The Peabody Institute of The Johns Hopkins University
THE NEXT NORMAL: Arts Innovation and Resilience in a Post-COVID World
Wednesday, February 10, 2021
Artists Panel, 10:45 am

TRANSCRIPT
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Fred Bronstein: Good morning. My name is Fred Bronstein. I'm the dean of the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Next Normal: Arts Innovation and Resilience in a Post-Covid World. Thank you for joining us today for this important series of conversations.

Last August the Brookings Institution published a study on the impact of the pandemic on the arts and culture industry across the United States. I don't need to recount the statistics here, but the study painted a devastating picture of the immediate loss of jobs, revenues, and, indeed, artistic talent. It wasn't that any of us needed a study to tell us what we were observing in cities and institutions across the land. But it did put numbers on the page objectively and brought to mind the adage, “I'm shocked, but not surprised.” Since the Brookings study there have been numerous other studies, articles, and blogs written about our field, its recovery, and the best ways to get from here to there. Clearly, it is essential for us to individually and collectively figure out how to help our institutions survive first, and then recover.

And yes, the next year or two will be critical. But I believe that if we don't look beyond the immediate future to think about the impact of Covid within the context of trends that existed long before the pandemic and think about this over a longer horizon over decades, then we'll have missed an opportunity to shape that future and perhaps even address some of the challenging macro trends, as we saw for more immediate issues. We know there are audience development challenges pre-Covid, and that for a long time, consumers have been evolving in how they commit to and take in arts experiences. We know that gaps in early arts education are problematic, to say the least. We know that technology is and has been an interrupter for years. And we know that demographics are changing rapidly in the country and that will place increasing pressure on developing new audiences from a diversifying population in a field that is has struggled to diversify itself.

If we think about this long term, we need to ask: Is Covid-19 essentially just accelerating dynamic trends that have already been happening in our field? And if that's the case, how do we solve for that? As we think about getting our audiences back, how do we expand that to include new audiences in order to answer that demographic call of the future? We've also seen technology do some miraculous things over the last year, and we have artists engaging in a way not seen before. That's one of the positive outcomes of the pandemic. Interestingly, in recent decades the classical music world has not seen technology as its friend, but more almost as a threat to live performance. And that's ironic when you think that the advent of electric recording nearly 100 years ago spawned a whole classical music recording arts industry that was the lifeblood for classical music for years.

Then there's the whole question of artists and what role they will play in communities, how it may be different from the past. Consequently, and admittedly, I'm especially interested in this as the leader of an institution that trains future artists. How should those changes be reflected in the education of young emerging artists?

TRANSCRIPT
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Of course, there is also the question of how to pay for it. A recent New York Times article made the case for a major government arts program like the WPA instituted during the Great Depression in the early 1930s. Well, maybe. But do we really want to bet the farm on government support at that level given the paucity of government support for arts and culture in the United States over the last eighty years? We can try, but we'd better have a Plan B. I'd like to think that at Peabody we've been forward thinking when it comes to training artists for the future, and equally so when it comes to changing and diversifying the faces of our industry.

But the pandemic has made us ask the question, "How can we be even more bold in thinking about the future?" And to do that, this fall we stood up the Peabody Conservatory Post-Covid Think Tank. And in truth, that's why we're here today - to ask ourselves these questions as a field. How can we be bolder as we emerge from the pandemic and not lose this opportunity to do big things?

I am so grateful for the incredible group of panelists we've assembled for today. It's a true Who's Who of thought leaders. Ironically, of course, the pandemic has made it easier to assemble people all in one place, and they are here today. And you are here today - artists and administrators, educators, funders, board members, and others from a wide array of institutions across the country, and indeed around the world. I welcome you all and applaud your interest in tackling these issues with us today in a forum that we cannot only learn from our incredible panels but from each other and the wide array of expertise that is represented by all of you participating. Thanks for being here. And I hope you have a productive and engaging day.

And with that, I'm going to bring on our first panel of distinguished artists, beginning with Du Yun, composer; Peter Sellars, director; Sean Jones, jazz trumpet player; Stephen Hough, pianist; Thomas Dolby, musician and producer; and Marin Alsop, conductor. Welcome, everybody. What a great group to have together, and thanks for being here for this really, I think, very important conversation. I wanted to begin by giving all of you a chance to answer an opening question. The way we will structure our conversation today is to have an opening segment - I'll ask each of you a question; take two to three minutes to answer, if you would. Then we'll have 30 minutes for more discussion and some additional questions. Then we'll have 15 minutes for questions from our participants at the end.

Let me begin by asking you all this. How has the experience of last year changed how you think about your craft, and how you do your work, and why? And maybe we can begin with Du Yun.

Du Yun: I think that as a composer sometimes it's really harder to dissociate ourselves from what we do, which is actually have that connection with performers, and we actually wanted to share this visceral connection with the performers and along, our audience. So, I think that the pandemic, even though most of us are feeling lost with online presentations and the shows and technologies, I think the year has been lagging on so we are trying to understand why we are doing this. We're trying to understand what's the purpose of our life. What's the purpose of our

TRANSCRIPT
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profession. I don't think most of us think of this as our career, but rather our purpose. I also think that the pandemic actually is a great reminder for us that the society really needs art, and the purpose is really reinforced.

Fred Bronstein: Thank you, Du Yun. Peter.

Peter Sellars: First of all, I just have to say, I am so moved to be with this group of people and each one of you I have loved for so many years. I can't believe I'm here, even virtually with you, and just love and thanks for so many years of beautiful, beautiful work. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

And just to say, of course, the question is that sickness, illness, is not just an affliction. It's a message, and can you hear the message. Can you hear that illness is speaking to you, and what is the message of Covid? The message of Covid is things have been going in the wrong direction for so long; we're dealing with hundreds of years of neglect. We're dealing with abusive structures; we're dealing with nightmare after nightmare. We don't want to return to whatever we came from, because that should not be normal - the greatest income disparity in the history of the human race, the ecological desperation. None of that should be normal. We have been in the time of crisis; the chance, the opportunity is to move forward. Of course, most institutions don't want to change; they're stuck and can only imagine themselves in their current forms. That's why art is necessary to just open people's sense of new structural possibilities, new relationships. What can we offer? We're here to offer. We're here to help. The arts are a service job. You know - where you just look around and say, "Excuse me, where can we help?"

And so, I just have to admire Stephen, Sean, Marin, Du Yun, your work in hospitals, your work in prisons. I mean, these are the crucial places to be. These are the crucial places. Just like the Covid virus, how do we redistribute everything? Look at who is not getting things that are urgent, who is not part of a conversation. This is our work as artists. Our work is to move across those lines, to be working in the justice system and creating more justice, to be working in the health care system and getting a sense of well-being, and help and health in its largest and deepest contexts.

To really be, there is so much that needs to be reformed. And I would just emphasize that, just looking around and seeing living in divided societies - excuse me - as artists, our task is to be in the heart of the divide and to live and work there. And like the Bach cantatas, just be with people and their struggles and living and dying, and what it is to die as beautifully as possible in a nightmare where you're surrounded by death. What are these questions? For me, as classical music artists, we have to get off the damn glamorous stage and be in the dust with people who are mourning 400,000 people dying here.

I mean, the media can't cope with it. They don't have language to even touch the grief. The politicians can't go near it. Nobody is touching what we're actually in the middle of losing. And,

TRANSCRIPT
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of course, recognizing that loss is also the beginning of opening into a new world and into a new set of possibilities, which need people of vision and heart and commitment to begin to realize. And the beautiful thing about art is it's a hypothetical example of what would happen if these people were actually empowered. Go! And so that's it for me. And again, the history of classical music. For me, it's a hard thing, the last generation of classical music - and I can think you can also compare this to the U.S. Senate - have placed themselves outside the actual struggles of our time. And I think classical music was always - Mozart, it's not just nice music. Mozart was in the heart of gender crisis, income inequality, and servants and masters and class systems. Beethoven, all the music, all the real music is right in the heart of what we're struggling with, and to me our task is not to be decorative, is not to be leisure activity, but to actually go to the places right now where there is no political or economic will to go. And we have to be there. And we have to be there selflessly and with full hearts and with not just, "Please listen to us," but "Excuse me, how can we listen?" Because listening is apparently not a skill. It's really at a premium at this moment. So, could we create new structures of listening, new ways of hearing really deeply, and ways of making sure the microphone gets passed around and shared? For me those are thrilling possibilities, and it is a privilege to be an artist at this moment in history where you actually feel we're on the cusp of major change.

Fred Bronstein: Thank you, Peter. Sean.

Sean Jones: Thank you so much for inviting me, Fred, to be a part of this. And it is a true honor to be here with these fabulous artists. It's positively overwhelming to be in your presence. I'd like to echo what Peter just said and eloquently delivered here that the arts are service positions. We are here to serve humanity; it's our job to tell the stories of what our fellow human beings are going through during this time. And it's important for us to remember what's at the core of all of this, which is our humanity. Our five senses - and we are the curators partially of the sense of sound. And what does that mean right now, and how do we tell the story of what we're going through? We express the pain, we express the frustration, and we also simultaneously provide healing in this time. How do we do it? And one of the things that I've had the great joy of experiencing over the past year is the realm of possibility. It's important for us to think about what is possible, and you can look at the past year in two ways. You could think of it like, "Oh my God, this is not possible anymore. We cannot be on stage, we can't, we can't, we can't." Well, what can we do? We can connect with folks that we haven't been able to connect with before, we can dive deeper into technology so that we can share our experiences more. One of the things I've been able to do during this pandemic is actually record with folks that I never even met before. People are just reaching out saying, "Hey, can you jump on this track?" And I say, "Sure, let's do it." Okay. The level of connection that's happening right now is really amazing.

Also, just dealing with our students and helping them to understand that there is a light at the end of this tunnel, and they are that light. It's them, our students are the ones that are going to get us through this. And they are going to tell the story after we're gone, and they're going to teach it to their students. And so it's important for us to not just project what we feel should happen during

TRANSCRIPT
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this time, but to also listen to them and what they're going through during this time, because I do feel that ultimately, they have the answers. I love going into classrooms where they know they introduced me to a certain level of technology that they've been dealing with. And I'm like, "Wow, I need to take that." And I go home and I'll figure it out. And then we get together, and we share it together. So, I'm just living in the idea of possibility right now, and it'll continue as we get through this.

Fred Bronstein: Thanks, Sean. Stephen.

Stephen Hough: Hello, everyone. It's wonderful to be with you all and see you all. This is a rare thing, isn't it? We could never have done this in the past, all over the world. I'm in London now, and I think most of you are in the States, but here we are chatting. Thank you to Sean and Peter and also Yun for those huge ideas. I mean, it's like a life-changing sort of thing for us to think about. I wanted to bring it back to a little bit more of a down-to-earth, practical level, perhaps as a contrast. When you asked originally, Fred, how this era, how this period, had affected us, how it changed the way we think about things - I'm going to mention a "hot potato," money, because I was very conscious here, the arts have saved us throughout the last year, whether it's watching movies, listening to music, making music. Without the arts, the world would be a disaster. I mean, it is in a pretty bad way, but can you imagine how we would have coped without all of these things to keep us going in our isolation, and particularly people who have been living completely alone? But what I want to say is, how do we think about artists beyond this? How do we treasure this art? Many musicians I think during this time have been going through very, very difficult times financially; some of them unable to pay rent, unable even to afford to live with their families.

How do we treasure the arts enough so we actually support these people, because so much of what has been asked of us or of the arts generally has been free. It's been, can you play a concert, can you stream, can you write that, can you compose this. Oh, no - there's no money at all involved. I just think this opens to me something as we go beyond this period and come through it, particularly in the area of streaming, perhaps. How do we pay our musicians? How do we treasure the arts? How do we make it so that it's not just a decoration as Peter was mentioning. I mean, this is actually a livelihood for people. This is a real job; we wouldn't think of not paying our nurses, of not paying our delivery people, or plumbers or anything else, but we often expect musicians to work for very little and for nothing. I just looked at the statistic earlier Tasmin Little, the English violinist, shared that for five to six million streams of one of her recordings, she received $15.67. This is something that needs to change. And I think this is something that we've all taken on board.

I'm going to flip the coin now quickly, before I pass on to something else. From the other side of it - before this pandemic, were some of us paid too much? How is it that musicians got this idea that we should be like film stars and billionaires with 10 homes in all the different countries in the world? Is there a case? Certainly, I'm talking about soloists, conductors, administrators, you

TRANSCRIPT
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know these organizations with hundreds of staff, huge salaries. I think we're going to have to be forced to change the way we think about this. At the moment with concerts going on, many of us have had fees, if we get them at all, halved or cut in a quarter just because we can't have enough people in the halls, or that the audience is small because of social distancing they can't be there. Is this going to change the whole way we think of classical music? Is it this middle-class thing forever where we all have these incredibly comfortable lives and salaries? And how many cars would you like if you're going to be a concert violinist? Or is it going to change the way? And this goes back a little bit to what Peter was saying as musicians. If you look at composers, very few of them actually were able to do much more than survive suddenly until the 20th century.

How many composers today can survive just by writing music alone? What is it - if you commissioned a string quartet from someone for a thousand dollars, it takes you six months to write it. That's not even the minimum wage in one of the poorest countries. So I think money is something that will actually have to be reconsidered as we come out of this and as our vaccine begins to work for us. Let's hope that's very soon.

Fred Bronstein: Thanks, Stephen. Thomas.

Thomas Dolby: Hi, Fred, and thanks for inviting me. Thanks, it's really great to be here with all of you. Some very wonderful ideas, very eloquently put. I can't help thinking that I'm one of the lucky ones in so many ways. And I spend a lot of my time these days worrying about young people starting out, whether they're in the arts or not. But I think especially for young artists, this question of whether you can make a living, make a livelihood from your music, from your art, and make a career out of it, or whether you are sort of a servant to society is going to be a very, very deep one if you're sort of undergraduate age at this time. And when I think about those young people, there is so much possibility. The same technology that allows all of us in our different countries to be here in real time today as a huge audience online has done so much for music and the arts.

The thing is, if you think back a couple hundred of years, as a musician you earned money when people gave you tips in the market square or the king paid to you a fee to go and play for a dozen people in his chamber. Technology made it possible for you to reach a larger audience with your music. The pianoforte came along, and now you could fill a concert hall. The piano roll and sheet music and jukeboxes and cable, all these technologies expanded our ability as an artist to reach a wide audience. And the revolution that really happened with technology in the last couple of decades has been the ability for musicians to also record and produce and promote their own music.

So now when you talk about the music industry you're not talking about a handful of record companies, publishing companies, who sort of filter the music that the world hears. Anybody in their back room with a laptop can be making music, can be getting it out to potentially a large audience. So that is incredibly empowering for young artists starting out; it doesn't feel so much

TRANSCRIPT
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like there's a glass ceiling anymore, like you've got to get a tape to a guy and get signed to a contract, that maybe you're the cream that will rise to the surface, and a huge audience will discover you and overnight you're going to become a superstar. But as Stephen pointed out, there isn't really an obvious structure anymore for how to compensate musicians for doing that. Maybe a new one will emerge, but it's clearly not a case of a handful of musicians becoming super rich anymore. The good news is that until the pandemic a very large number of musicians were making something from their music, it could be much larger than in our lifetimes, but a lot of that was really down to the live music situation. No records are being sold anymore, CDs, so we sort of pushed the revenue off downstream, and making the record was just an advertisement to get more people to come and see you next time you appeared at a festival.

But the festivals are gone. The live venues are gone. It's not just the musicians that are suffering for that. It's all the supporting infrastructure, all of the promoters, roadies, stand engineers, regulars, parking lot attendants. All of that livelihood is gone, and, believe me, those people had no retirement, no health insurance, they had no Plan B before any of this happened. And it's an absolute catastrophe for them. And so, I think going back to your prospects as a young artist, you've got to look at this and you've got to weigh, "Is this really a career that I can realistically pursue, or on the other hand, should I find a real job, and just treat music and art as my hobby?" And I think that's really a very deep-rooted question that young people need to face today.

Fred Bronstein: Thank you, Thomas. Last and not least, of course, Marin. What do you think?

Marin Alsop: Thank you, Fred, thank you for inviting me, and it's great to see everyone on the panel. And you know these times, I think, have given us great pause to think about why we became artists.

Fred Bronstein: Unfortunately, we're having a technical challenge with Marin. She is frozen. So, let's do this. She's dropped out. We'll come back to her. There's so many ways and places we can go with this conversation right now. There are so many things to talk about, and we have limited time. But I want to ask you all a question because we have a lot of folks in our audience today that are administrators, they're artists,…. Oh, she's back. I'll wait to ask this question.

Marin Alsop: I'm back. I'm having some internet issues here in Vienna. I think just to say that, of course, we've all had time to really think about why are we artists in this time. What is it about being an artist that is essential to our civilization and to our well-being as human beings? And this time has really brought that into focus for me. And it's a tremendous opportunity to break the system and break it open so that art can consist of access and inclusion for every single human being, because art is about imagination, art is about consolation, art is about emotion. Art is about creative thinking, and in this moment in history when we're suffering from such an enormous crisis of courage, this is the moment when we need art the most.

TRANSCRIPT
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And I think what this has brought to focus for me is that we as artists need to share that with the public. We need to really gather together and explain why it's an important for a young child to learn a musical instrument. It's not about becoming a musician, it's about listening. It's about communicating. It's about being applauded. It's about expressing yourself. These are the qualities that we want to see on the floor of the Senate. We want people that are courageous and feel that they can speak out and stand up. And that's why we need art.

Fred Bronstein: Thanks, Marin. As I was starting to say before, there's so many directions we can go in here today. We do have a lot of folks participating and listening that represent organizations; they are administrators, they are board members. We have artists. And I guess one of the things I'd like to ask you to respond to is: how does Covid-19 and, I'll couple this not just with the pandemic, but maybe trends, and audience development trends and challenges, how do all of those issues change, or will they change the relationship between arts institutions and the artists they employ? And what are the long-term implications for those relationships? I think this gets into a question of the direction of ongoing expectations about artists, what artists need to be able to do, what's the role. This is a conversation that's going on with orchestras certainly and other institutions as well. But I'm interested in - you all have very different perspectives, and I would like to hear you talk a little bit about that challenge and that opportunity actually, as we look to the future. Who wants to jump in on that?

Stephen Hough: Can I just pick up something that Marin said, which I thought was wonderful, about everyone learning an instrument? I just think almost all of our issues, pandemic aside, come from education, as young as we can possibly go. And I think what we need to do is to get the message over to our political leaders that the arts is good value for money. The arts is good for society. It's good for mental health. And this is something that I think is going to come out of this whole crisis enormously. Once Covid as a physical illness is way in the past and it's a nasty memory from 2020 and 21, we're going to be suffering still from many mental issues. I was just with a family the other day very concerned about their daughter, who is at the very age when she needs to be interacting with other kids her own age. She can't, and she's not learning these essential life skills. But I think with the arts, let's try and convince our political leaders to put money into the arts at the earliest stage because this creates a good society that listens, as Marin said, a society that learns skills, that learns to concentrates, to communicate with other people in those settings. It's invaluable, and I think when we can get this message out, a lot of these things will be solved, including our future audiences, because we we're not going to have future audiences if people have never heard of or know anything about these wonderful works that we love so dearly ourselves.

Fred Bronstein: Well said. Are there other responses?

Sean Jones: I'll chime in here as well to echo what Stephen and Marin already said. I grew up in Warren Ohio. I grew up going to church literally almost every day of the week in a Pentecostal church. And for anyone that knows anything about a Pentecostal church, there's very

TRANSCRIPT
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little speaking, but a whole lot of singing and playing. That is literally how I grew up, and what that created for me was the understanding that I could release it all, I could just give it all up through a song, and I could share that with other people. And they could sing it with me, and that we could get through it all together. So, I would just like to say that, yes, we definitely need to get music, instruments and singing, in the hands of our children much sooner. And we have to take it a lot more seriously.

Regarding the question that you mentioned, Fred, regarding relationships – a quick story here. A very dear friend of mine who is a curator of music at one of New York's greatest jazz clubs put on Facebook that the club was closing, and he called a few of us, and he really asked for help. And he just didn't know where he was going with this. And you know years before that a lot of folks thought that this individual would just kind of sit high and mighty and hired who they wanted to hire and paid who they wanted to pay for whatever reason. But it forced me personally to take a step back and say that, you know, sometimes the folks that you think are in the highest position are standing right next to you in the same position while doing a different service. So it's important for us to see folks that are arts promoters, curators of the art, sitting on boards, things like that. They have a different set of challenges, and we have to help them as musicians to understand what we need, and we also have to ask what they need from us.

And it's an interesting balance of selfishness and selflessness because we have to take care of ourselves. We get paid, we have to make a living, but we also have to recognize that the folks that are on the other side of what we're trying to accomplish are doing the same thing. So we have to work together with one another and be honest through it all. If we can make more in the situation or we need more, we have to express that. And if there is an arts organization or a curator of the arts that can't provide what they want to provide, they have to be honest with you about that. And we have to truly work together. A slew of friends of mine are musicians; we have worked with arts organizations, jazz festivals, jazz clubs, to provide content for them. They have also gone back in their archives and offer deals for archival performances, and we're just all trying to get through this together. And I think it's important for us to re-evaluate what those relationships look like, and do what Stephen said and talk about the inequity there of what's being paid out and why.

Fred Bronstein: Thanks, Sean. Marin, I want to put you on the spot a little bit because you're in the orchestra world, and my former world. This question of the relationship between the artists and the organization - what are your thoughts on this and how that might change, or is changing, or should change.

Marin Alsop: Well, I think that we have to really come to terms with our role in society, not just within an organization. Not that it’s just sort of this patriarchal “we'll take care of you,” and so you only play the notes on the page and that's what we pay you for, this kind of relationship. But instead, I think our organizations have to understand their role in society as service organizations, and for especially those of us who have been given so much, we have to give back

TRANSCRIPT
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so much more. And I think after you teach a child how to play notes on the instrument, the next lesson is how that child needs to teach another child the same thing. You know, it's about passing it on, and it's about sharing. And I think many of our organizations have become insulated and little systems unto themselves, and they support only a limited number of people at a certain degree, instead of blowing open the doors and letting everybody in, and perhaps it means less for all of us, but ultimately it means so much more for all of us.

Peter Sellars: Can I jump in there? Let's face it, most of us were convinced in the 1980s to think institutionally, and now we have institutions and not artists. And I really just have to say that, I'm sorry, the institution is overwhelmed of deeper and larger mission. And for me, opera, for example, exploded in the last couple of years at a smaller scale. Opera suddenly became intimate and alive and a handful of people making something and gave an amazing new experience, and not opera imagined as a 19th-century product. It's time for institutions to stop representing the past and truly to represent a future, and that future is intimate, engaged, active.

And you can still employ the same number of people, but way differently, way more diversified, way more engaged, in lots of different conditions and situations and relationships. And we just have to step away from these giant monolithic structures of the19th century as our only way of thinking, and again, as Thomas said, we have the technology that invites us to a whole set of new relationships. Let's really go deep into these relationships, and so I would just ask the classical music world not to try and recreate one thing that we came from. But truly to just say, what are we going towards? Let's create that, and let's open our minds to the fact that all this was music of the future always. And if it's in the context of music of the future, it becomes very, very exciting. Du Yun has just with her *Angel's Bone* exploded opera in the most thrilling way, and opera is the product of a handful of people. And can I just say - intimacy in America, we filled halls that hold thousands of people. Most of the current generation don't want to go to some corporate event; they want to actually be there in a restaurant that has four tables that serves organic food and you know the people who grew those vegetables. You want to have this incredible sense that everything is artisanal, alive, and has deep values in it. Values about saving Earth, values about how we do want to live differently. And so for me, the way in which our values are part of the way we shape our structural thinking. I think that's just so crucial and we're not just giant capitalist players. So forgive me, Fred, but to have the capitalist language of marketing applied to what we're doing is actually the sad thing. And there have to be ways of generating income that don't go to these tired, old, discredited structures and that move in way more exciting senses of purpose, as someone said earlier. And again, I just want to say, if you're with people with their issues, then you're creating solidarity. It's not marketing; it's solidarity. It's like what - how are we connecting and how are we creating zones of solidarity, zones of coalition building, zones of larger, larger senses of purpose, how we bring people together, not in a marketing campaign but because what we're doing stands for something and is something people want to see emerge in the world. And we're giving it a form, and, yes, we haven't gotten there yet, but art is here to say, "No, no, this is an actual path, and we're on it."

TRANSCRIPT
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Fred Bronstein: Thank you, Peter. In my opening comments I alluded to the issues of diversity. And this, I think, is an interesting segue. We all know classical music has long faced a demographic challenge. I would argue, of its own, our own, making. How does Covid, and I would say, combined with the growing movement towards racial justice, how do those combine to impact - or accelerate or urge, prod, whatever term you want to use - our field to make diversity a core value and no longer something that's peripheral? Because it's something the field has been talking about for a long time. And we can all look at the statistics, and we know the statistics are not good. We also know demographics are changing, and where our audiences are going to come from. I guess the question I'd like to hear you all speak to is how do we create urgency, real urgency? I think it's an existential question.

Marin Alsop: I think, thank heavens, there is now urgency around this issue, and I don't think there's any escape anymore. And sometimes that's the only entry point for people, when there's no escape. And I couldn't be happier that there's no escape anymore. As a woman on the podium, it was sort of a lonely position for many, many years. It's not as though there were no talented women, they simply were not let in. I mean, that's the reality. But the Me Too movement changed this, and it passed a tipping point. And I couldn't be happier about that. But sometimes it takes a social movement to make people do the right thing, and especially when they have a system that they're hanging on to that they're benefiting from. I feel that we're at that moment, Fred, don't you? We've been talking about it at Peabody and really working toward that for a long time. But finally, it feels like, okay, the floodgates opened a little bit for us.

Fred Bronstein: Yeah. I feel that sense of urgency with you, and that's why I asked the question, obviously. Do other folks want to speak to this very important issue?

Du Yun: My connection is not very good, so I apologize. We must talk about funds, about scholarships to have the new generation of a group of students and young kids who are interested in learning whatever music that they want to do and they want to learn, and our faculty need to always be sensitive to the needs and to also adapt ourselves. It's not catering, it's sort of a new role with the people, with the young generation. And we need to also offer the reason, the why, there is a purpose of doing arts, because a pandemic really made us to know that living life is not enough, but having a purpose in life is what it is meant for human beings.

So I would call for more funds for scholarships. I would also like to call for more government support for fine arts work, for not just for the United States, but also international and from different regions, different economical parties of the places.

Fred Bronstein: Thank you, Yun.

Sean Jones: I'd like to add something to this. As a jazz musician, this is something that we fight in jazz all the time. It's in all music, but I speak for the genre that I love so dearly. And we've done a terrible job at being diverse, specifically in terms of gender, and as Marin said, we cannot

TRANSCRIPT
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use the excuse that they are not there. It is your job to go and find them, and when you find them, you have to encourage them and let them know that it's okay for them to be there, that they belong. That's extremely important. And for those of us that know to do and don't do it, it's wrong. It's wrong for us to sit on the sidelines and know that there are women out there that can do the job, and we don't go and say, “Hey, please come. We need you and we value you.” We have to do that. We all have to do a better job at it.

And also, I live in America. I live in the United States of America that has a beautifully rich culture and the tradition of a ton of music that's extremely diverse. I don't want to see jazz as separated from classical music anymore. I don't want to see classical music separated from rock or pop. As Duke Ellington said, there's good versions and bad versions of everything, and I just want to make sure that our students have the technical prowess to be able to play it all and enjoy it all. And then we could all play it all and enjoy it all together. I had the wonderful opportunity of seeing Marin conduct Mahler a little over a year ago or a couple of years ago. And it was absolutely stunning. And I was sitting there in my chair wanting to play over it; you know, I mean that type of thing. We have to have more of that. So I would say that we have to really take a good look at this beautiful treasure trove of music that we have that's just created in this country and propel that a little bit forward more.

Fred Bronstein: Obviously we've touched on this issue of young artists and what the future is going to be through young artists, folks that are coming out of schools like Peabody and other schools. This is something we've certainly talked a lot about at Peabody and done a lot of work on, but how do you all think about this issue of training artists for the future? Again - when we think about the pandemic experience, and we think about trends, and we think about the challenges, and we think about the diversity issues - what do you all think we need to give our students? We who collectively are training young artists, what do we have to give we're not giving them today and in order to be the kinds of artists we want them to be in the future?

Stephen Hough: This is all great. You're all saying such wonderful things. Can I move a little in a little different direction and be a little bit counterrevolutionary here? The one thing that I really treasured over the pandemic months is the idea of my instrument, the piano, as an acoustic instrument needing no electricity, no faulty internet connections, and I think alongside all of this, we need to trust in the organic truth of our music and our instruments as well. I agree that we need to look at every way to diversify the way we people hear this music, but, in the end, it's a bit like a great painting. With the Mona Lisa, whatever, you can like the Mona Lisa, you can market it. You can put in a different exhibition, a different setting. But in the end, we have to keep hold of the fact that it's the Mona Lisa we're trying to promote, not everything else, not the wrappings, not the other side of it. This goes back a little bit even to what Peter was saying about how we need to get back to certain basics here.

And I think that the basics of music education are the music. And I think we can get worried about our audiences dropping or how we're going to do this, and we can lose sight of the fact that

TRANSCRIPT
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if we take our eyes off the music, off the central point, that nothing else is going to work. We fix that first, then then we're free to do all of the rest. But let's not forget that. And let's give our young people the confidence in the music we love. I think there's a sense in which if they begin their educational lives worrying why is this not right, why are audiences dropping, what can we do, what can we do, in a sense of lacking that self-confidence. I think we have to start with belief in the music we're working with and then work it out from there. And just quickly, finally, to pick up a little bit from the previous point. I think, again, this goes back to education. We're at a great point. Marin said that there's no exit. Now we have to deal with this issue, and I think that the only way this is going to work in the future is with education as young as we can possibly do.

I don't know of a music college which isn't open-hearted about including everyone from every background, every social, racial background. I think it would be crazy to think that any one doesn't deserve to be 100 percent in the center of our arts world, of course. That's absolutely true. But I think unless we get people on board early on, it's going to be wishful thinking, because really by the time of age 18, 19, 20, it's a bit late to start learning that instrument if you want to do it as a profession. So we have to start and give people the opportunity early on, and so more people can learn instruments and learn music appreciation as well. The earliest the better.

Fred Bronstein: Thank you, Stephen. Anybody else want to add to that before we take a question from our audience? Peter.

Peter Sellars: People have said very beautifully and, as Marin said - these are the questions, these are qualities we're looking for in the Senate - to also educate our gifted artistic students, not just as artists, but as citizens. We're past the level where the artist is the lonely person at the end of the bar drunk, antisocial and helpless. You know, it's the opposite. The artist is the organizer. The artist is the gathering, the artist is creating the gathering, the artist is creating the energy, the artist is creating the community that didn't exist before. And so for me, it's actually a job that has so many levels. Absolutely perfect your instrument, yes, but also perfect your being and also open yourself outward. A lot of the classical music tradition recently is just so inward looking, and you just want to say, “Excuse me. Open this up, and open yourself up, and create structures that are in dialogue.” And for me, those are really important things.

The Vienna Philharmonic in Brahms’ lifetime played eight concerts a year. And then, what else, right, and that's what's interesting. What's interesting is so much of the history of music didn't have big institutions. It actually had this incredible lively diverse groups of musicians that were creating things. And I think we just need to really reimagine structurally, what you and the artists are doing, and organize and stimulate and empower communities. And it's not just where's my audience. You know, we are creating audience. For me, the lesson in my lifetime has been you have to work as hard as you work for what's on stage. You have to work for who is in the audience. And it's the same amount of work. And it's the same amount of engagement. And it's the same amount of development of the art form. Because the development of the art form is the development of audience and those are not separate factors. And that's what's exciting.

TRANSCRIPT
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Fred Bronstein: Thank you for saying that. I think that is really important for young artists to particularly hear - their role, their obligation, and they're an essential part of that. Thomas.

Thomas Dolby: One thing that hasn't been mentioned is apprenticeship, along with all of these wonderful technologies that enable us to do so much. Some of that we can do from home. A couple of things. Number one, I think it helps us appreciate what actually happens when musicians get in a single space where you're all sharing and moving the same sound waves in a room; we appreciate and that's great. But there is a lot of preparation work, a lot of organization work, that we are now learning and we can do from home with a decent internet connection. The issue is that if you're over 30 as I am, you probably are not very good with these skills, these new skills that you're required to learn.

So, you know what? If you have a position in the music world, hire a young musician to come and work with you, and share some of that wisdom and experience that you've gained with a younger person. I teach mainly in film music. The top Hollywood film composers now have teams of assistant composers working with them. Hans Zimmer started life in the 80s in London as an assistant to a composer there, and now he has several composers. He's launched the careers of half a dozen other composers in Hollywood. So, the kind of basic skills like backing up and organizing your libraries and things, we're not very good at that. Why don't you offload to a millennial or younger somebody that is good at it? And in so doing, you can share this gift. I think what we're all coming to realize is that if you have a gift, it's not for you. It's for the rest of the world to share through you. And I think that's something that, for all artists, this pandemic has really brought home to us.

Fred Bronstein: Thank you, Thomas. I want to open the opportunity to see if we have any questions from our participants, and if we do, they will come up on the screen. Here we go.

How should we change what we offer in music schools to prepare future musicians for the changing landscape?

We were beginning to touch on that a little bit. Any other specific thoughts on that you all would have? Several of you, most of you teach. Is there anything you'd like to speak to? Sean.

Sean Jones: Before I give my answer to that question, I just want to sort of piggyback on what's already been said again. I love quotes, if you haven't realized that yet. There's another quote from a legendary high school principal that said, "Discipline is not the enemy of enthusiasm." Discipline is not the enemy of enthusiasm. So, a few points that have already been made. I think one of the challenges that we have is making sure that our students have this level of pedagogical excellence, and for me, I found that through the European classical tradition. The way to play the trumpet has been coded in the European classical tradition. If I want to know how to play the trumpet and play it well and have longevity, then I have to study that music, then the idiosyncrasies that go along with that.

TRANSCRIPT
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I think it's important that we give our students that balance - freedom of expression with pedagogical responsibility - that is extremely important. The way that we can offer that in our schools as we prepare them for a changing landscape is to diversify those opportunities while maintaining the rigor, and I do feel that here at Peabody we're doing an excellent job at breaking down curricular walls to offer multiple lanes of study, to have different lanes of music, types of music, that could be studied, all while we are maintaining that level of pedagogical excellence that's needed to be able to express the ideas clearly.

Fred Bronstein: Sean, let me turn that around for a moment. What about teaching our classical side of the house some improvisation skills? What are we missing by not frankly insisting on that?

Sean Jones: Improvisation is a large part of not just American music history, it's a part of all music history. Classical musicians improvised long before there was something called jazz. It has been happening all over the world. I think we just need to destigmatize what it means to improvise. I think that most people, when they think about improvisation right now, they immediately think about jazz. Well, you improvise in all different types of music, and if we were to offer something like that in a curriculum or in the curriculum anywhere, that we just literally say, “Okay, these are the ways in which you could improvise inside of music.” I think it's a challenge, but at the same time, the challenge is a lot of fun. And it just requires folks to be a little vulnerable and recognize that this is not the lane that they were in, but it is a part of the broader musical tradition that we have.

Fred Bronstein: Any other..? Marin.

Marin Alsop: Well, just to add, to piggyback on what Sean was saying and Thomas and everyone. I think this pandemic also blew up how we used to teach. Try to teach conducting on Zoom. Now this is a study in creativity, and also my students are so fantastically innovative in figuring out what they need. How can I help you, what can we do, how can we create this? We were in a very, very distinct rut. We thought in order to become conductors we have to do it this way. But it's not true. And that's what we lose sight of so often in our sort of business mode. We lose sight of that creativity. We don't evolve enough. We don't question things enough. We don't say, “What can we do differently?” And this pandemic has pushed us into being the best of ourselves in some ways, so I think that it's almost the pandemic is training us for the future landscape.

Fred Bronstein: Interesting. Peter.

Peter Sellars: Could I just add two seconds? Thank you. And just to say improvisation is the main skill to be alive right now. I’m sorry, but hello, it's not like on the side. It is front and center, and it's your only hope, and so to actually empower people to create new realities

TRANSCRIPT
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instantly. Not just say, oh, that's going to take a long time. No - start, now go. And that is incredibly exciting and necessary and urgent to survive right now.

And again, on the other side - you know, Sean, what you're saying is super beautiful. I always think we're also supposed to not just get a level of excellence - but a level of excellence is something good to show the Senate, that excellence is possible - but also the impossible, which for me is really important. I always think of John Cage writing the Freeman Etudes for violinist Paul Zukofsky, who is one of the greatest violinists to ever live. And Paul looked at the score, sat with it for six months, and said this is unplayable. And then amazingly, Irvine Arditti came along and played the Freeman Etudes. For me, that's what we're always doing in music. Music is a branch of the Olympics; it is actually what was not previously thought to be possible or imaginable. We're now doing that. And to me you're always opening the floodgates of human possibility, and you're just saying, okay, no previous generation could have imagined this. And guess what. This is what we're doing now, and that is super exciting.

And for me, the beauty of all those Greek statues on the Olympic stadiums in ancient Greece - they said, yes, come to the theater and we're going to tell the stories from Homer and these beautiful ancient myths, and we are going to say that young person runs faster than anyone ever ran in history. And to me, this is this combination that the classical music world needs to be, like moving on the deep myth, moving on and having the deep myths and the sense of gods and heroes and all that. And at the same time saying, "Excuse me. Thank God, these kids are here. They're better than any of us ever were." And that's what the prayer is.

Fred Bronstein: Thank you, Peter. I think we're going to have to leave it there because, believe it or not, we're out of our time. My only regret is with this conversation we could take another three hours and barely scratch the surface. There's so much to say, so much to talk about. Thank you all - a great conversation. I really appreciate your being here and being part of this. So many great insights for people to hear. And wonderful to see you all together, also.

Also, just a reminder to our folks that are participating today. If you've signed up for the lunch roundtables you're going to be heading to your next Zoom link. We'll be back with our next panel at 1:00 pm, our discussion with the CEOs of the major arts organizations. Again, thanks to all of you for being here.