

FUNDING PROPOSAL

Project Description

A year since the New York Philharmonic launched *Project 19*, the largest-ever orchestral commissioning initiative for women composers, nothing about the world remains the same. Shortly after the Orchestra premiered six dynamic new works, David Geffen Hall went dark and silent as people across the City and globe fled indoors to contend with the sweeping health threat posed by the novel coronavirus.

Amidst staggering national disaster marked by widespread sickness, economic hardship, and social upheaval, the pandemic has brought devastation to New York City's vibrant cultural landscape. Like neighboring companies and theatres, the Philharmonic is experiencing its gravest financial and existential challenges. These include over a year of cancelled performances, the reduction of its administrative staff by half, pay cuts across the organization, and \$21 million in lost revenue.

Despite being forced into hibernation, the Philharmonic—true to its charter and character— seized the opportunity to innovate, forging new ways to connect with audiences. The Orchestra pivoted to online programs through the *NY Phil Plays On* and *Learning@Home* portals, and in Summer 2020 deployed a pickup truck, the *NY Phil Bandwagon*, to deliver more than 80 outdoor live “pull-up” concerts to all five boroughs. Soon, the Orchestra will unveil *NYPHil+*, a digital streaming service featuring new and historic performances. In partnership with the management and Board, musicians ratified a four-year agreement to help the organization survive, including significant pay concessions, full media rights, and up to 10 Sunday afternoon concerts per season. Throughout the pandemic, the Philharmonic has continued to pay musicians despite the cancellation of all concerts.

These developments are emerging in the context of the renovation of David Geffen Hall. In partnership with Lincoln Center, the Philharmonic is leveraging the Orchestra's current absence to accelerate construction. The new design opens broad possibilities for reimagining the Orchestra's presence in its hometown and features dynamic spaces for education, community engagement, and exhibits.

It is within this context of turbulence and rebirth that the Philharmonic resumes its work amplifying the voices of female composers through *Project 19*. The Orchestra stands more firmly than ever by its core values, including a commitment to building a more equitable future for classical music. The organization is engaging deeply with questions of how this vision can be realized and expanded in the coming year and beyond.

During this time, the Philharmonic also affirmed the tenets of justice and parity underpinning *Project 19*. Following the murder of George Floyd and resultant protests, the organization embarked on an Equity & Inclusion Initiative to begin building a race equity culture. The Board, Staff, and Orchestra participated in race- and identity-focused training and dialogue and an organization-wide benchmarking survey. Representatives from all three constituencies convened as an Equity & Inclusion Working Group and worked with a consultant to begin outlining a long-term vision for an Orchestra that embraces and reflects all New Yorkers.

Project 19 was built upon prior work, led by Maestro van Zweden, exploring the Orchestra's artistic and social imperative as an inherently civic institution. In 2018-19, performances of works such as

John Corigliano's First Symphony, dedicated to loved ones lost in the 1980s AIDS epidemic, and the premiere of Julia Wolfe's Philharmonic-commissioned oratorio *Fire in my mouth*, about the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire in which dozens of immigrant women perished, contributed to musical inquiries into the crises and questions of our time.

Project 19's continuation in 2021 and beyond will incorporate all these threads of history, past and present, into a collective musical portrait and beacon of societal transformation.