the publicity and marketing work I thought was most creative and forward-thinking generally ended up being more beneficial to the artists than actually helping to sell recordings,” he says, explaining why he set up his own PR and marketing company Unison Media in 2015. “I proposed that Warner [hire] me as a consultant so I could work directly with artists but still promote their recordings.”

Clients like Gustavo Dudamel, Wynton Marsalis, Joshua Bell, and Jeremy Denk helped Unison to grow and now Ousley has

three fulltime employees and an army of freelancers covering design, video editing, and styling. “We take an integrated, holistic approach to promotion—not just sending out a press release and pitching a few standard media contacts, but incorporating social media from the ground up, creating video/photo content for campaigns, planning bespoke events, and building a strategy that encompasses all of those in the most creative way possible,” he says.

Unison also produces a pair of concert series that have garnered considerable attention in recent years. One is the [Crypt Sessions](#), an award-winning classical music concert series in the Crypt under the Church of the Intercession in Harlem. The other is [The Angel’s Share](#), a program that takes place in the atmospheric Catacombs of The Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn. World premieres of new works by David Hertzberg, Gregg Kallor, and Daniel Bernard Roumain have been among Ousley’s personal highlights of these series.

Ousley’s curiosity, spirit, passion for spreading the word, and determination to find entry points for new audiences have all contributed to his success. The fact that his events regularly sell out just happens to be a bonus. —Clive Paget



GARY A. PADMORE

Director of Education and Community Engagement

[The New York Philharmonic](#)

Gary A. Padmore joined the New York Philharmonic in June of 2018. Before that, he served in a similar capacity for the [Orchestra of St. Luke’s](#), where he is credited with creating a free concert series celebrating composers of color, doubling enrollment in the youth orchestra program, and boosting school and community partnerships throughout the five boroughs.

At the Philharmonic, Padmore manages a budget upwards of \$2.5M and leads an administrative team of six alongside 40 teaching artists who engage young people and adults in a range of settings. Among his responsibilities are overseeing the famous [Young People’s Concerts](#) and promoting the orchestra’s artistic vision in schools and among community partners. “I’m also

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engaged in strategic conversations about equity and inclusion practices related to who's on stage, in our communities, and in our audiences," he explains. "Because our communities are ever-evolving, our programming must continue to adapt and support in a meaningful way; I find that both exciting and terrifying! The kind of influence I can have on communities like my own, as well as this institution, are immeasurable."

Since Padmore's arrival, the orchestra has developed several new partnerships, including the [All-City Orchestra and Concert Band](#) made up of nearly 200 students among 80 of the city's public schools. "We are currently undergoing training on culturally responsive pedagogy to identify ways in which our curriculum is reflective of those we are engaged with," he adds. "It's something

we feel will strongly link us to our communities and partners."

A trumpet player and native New Yorker, Padmore has a bachelor's degree in music and certificate in music education from Queens College, as well as a master's degree from Mannes School of Music. Outside of the Phil, he is vice chair of the [NYC Arts in Education Roundtable](#), an organization that services administrators and teaching artists, and co-chairs its taskforce on equity and inclusion. He is also a co-founder of [The Dream Unfinished](#), an activist orchestra that engages with issues that have an especially deep impact on communities of color such as police brutality, the school-to-prison pipeline, and climate change. —Clive Paget

PHOTO: © Kyle Dorosz

MELISSA SMEY

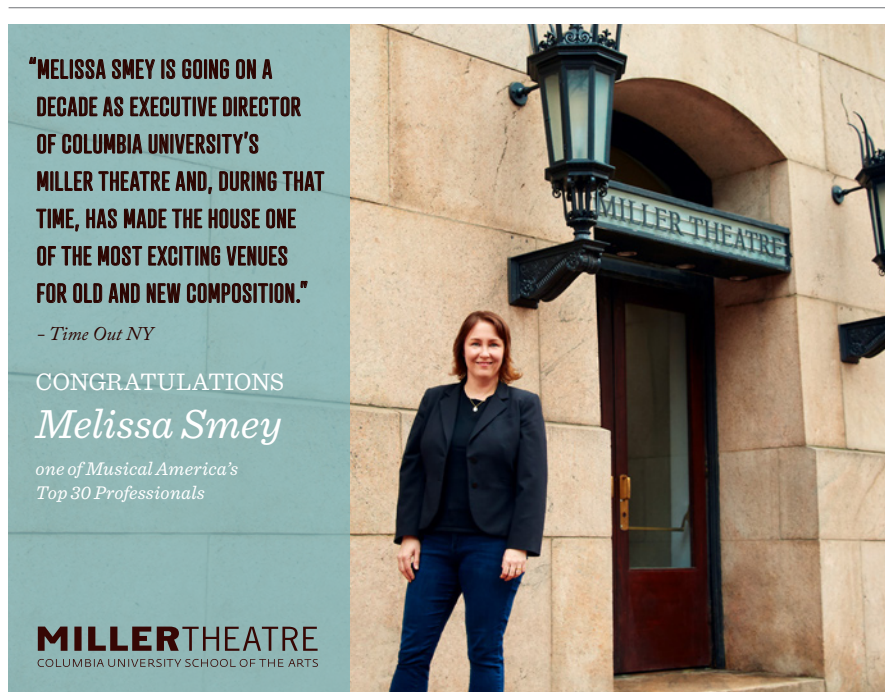
Associate Dean and Executive Director

[Miller Theatre at Columbia University School of the Arts](#)



Over the last ten years, Miller Theatre's Melissa Smey has demonstrated her passion for new music and fostering new

audiences by commissioning and premiering 29 new works and two new chamber operas by artists including Chaya Czernowin, Missy Mazzoli, and John Zorn. In the last half-decade she has produced free programs for over 16,000 audience members and now commissions a visual artist to create an annual installation for the theater lobby.



Hailing from Ellington, CT, Smey began playing flute in elementary school. The first person in her family to go to college, she studied at the University of Connecticut, where she caught the bug for new music. "Playing gave me confidence that I could put myself out there and succeed," she says. "When I was in college, the director of the wind ensemble was committed to commissioning new work and the experience of playing a piece when the composer was actually there

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was formative for me. It helped me realize a composer can be a real living person in the room, not just a name at the top of the score.”

Part of Columbia University, Miller Theatre has nine fulltime staffers and a \$1.8M budget. When Smey became ED in 2009 she rapidly acquired a reputation as a tastemaker, engaging with an eclectic mix of musicians, expanding Miller’s community engagement through pop-up concerts and the annual Morningside Lights procession of community-built lanterns, and addressing gender imbalance by showcasing the work of female composers. “I’m particularly proud to curate our

Composer Portraits series, featuring one living composer at a time in evening-length performances and allowing audiences to experience new music in greater depth and context than is typically the case,” says Smey.

A two-time recipient of the [Chamber Music America/ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming](#), Smey has served as a panelist for organizations including the American Academy in Berlin, Chamber Music America, The Juilliard School, and National Endowment for the Arts. “I strongly believe music shouldn’t be just for special occasions—everyone should have the opportunity to make it part of their daily life,” she says. “At the core, we are connecting people of all means to the arts, and it feels good.” —Clive Paget



JOHNNIA STIGALL
Manager, Pre-college and Pathway Programs
[Cleveland Institute of Music](#)

Johnnia Stigall’s career has been devoted to increasing diversity in classical music, and now she has a major role in pursuit of that goal at the Cleveland Institute of Music. In July, she was named manager of the Young Artist, Pre-College, and [Musical Pathway Fellowship](#) programs in the conservatory’s preparatory division.

“I think the mission of CIM is to be the future of classical music, and I see this job as an opportunity to prepare young musicians to be a part of that future,” Stigall says. Her arrival in Cleveland comes as the conservatory is pushing to improve racial diversity, with 15 percent of its overall enrollment of 375 students this year being African-American or Latinx, up 235 percent since 2016.

Stigall previously managed the [National Alliance for Audition Support](#), an initiative by the Sphinx Organization, New World Symphony, and the League of American Orchestras, to prepare musicians of color for orchestra auditions. In a 2016 survey, the League reported that less than five percent of orchestra players

were black or Latinx, and the percentage was even lower in larger orchestras.

At CIM Stigall works with musicians whose average age is 15 or 16. “I prepare them for the next step, which will be college auditions for many of them, but also for learning music as an academic subject. You can play really great, but if you’ve never taken music theory before, you’re not going to do so well when you take it in college.”

Stigall has a pair of performance degrees in viola as well as a master’s in arts administration from the [University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music](#). “I consider myself a retired violist,” she says. “I appreciate and acknowledge all the work and time that went into my training as a musician, but performance didn’t really click with me. My interest is in helping young musicians.” —John Fleming

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CAEN THOMASON-REDUS

Senior Director of Community & Learning

[Detroit Symphony Orchestra](#)  

Caen Thomason-Redus became the Detroit Symphony Orchestra's senior director of community & learning in 2015, after playing flute in the DSO for two years as a Minority Fellow and coaching the orchestra's Civic Youth Ensembles. Previously, he was director of corporate partnerships for the [Sphinx Organization](#).

A native of Grosse Pointe Park, MI, Thomason-Redus studied flute in public school before earning music degrees from Rice University in Texas and the University of Redlands in California, with additional study at the University of Michigan and the Mozarteum Akademie in Salzburg. His first orchestral administration job was with the Evansville Philharmonic, shortly before he became a member of the orchestra.

"I've always done some combination of teaching, playing, and admin," he explains, though he faced the difficult decision to cut back on performing when he accepted his current position. "I tried to have faith that I would feel rewarded by the deeply meaningful work and also be able to continue my playing. I'm grateful to say both are still true."

At the DSO, he serves as chief community engagement officer, which means developing, administering, and fundraising for such in-reach activities as free concerts, in-school performances, educational partnerships, and the William Davidson Neighborhood Residency Initiative, which presents concerts across six locations in metro Detroit. "I'm incredibly fortunate to be at an orchestra that takes its role in the community seriously," he says. "My position involves training programs teaching people to play everything from bucket-band music to symphonic repertory, numerous community engagement programs, and a good amount of work in diversity, equity, and inclusion."

Future plans include Detroit Harmony, a new initiative that has the lofty goal of providing musical opportunities for every child in Detroit, as well as creating the jobs to support that. "It's a goal that's way bigger than us" he says, "but it's what Detroit deserves." —Clive Paget

PHOTO: © Fay Fox, Metropolitan Opera

MELISSA WEGNER

Executive Director

  [Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions](#)



Melissa Wegner has heard countless young opera singers do their best to make an impression. As executive director of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Wegner will hear, and judge, up to 250 singers audition at the district and regional levels, and then in the semi-finals and grand finals concert (March 1) at the Met. Does she tire of hearing the same arias over and over?

"Never," she says. "Each time it's a new singer, and that singer has an opportunity to express that piece as only they can. That's

what this entire tradition is all about. Someone singing 'O mio babbino caro' and making it so memorable that their voice stays with you after the day is done."

A double major in voice and music business at SUNY Potsdam, with graduate degrees from the Manhattan School of Music and Bard College, Wegner performed as a soprano throughout the U.S. and Europe. She was a supertitle associate at New York City Opera, and still does titles on a freelance basis (a favorite

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project was Jordi Savall's *The Routes of Slavery*). A frequent judge at voice competitions, she is a faculty member of [Ravinia's Steans Music Institute](#) and much in demand for master classes at conservatories. Responsible for casting workshops in the Met's opera commissioning program, she is a casting consultant for the new Ricky Ian Gordon/Lynn Nottage chamber opera *Intimate Apparel*, which opens at the Lincoln Center Theater in March.

Many great singers got their start in the Met's National Council Auditions, and Wegner is acutely aware that she is in a unique position. "I feel that I have a responsibility to give back to young singers as well as being the one who is making decisions that might affect their career. That being said, I also have a realistic outlook on the industry and know that I'm not here to make or break anyone's career. But I help any way I can when it's a young singer that I really believe in." —John Fleming



DAVID WHITEHILL

Executive Director

[Asheville Symphony Orchestra](#)

Since his arrival as Asheville Symphony Orchestra's executive director in 2012, David Whitehill has shifted the orchestra's strategic focus to explore diverse relationships within the music community, step out of its traditional performance role, and resolutely enter the digital world. Innovative programs have expanded the typical reach of a classical music organization and proved that cross-pollination benefits an entire industry, while changing perceptions about the role of a symphony orchestra today.

Whitehill, a native of West Palm Beach, FL, grew up playing cello and conducting, until, that is, he read *The Last Impresario*, a book about legendary artist manager Sol Hurok. "To me, people like Hurok, Arthur Judson of the New York Philharmonic and Philadelphia Orchestra, and Rudolf Bing at the Metropolitan Opera were visionary leaders who championed the art form I love," he explains. "After that, I started as an apprentice manager of California's Orange County Youth Symphony Orchestra and built my career from there."

In 2016, Whitehill created IDEASOUND, a recording initiative and audience engagement project that connects the ASO with leading pop artists. Among its recordings, the latest features R&B legends Boyz II Men, making the ASO among the most-streamed

orchestras in the Southeast with complimentary features in *Rolling Stone* and *Billboard* magazines. Whitehill also started the biennial [Asheville Amadeus](#), a community event that features music, dance, food, beer, art, theater, and more. Headlining artists have included Emanuel Ax and Midori.

"IDEASOUND embraces and magnifies our region's musical heritage and strives to dissolve barriers among musical genres," says Whitehill. "I'm extremely proud of the leadership role the Asheville Symphony has taken by bringing together a diverse group of musicians, producers, and arrangers to engage new listeners and further awareness and interest in our region's musical culture."

Whitehill came to Asheville following five years as executive director of the [Bangor Symphony](#) in Maine and various roles at the [Philharmonic Society of Orange County](#) and the [Pacific Symphony](#) in Santa Ana. As for the future: "Artistic excellence alone is no longer enough," he says. "21st-century orchestras must be social entrepreneurs, leveraging the environment in each of our unique communities to experiment and innovate around a growing set of new opportunities." —Clive Paget



SARAH WILLIAMS
 New Works Administrator
[Opera Philadelphia](#)

Sarah Williams has a well-earned reputation as a powerhouse of fresh ideas and a savvy commissioner of new work. As new works administrator at Opera Philadelphia, her close relationships with some of America’s most exciting creative artists—both established and emerging—have led to an enviable slew of genre-challenging operatic world premieres over the last six years.

A native of Williamsport, PA, Williams is a onetime professional singer with degrees from the Manhattan School of

Music and Westminster Choir College. “I was very proud of my career. However, I also had great frustrations within a medium that is sometimes so caught up with the reverence of its historic past that it is often beholden to it,” she explains. “I yearned for more diversity, exploration, creative responses to the world we live in today, and a wider lens to artistic excellence.”

As a singer with a passion for new work, Williams quickly developed a preference for process over performance. “From year one in conservatory, I somehow got myself into the room with

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*for guiding incredible artists and
 World Premieres to our stage.*

Charlie Parker’s Yardbird (2015)

Andy: A Popera (2015)

Breaking the Waves (2016)

Elizabeth Cree (2017)

The Wake World (2017)

We Shall Not Be Moved (2017)

Cycles of My Being (2018)

Sky on Swings (2018)

Denis & Katya (2019)

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some of our greatest living, creative artists," she admits. "I found that developing and creating something in this way was not only rewarding, it was incredibly challenging. Did I mention that I like a challenge?"

When she arrived at Opera Philadelphia in 2014, the company's most recent world premiere had been in 2005. "It was time to get to work!" she says. Since then, she has cultivated a remarkable nine world premieres including *Elizabeth Cree* by Kevin Puts, Lembit Beecher's *Sky on Swings*, and this year's [much applauded *Denis & Katya*](#) by U.K. composer Philip Venables.

Missy Mazzoli's *Breaking the Waves* and David Hertzberg's *The Wake World* won Best New Opera from the Music Critics Association of North America.

Williams, who serves as a board member for the [American Composers Forum](#) and on the artistic advisory board of [Young Women Composers Camp](#), also oversees OP's \$1.7M grant-funded composer-in-residence program. As a nurturer of new work, she loves each of her musical children equally. "I develop them and live with them for years, I fight for the projects, for OP, and for the artists," she says. "Not one of them looks like or sounds like the next. They move you and challenge you differently." —Clive Paget



BENJAMIN WOODROFFE

Chair

Global Foundation for Performing Artists

PHOTO: © Rphaelle Mueller

A practicing architect with majors in French, music (piano), and art history, Australian-born Benjamin Woodroffe has directed organizations committed to young artists for the past 15 years. As general manager of the [Melbourne International Chamber Music Competition \(MICMC\)](#) from 2005 to 2015, Woodroffe presided over its fifth, sixth, and seventh editions, the first and second Asia-Pacific Chamber Music Competitions, and the Victorian Governor's Recital Series.

His time at MICMC significantly enhanced the Competition's international reputation. "Each and every MICMC prize-winning chamber ensemble during my tenure is enjoying a professional performing career to date," he says. "The MICMC has also greatly helped to establish a thriving chamber music scene in Melbourne."

From 2015 to 2019, as Secretary General of the Geneva-based [World Federation of International Music Competitions](#) (the body that represents, promotes, monitors and advocates on behalf of the world's major music competitions), Woodroffe coordinated the operations of 125 competitions across 40 countries. He is credited with growing

WFIMC's international profile and membership, and creating new revenue streams through major global network expansion.

Currently, he is in the process of registering a new philanthropic trust in New York, a global foundation that he will chair, dedicated to providing assistance and advice and supporting and promoting performing artists. "We anticipate opening events from March 2020 in the U.S. and China," he says. "The Foundation will comprise an international board of experts (education, business, artists, philanthropists, and artistic directors) committed to the performing arts and its advancement and sustainability."

The initial focus will be on classical music and ballet, with an eye toward providing access to opportunities in performance, marketing, personal discipline and wellness, international networking, media training, and self-development.

"I have worked with talented emerging classical musicians for many years and have observed first-hand the invaluable impact of timely and considered advice in securing a career," says Woodroffe. "Our Foundation will provide sufficient resources to allow young artists to reflect, to experiment with repertoire, and to learn skills to assist them realize their projects." —Clive Paget



John Fleming writes frequently for Musical America Special Reports. The president of the Music Critics Association of North America, he has written for *Classical Voice North America*, *Opera News*, and for over two decades covered the performing arts for the *Tampa Bay Times*.



Clive Paget, a regular Musical America contributor, is a freelance arts writer and critic, and editor-at-large for Australia's *Limelight Magazine*. He was music theater consultant at London's National Theater from 2002 to 2007, and before that spent ten years as a theater and opera director.

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