

CARNEGIE HALL

Press Clips

2025-2026 Season

Prepared for the Vidda Foundation
August 2026

MUSIC AS MEDICINE

By Naveen Kumar

The positive effects of music on mental and physical wellbeing have long been recognized. Now, scientific research increasingly proves the vital impact of music on health and wellness. As more and more orchestras, ensembles, and concert halls are delivering programs that focus on health and wellbeing, here are approaches at three music organizations that are tailored to their communities.

Chris Lee



In April, a Carnegie Hall Well-Being Concert in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum featured the Khorikos vocal ensemble in music of Arvo Pärt, John Tavener, Shara Nova, Anna Meredith, Thomas Adès, Kile Smith, and a world premiere by Charlotte Greve. Audience members were invited to listen as they wished.



As evidence grows of music's profound impact on health and well-being, orchestras are increasingly recognizing the potential to lead in the wellness space. The League's Catalyst Guide, *Orchestras in Health and Wellness*, examines how programming with a focus on health supports well-being, deepens orchestras' community engagement, and demonstrates orchestras' role as vital contributors to public health, social connection, and local resilience.

The League's *Orchestras in Health and Wellness* guide is available free of charge at americanorchestras.org/catalyst-guide-orchestras-in-health-and-wellness/.

A boom in research over the past decade has left no doubt that live music has powerful impacts on well-being. From ameliorating trauma and anxiety to managing chronic pain and dementia, the range of uses and conditions for which music has proven effective is staggering. The *Orchestras in Health and Wellness* Catalyst Guide released last summer by the League of American Orchestras has served as a resource, documenting wellness initiatives at orchestras around the country and sharing best practices in a burgeoning area of experimentation.

Increasingly, the question is no longer whether orchestras have a vital role to play in promoting health and well-being for the audiences they serve: That understanding is becoming a primary pillar of many community engagement departments. But as orchestras continue to develop creative approaches and evaluate their effectiveness, a continuous stream of insights has emerged that the field can build upon collectively.

As with any community engagement work, what sort of wellness-centered programs might be right for a particular orchestra depends on the needs in their area—and among partnering organizations, like schools and caregiving facilities. But the research components that often grow in tandem with wellness initiatives aim to understand not just their effectiveness, but how they can be iterated at other organizations and benefit various populations.

SOUNDS OF THE SYMPHONY

The Phoenix Symphony has for more than 10 years partnered with researchers at Arizona State University to design and study the impact of health-related initiatives, including at local care facilities. But their latest project brings that work inside the concert hall—or really, into the lobby—where military veterans, active service members, and their families are invited to converse with musicians before and after select performances.

The program, called Sounds of the Symphony, is funded by the NEA and coincides with the symphony's current season. It draws from audiences who've arranged tickets through the Veterans Ticket Foundation, or Vet Tix, which offers free and discounted tickets to veterans and military members. For sessions of around 30 minutes before and after the musicians

From ameliorating trauma and anxiety to managing chronic pain and dementia, the range of uses and conditions for which music has proven effective is staggering.

A form for the Music on Prescription program, to be signed by the doctor and patient, prescribes attendance at a concert by the Montreal Symphony Orchestra to improve physical and mental health.

Participants in the Phoenix Symphony's Sounds of the Symphony fill out brief surveys before and after the experience to report on changes in stress and mood, pain levels, and social bonding.



Chris Lee

At the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, a Carnegie Hall Well-Being Concert in February gathered relaxed audiences for an evening of Baroque music performed by tenor Nicholas Phan and Theotokos ensemble, hosted by Krista Tippett.

perform onstage, a group of them gather to talk with participating vets, service members, and their loved ones.

"We're trying to create this opportunity to reach beyond the curtain to provide a sense of connection," says Valerie Bontrager, the symphony's vice president of community engagement

and education. "Veterans have a really interesting perspective, having had these high-tense jobs and having to learn to work together," Bontrager adds, noting that the conversations enrich the veterans' understanding of what it takes to be onstage, and help musicians see their jobs in a new light as well.



Fadi Kheir

Soprano Joyce DiDonato took a break from her operatic and orchestral engagements to lead an intimate Carnegie Hall Well-Being concert.



Fadi Kheir



Chris Lee

In November, Britain's Maxwell Quartet performed an intimate Well-Being Concert at Carnegie Hall's Resnick Education Wing.

"It demystifies, in part, who these musicians are," says David Coon, PhD, research lead for the project and director of Arizona State University's Center for Innovation in Healthy and Resilient Aging. "It also raises awareness of the sheer talent that's in your backyard that you're sitting and listening to," he adds. Conversations with the musicians range

from participants learning about the rigors of training and what they'll hear onstage to more personal anecdotes that connect everyone involved on a more human level. (One patron and musician, for example, learned their parents shared a neighbor in Minnesota, Bontrager recalls.)

Patrons fill out brief surveys before and after the experience, reporting on potential changes in stress and mood, pain levels, and feelings of social bonding as well as the perception of benefits. Researchers also invite the patrons to participate in focus groups to gather more qualitative data. The current study is still underway, but organizers are encouraged by observing the program's success so far, and hope to find ways to iterate it beyond the initial year at PSO.

"It's not just about the Phoenix Symphony," Coon says. "We're also thinking about who else might pick this up and try it in the future elsewhere."

WELL-BEING CONCERTS

Twenty partners around the globe have signed on to try their own take on Carnegie Hall's Well-Being Concerts, which were born out of brainstorming about how to address the mental-health impacts of the pandemic. Piloted in 2023, Carnegie Hall's concert series catered at first to health care workers and those impacted by the criminal justice system, but quickly expanded to invite the public. Partnering orchestras receive a variety of free resource guides and educational support to help launch their own series.

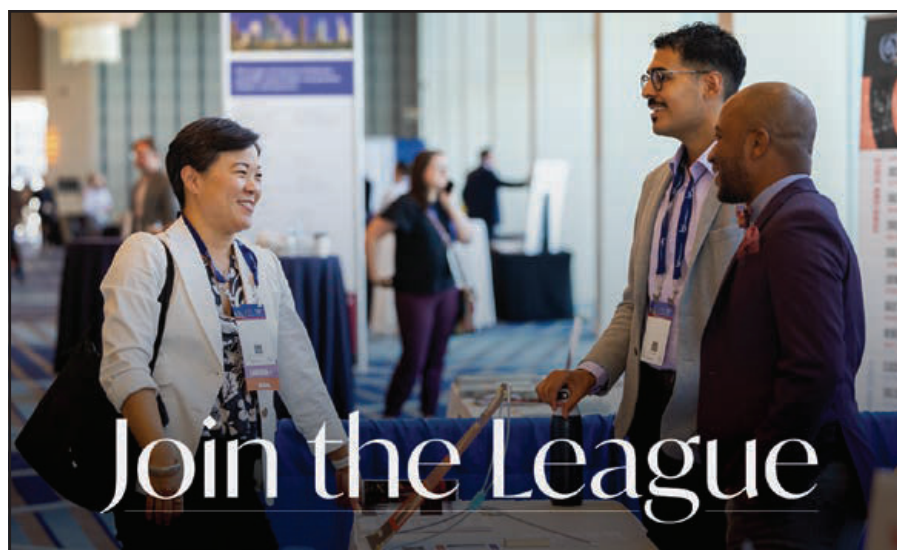
The Well-Being Concerts, which are supported by government funding and other annual support to Carnegie Hall, including from Northwell Health, have been shaped through feedback from participating audiences, musicians, and staff, both anecdotally and in formal research studies. The concerts, which Carnegie Hall has held both internally and at off-site locations like the Guggenheim Museum, share a few basic design principles: They are set in the round with musicians at the center, and feature various seating options in addition to chairs, including cushions and yoga mats on the floor.

"We wanted to create a calming, enveloping space that would feel like a big living room," says Sarah Johnson,

At the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, patients can fill a prescription from their doctor to attend a concert.

chief education officer and director of Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute. Soft lighting allows people to see each other across the circle, encouraging a sense of community, while a host invites

participants to interact and to set an intention. The variety of responses they heard led to one early realization: People weren't just coming to relax and destress, as might be assumed—some wanted to



Join the League

No matter what your role is in the orchestra world, you don't have to go it alone. Connection is key. The League of American Orchestras links members with each other through a **Member Directory**, **Constituency Groups**, the **National Conference** and the **Midwinter Managers Meeting**, and **League360**, an online discussion forum where members can pose questions to their peers and share solutions to common problems.

The League's membership of more than 2,000 organizations and individuals across North America runs the gamut from world-renowned symphonies to community groups, from summer festivals to student and youth ensembles, from conservatories to libraries, from businesses serving orchestras to individuals who love symphonic music.

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League
of American
Orchestras

Carnegie Hall's Well-Being concerts are set in the round with musicians at the center, and feature seating options in addition to chairs, including cushions and yoga mats on the floor.



Phoenix Symphony musicians meet Vet Tix participants in a Sounds of the Symphony program before a concert.



Musicians from the Phoenix Symphony and researchers from Arizona State University, in photo, have worked together for years on health-related initiatives. In the Sounds of the Symphony program, military veterans, active service members, and their families are offered free or discounted tickets to Phoenix Symphony concerts.

feel energized, engaged, and joyful.

"People can come to the same concert looking for different things, and find those experiences," Johnson says. Well-Being Concerts have since featured a dynamic program of music that aims to activate and connect participants to each other in a variety of ways. At one



At the announcement of the Music on Prescription program, a partnership between the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and Médecins francophones du Canada.

early concert, a musician shared a story of personal loss that opened up a space for others to tap into their own grief, Johnson recalls.

"From the beginning, the series tried to center curiosity more than certainty," says Ian Koebner, PhD, strategic consultant for Carnegie Hall on health and wellness programs and co-author of a study, titled "Beyond performance: Carnegie Hall's Well-Being Concerts," as a model for arts in health, which was published in October. Koebner considers the concert series "a creative laboratory for audiences, artists and scholars from many different disciplines to ask questions of these encounters with live music."

Further research is ongoing, but findings published so far have found participants reporting an increased sense of calm and connection to others, and an awareness that music can be a vital resource for their well-being. Some even expressed their desire to incorporate live music into an ongoing mental health practice, suggesting that wellness-centered programs could generate their own loyal patrons.

A PRESCRIPTION FOR MUSIC

At the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, patients can call in to fill a prescription from their doctor to attend a concert. MSO is in its first season partnering with Médecins francophones du Canada

on a program known as Music on Prescription, part of a growing number of similar initiatives utilizing the health benefits of the arts. Patients who receive a prescription from their physician can arrange a pair of free tickets to attend an MSO performance. The program is open to all physicians in Quebec, and organizers expected about 100 to sign up. So far, nearly twice as many have. The research component is led by Médecins francophones du Canada, and the partners hope to develop a funding model for long-term sustainability.

Prior to being named CEO of the symphony in 2024, Mélanie La Couture spent more than 10 years in leadership at the Montreal Heart Institute, where her experience informed her understanding of the role arts can play in well-being. "I often heard my physician colleagues emphasize how profoundly healthy lifestyle habits influence overall health," La Couture says. "Sitting in a concert hall allows people to truly disconnect for two hours; it reduces the stress hormones which reduces heart rate and blood pressure, and it helps stimulate memory."

Social prescribing, through which doctors recommend non-clinical, community-based activities to benefit health, was first developed in the U.K. in the 1990s and has increasingly caught on in Canada. A recent report by the Canadian Institute for Social Prescribing found that such programs can reduce primary care visits by up to 42 percent and emergency department use by 24 percent. The practice is growing stateside as well, where Social Prescribing USA offers resources for providers and patients, including a map of available programs.

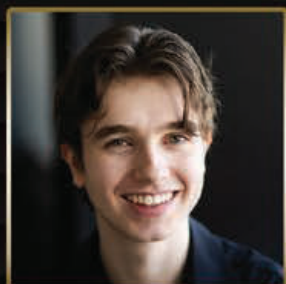
Patients' health information remains confidential, but there's a valuable opportunity for dialogue when they call in to schedule their visit. "They speak to a human and say, 'I've got this prescription. What should I go see?'" And we ask them, "Do you know classical music? What are your interests?" says Léo Mondor, a publicist at MSO. "It has such a great effect just to have the conversation." **S**



NAVEEN KUMAR is a journalist and critic whose work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Town & Country*, and more.

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INQUEST



On a frigid Saturday afternoon in January, Brad Balliet—a virtuosic woodwind player—delivered news that would change my life. We sat across from each other at a battered steel desk in a basement workspace at Sing Sing Correctional Facility in Westchester, New York. Beyond the electric fence outside, Metro-North trains tore by, roaring through our conversation and the prison itself.

Brad and I had met eight years earlier when I enrolled in Musicambia and Carnegie Hall's Musical Connections, programs that connect professional musicians with incarcerated artists. Within the confines of one of the world's most notorious maximum-security prisons, I started to learn music theory. I listened to the way instruments sounded, dreamt up harmonies and rhythms on a spare keyboard, and jotted down notes on manuscript paper. Brad watched me grow from a nascent artist to a composer across various genres: folk, classical, jazz, and opera.

Over time, Brad became not just a mentor, but a collaborator—someone who saw what my music could become beyond prison walls. So when he returned years later with a proposal that could change everything, I listened closely.

By then, Brad was used to the cacophony of our visits—the echo of instruments played in rooms nearby, the shouting from the recreational yard, the rumbling trains in the background. The sounds of the education wing, however, were a welcome contrast to what I usually heard: radios blaring out the latest drill tracks, men yelling from cell to cell about food or cigarettes, and officers slamming gates in the housing units.

Brad, a wiry fellow with round, wire-rimmed glasses to match, leaned back in an office chair. A cushion popped out from its side, probably from an earlier search. “We have secured a grant to produce an opera of yours and perform it at the hall,” Brad said with a smile. “If we do, we’d need the score by the second week of April to give the musicians and singers enough time to learn the music and rehearse.”

“I can do it,” I said, pulling my tongue from the roof of my mouth. I was not sure who I was reassuring more, Brad or myself. A few minutes later, we nodded our goodbyes. I turned, glanced through a plexiglass window on the door, and hurried down the hallway toward an office where I liked to compose.

I sat. I played. Soon, I began to write.

I fell in love with opera in 2015. That year, the acclaimed mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato came to Sing Sing as a visiting artist. She performed traditional arias for us, as well as music that we all wrote together. For three more years, she returned to Sing Sing, and with every visit, my love for the genre deepened. Writing stories and poems, and listening to music, helped me find refuge during my adolescence—a time when I experienced sexual abuse in my household. Opera lets me explore both avenues, a genre where the emotion of a narrative is bolstered by music.

At the same time, opera was utterly intimidating. I sat in front of my keyboard, tan-knuckling a pencil. It’s common for artists to spend years completing a single opera—and that is with access to all the amenities and inspirations of the real world. I wondered how I was going to write and compose a three-act opera within ten weeks, and despite the trappings of prison.

In 2020 I began writing about the pandemic, reflecting on the death, isolation, and fear surrounding me. And for years before that, I had kept a book of manuscript paper loaded with melodies I had jotted down. These two collections of documents would give birth to *9131: A Sing Sing Opera*. *9131*—titled after the number of days in a twenty-five-year prison sentence—gives the audience a glimpse into the internal conflict of a man longing for release while grappling with what true freedom of body and soul really means.

In the days that followed my meeting with Brad, I started putting the story together. First, I needed a protagonist. My audience would be mostly white and affluent, I imagined. How could they ever relate to the experience of incarceration? I chose to make my protagonist white, someone who had awakened to the realities of mass incarceration and systemic injustice through his experience.

I asked myself questions. How long would it take for a white, affluent man to become entrenched in prison culture? More than fifteen years. Why would a white, affluent man spend more than fifteen years in prison? Murder. What would follow twenty-five years of his incarceration? A developed sense of empathy. Full assimilation into prison life. How would he approach the parole board? Fearfully.



Production still from *9131*, Carnegie Hall.

It was important to me to highlight the realities of incarceration—both its impact in the present moment and the ways it shapes one’s future. *The audience has to witness the humiliation of a strip search, late-night conviction in a lonely cell, separation from loved ones*, I thought.

In February, I began writing out the opera’s libretto, or text. I could not do it alone. I had responsibilities as an Osbourne Association clerk and caregiver, and a Hudson Link college student. I needed help. Luckily, I had a longstanding friendship with Zontieil Gordon, a tall, slender spoken-word artist also incarcerated at Sing Sing. We met while working at the prison’s library and quickly bonded over our love of stories and words. I proposed that we write an aria together and he agreed.

All I had was a refrain, an homage to the 1937 anti-lynching ballad “Strange Fruit”: *Fire roasted strange fruit. They find shade. Frenzies abate*. I wrote it down and sent it to Zontieil. Through a series of kites—or letters distributed throughout the prison through a network of friends—he and I wrote the words to an aria, “Canned Strange Fruit.” The aria draws on food preservation as a metaphor for the legacy of slavery. Lynching, the horror so vividly featured in “Strange Fruit,” lasted minutes. But the suffering of incarceration, in steel cages called “the can,” often lasts years, decades, lifetimes. Just as the can preserves food, the modern prison preserves the depravity of the abuser and the pain of the abused.

Last was the painstaking work of setting it all to music. I had written out all of the melodic lines, but needed to give them a body, a harmony. Here I leaned on another companion, He Xiaobao. Another Sing Sing resident, Xiaobao is a laid-back Chinese bebop musician and classical guitarist with a K-pop look. We blended our knowledge of multiple genres to create a harmonic backdrop that would sound unexpected yet familiar.

I turned in the score on the second Saturday of April. It was not complete; in the end, I submitted two out of three acts. Brad assured me that it was good enough, more than expected given the time I’d had.

On the night of the concert, I decided to call my sister Myosha. I was in a room lined with phones, about four on each wall. It was directly across from the showers, and steam drifted through the already hot, unventilated cinder block cube. I dialed Myosha's number and waited through silence that is trilling in the outside world. She picked up.

"Hello, sista," I said. I could hear my music in the background.

"I'm at your opera," Myosha responded. "I don't want to miss it."

"OK, love you, talk to you soon," I said, and hung up the phone. I did not want her to miss it either. Over the years, my sister has gone to Carnegie Hall on my behalf to hear music I've written, performed by artists including Rhiannon Giddens, Sarah Elizabeth Charles, and Mwenso and the Shakes. She was an adolescent when I was arrested. Now, two decades later, in her thirties, this is how I spend time with her—giving her something to be proud of. Hoping, maybe, she can find some pride in what grew from my shame.



The author's sister, Myosha (center), with cast and crew of *9/131*.

I was given ten weeks to complete *9131*. I wrote it frantically, between obligations, playing line after line over and over again. Instead of socializing or exercising, I imagined what a character might say, might feel.

But the truth is, *9131* wasn't written in ten weeks—it took over eight years of work and friendship to pull off. Every melody I saved, and every moment I spent connecting with fellow musicians, inside and outside prison walls, was crucial. I made it to Carnegie Hall because I practiced, practiced, and practiced—not just at being a composer, but at being a friend.

On June 9, 2023, an audience at Carnegie Hall witnessed an opera written by a person who had been convicted of murder, in collaboration with his fellow incarcerated artists. Over two years later, this fact is still striking to me.

I have often felt conflicted by my accomplishments behind bars. Am I worthy of them? Do they erase my past? While these questions still cross my mind, I have concluded that, for me, accountability is struggle, is constant work.

Every day, I work to leave the old Joseph behind, in the hopes that his misdeeds can fuel metamorphosis. I still study music theory, play my keyboard, and jot down melodies. I push myself to document the lives of incarcerated people through journalism and music. I'm not certain about what lies ahead, but I know that I'll be ready for it. Or at the least, I'll be ready to tell the tale.

[I'm in Prison. My Opera Was Performed at Carnegie Hall. - Joseph Wilson - Inquest](#)



CALIFORNIA

Singing in class can rewire young brains for reading, research shows



Students perform the “Good Morning Song” at the Normont Early Education Center in Harbor City in January 2026. (Gary Coronado / For The Times)

By Jackie Mader

May 26, 2026 3 AM PT

- A growing body of research shows singing and music build vocabulary and sharpen early reading skills.
- Yet access to music in early childhood is uneven.

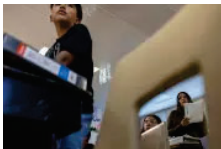
- Nonprofits are embedding free music classes in clinics, child-care centers and Head Start, reporting promising literacy gains.

Parents and educators intuitively know the benefits of singing and music for young children. It's why children learn the alphabet through song, and why lullabies are used to lull babies to sleep.

But there is also a growing body of research backing a link between music and brain development — specifically, reading skills. Studies have found that singing helps children [learn vocabulary](#) and [identify sounds in words](#), known as phonological awareness. Listening to music also [reduces anxiety and supports bonding](#) between caregivers and children, research shows. Playing instruments has been found to strengthen fine motor control and executive function.

Experts say making more time for music in early childhood classrooms could be a way to improve child outcomes, especially at a time when reading scores have stalled.

“Increasingly in early childhood education, if you look at the requirements, we’re urging literacy and mathematical competence,” said Dennie Palmer Wolf, a principal researcher at the research and consultancy group WolfBrown and author of a [recent report](#) with Carnegie Hall’s Weill Music Institute on how music affects child development. “Visual arts, dance, music get pushed to the side.”



CALIFORNIA

The nation's students are deep in a reading recession. Here's how L.A. and California fit in

May 13, 2026

When it comes to accessing music, opportunities are uneven and limited for many children. In the earliest years, exposure to the arts is largely contingent on the capacity and resources of parents or caregivers. And although almost anyone can sing or chant,

many caregivers lack confidence in their musical abilities, Palmer Wolf said. Children's music classes can be costly, and access to free options, such as those at public libraries, varies greatly by community.

In some states, nonprofits are trying to close the gap by bringing music programs into places already frequented by families and young children. In Minnesota, the [MacPhail Center for Music](#), a music school that serves thousands of students a year in the Twin Cities, has partnered with local health clinics to offer free parent-child music classes.

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In Houston, the Prelude Music Foundation offers free music classes in local early childhood programs, with an emphasis on underserved communities. And in New York City, the [Weill Music Institute](#) has launched music initiatives in child-care programs, public hospitals and correctional facilities to encourage parents to sing and make music with their children.

Another state-funded project in Minnesota provided \$600,000 for an intervention called [Tune Into Reading](#). From 2016-21, children in 25 of the state's elementary schools used karaoke-like software that encouraged more singing.



CALIFORNIA

California is leading national preschool expansion, but quality lags, report says

April 22, 2026

“Singing is natural, it precedes talking,” said Ann C. Kay, co-founder and education coordinator of the project. By encouraging more singing, Kay said, teachers can “develop young brains for reading.” The program, run by a nonprofit called the Rock ‘n’ Read Project, was used for 14 hours over a span of 12 to 16 weeks. A report to the Legislature after the program concluded said that children who participated made [notable literacy gains](#).

The program has shifted to bringing more music to early childhood classrooms by educating teachers and parents on the literacy-related effects of music and singing. This year, the Rock ‘n’ Read Project is partnering with four Head Start pre-K classrooms in Minneapolis to train teachers and encourage daily singing and basic music skills, such as beats, rhythm and pitch.

“Auditory processing is the key to language and literacy,” Kay said. “This is how it starts.”

Mader writes for the [Hechinger Report](#), which produced [this story](#) and is a nonprofit, independent news organization focused on inequality and innovation in education.

More to Read

Disney Jr. is expanding its preschool universe with ‘Marvel’s Avengers: Mightiest Friends’

Aug. 7, 2025



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June 2, 2025



Voices**The musical gift Los Angeles offers public school kids**

Jan. 12, 2024

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Toll Free Telephone Number:
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877-829-5500
Fax Number:
513-263-3756
Federal Identification Number:
13-1923626

Dear Sir or Madam:

This letter is in response to your request for a copy of your organization's determination letter. This letter will take the place of the copy you requested.

Our records indicate that a determination letter issued in February 1962 granted your organization exemption from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. That letter is still in effect.

Based on information subsequently submitted, we classified your organization as one that is not a private foundation within the meaning of section 509(a) of the Code because it is an organization described in section 509(a)(2).

This classification was based on the assumption that your organization's operations would continue as stated in the application. If your organization's sources of support, or its character, method of operations, or purposes have changed, please let us know so we can consider the effect of the change on the exempt status and foundation status of your organization.

Your organization is required to file Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax, only if its gross receipts each year are normally more than \$25,000. If a return is required, it must be filed by the 15th day of the fifth month after the end of the organization's annual accounting period. The law imposes a penalty of \$20 a day, up to a maximum of \$10,000, when a return is filed late, unless there is reasonable cause for the delay.

All exempt organizations (unless specifically excluded) are liable for taxes under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act (social security taxes) on remuneration of \$100 or more paid to each employee during a calendar year. Your organization is not liable for the tax imposed under the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA).

Organizations that are not private foundations are not subject to the excise taxes under Chapter 42 of the Code. However, these organizations are not automatically exempt from other federal excise taxes.

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Your organization is not required to file federal income tax returns unless it is subject to the tax on unrelated business income under section 511 of the Code. If your organization is subject to this tax, it must file an income tax return on the Form 990-T, Exempt Organization Business Income Tax Return. In this letter, we are not determining whether any of your organization's present or proposed activities are unrelated trade or business as defined in section 513 of the Code.

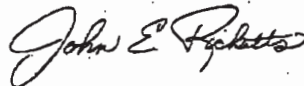
The law requires you to make your organization's annual return available for public inspection without charge for three years after the due date of the return. If your organization had a copy of its application for recognition of exemption on July 15, 1987, it is also required to make available for public inspection a copy of the exemption application, any supporting documents and the exemption letter to any individual who requests such documents in person or in writing. You can charge only a reasonable fee for reproduction and actual postage costs for the copied materials. The law does not require you to provide copies of public inspection documents that are widely available, such as by posting them on the Internet (World Wide Web). You may be liable for a penalty of \$20 a day for each day you do not make these documents available for public inspection (up to a maximum of \$10,000 in the case of an annual return).

Because this letter could help resolve any questions about your organization's exempt status and foundation status, you should keep it with the organization's permanent records.

If you have any questions, please call us at the telephone number shown in the heading of this letter.

This letter affirms your organization's exempt status.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "John E. Ricketts".

John E. Ricketts, Director, TE/GE
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CARNEGIE HALL

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2025-2026 Season

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CARNEGIE HALL

The Weill Music Institute - Key Staff Bios

The implementation of Carnegie Hall's programs is supported by professional staff and numerous teaching artists, advisors, and consultants.

Carnegie Hall Staff

Clive Gillinson, Executive and Artistic Director

Clive Gillinson became Executive and Artistic Director of Carnegie Hall in July 2005, having been appointed during Carnegie Hall's previous season. In this role, Mr. Gillinson is responsible for developing the artistic concepts for all Carnegie Hall presentations and overseeing management of all aspects of the world-renowned venue, including the operations of Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute. Born in Bangalore, India, Mr. Gillinson began studying the cello at the age of eleven and, as a teenager, he played in the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. Mr. Gillinson later went to London University to study mathematics but realizing that he wanted to make music his life, he then entered the Royal Academy of Music, where he gained a Recital Diploma and won the top cello prize. After graduating, he became a member of London's Philharmonia Orchestra. In 1970, he joined the London Symphony Orchestra cello section and was elected to the Board of Directors of the self-governing orchestra in 1976, also serving as Finance Director. In 1984, he was asked by the Board to become Managing Director of the LSO, a position he held until taking his leadership role at Carnegie Hall in 2005.

Sarah Johnson, Chief Education Officer and Director of the Weill Music Institute

The overall vision and implementation of Carnegie Hall's early childhood programs is stewarded by Sarah Johnson, Chief Education Officer and Director of the Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall. Since 2007, Ms. Johnson has led enormous programmatic growth and has launched numerous educational and social impact initiatives at Carnegie Hall. Before joining Carnegie Hall, Ms. Johnson served as Director of Education and Community Partnerships at The Philadelphia Orchestra. Ms. Johnson has also worked as a teaching artist with the New York Philharmonic and Lincoln Center Institute. A graduate of the Juilliard School, she received her bachelor's and master's degrees in oboe performance.

Tiffany Ortiz, Director of Early Childhood Programs

Tiffany Ortiz is the Director of Early Childhood Programs at Carnegie Hall, working with organizations across NYC, nationally and around the globe to support families and communities through music. She oversees the Lullaby Project, a songwriting program for caregivers, Big Note, Little Note, a 10-week music class for caregivers and babies, and public programming for families at Carnegie Hall including Early Childhood Concerts (ages 0-2), Sing with Carnegie Hall (ages 3-6), and Family Days (ages 3-10). Prior to her role in Early Childhood Programs, she managed Carnegie Hall's Neighborhood Concerts (now Carnegie Hall Citywide), supported Carnegie Hall's Family Programs, serving thousands of families through performances in community venues and at Carnegie Hall, and supported justice and social impact programs. In 2023, Ortiz was named one of Musical America's Top 30 Professionals in the country. Ms. Ortiz holds a BA in Communications with a Minor in Music from the University of Pennsylvania.

Ayanna M. Cole, Director of Social Impact Programs

As Director of Social Impact Programs at Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Institute (WMI), Ayanna Cole leads programs in the justice system and in underserved communities. Ayanna oversees WMI programs serving people of all ages who are justice-involved through programs in which participants write and perform their own music, collaborate with others, and develop their artistry; this work also aims to leverage the arts as a tool for justice reform. Since 2016, Ms. Cole has led partnerships with city and state agencies and launched initiatives that introduce teens to professionals in the music industry and jobs in the creative economy. Prior to WMI, as a Producer at A&E Television

Networks, Ayanna co-produced an Emmy Award-winning special. Ayanna also founded Life Light Street Productions, a street outreach organization that provides youth in underserved communities with training in documentary filmmaking. Ayanna holds a BA from Morgan State University, an MBA from Fordham University, and an MSW from Columbia University.

Joanna Massey, Director of Learning & Engagement Programs

Joanna Massey serves as the Director of Learning & Engagement Programs at Carnegie Hall, where she has led music education programs for students, teachers, and families since 2012. Her work as an educator and administrator includes direction of Musical Explorers, Link Up, and Music Educators Workshop. She also previously directed research and planning at The Boys & Girls Clubs of America for a national afterschool arts initiative reaching more than 1 million young people. Ms. Massey holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from Boston University and a master's degree in arts in education from Harvard University. She has served on the board of directors of the NYC Arts in Education Roundtable, as a member of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America's National Arts Advisory Council, and on the steering committee for the Harvard Graduate School of Education's Arts in Education conference series.

Consultants

Manuel Bagorro

Manuel Bagorro is a long-time Creative Advisor at Carnegie Hall, working on the design, planning and implementation of a range of programs. He is also Artistic Director of Bay Chamber Concerts and Music School in Rockport ME, Founder and Artistic Director of the Harare International Festival of the Arts (HIFA) in Zimbabwe and served as a program advisor for CultureSummit Abu Dhabi in 2017 and 2018. He curated the arts program for the first Wellbeing Summit in Bilbao, 2022 and leads the artistic team for the Global Hearth Summit in Ljubljana, 2025. For the last 12 years, his work with Bay Chamber Concerts and Music School has resulted in a new approach to the organization's educational offerings and community engagement programs. Under his leadership, the Harare International Festival of the Arts (HIFA) became one of the most significant artistic and social impact projects in Southern Africa, weathering the social, political and economic turmoil in Zimbabwe for more than a decade.

He is also a pianist, having performed extensively and won prizes in the Newport International and Royal Overseas League Piano Competitions. He performed in the John Schlesinger film, *Madame Sousatzka*, and appeared as soloist with the BBC Welsh and Cape Town Symphony Orchestras.

Dr. Ian Koebner

*In January 2024, Carnegie Hall hired Dr. Ian Koebner (PhD, MSc) as the Strategic Wellness Advisor to support evaluation/research projects and efforts to scale CH's mental health and wellness programs nationally and internationally. Dr. Koebner is currently a Research Affiliate within the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at Harvard University. Previously, he was an Assistant Professor and the inaugural Director of Integrative Pain Management within the Department of Anesthesiology at the University of California, Davis (UCD). At UCD he was the recipient of a National Institutes of Health, National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NIH-NCATS) Career Development Award for his project entitled, *The Analgesic Museum: The Development and Effectiveness of Museum-Based Experiences to Reduce Social Isolation and Pain Among Individuals with Chronic Pain*. He has over 20 years of experience developing and evaluating innovative strategic partnerships between the cultural and health sectors to improve individual, organizational, and community wellbeing.*

Dr. Dennie Palmer Wolf

Dr. Dennie Palmer Wolf is Principal Researcher at WolfBrown. She is one of the leading arts and human development researchers and evaluators in the United States. Wolf holds a doctorate from Harvard University where she served as a researcher at Project Zero for more than a decade. She then headed Harvard PACE, an initiative linking schools and external partners in new approaches to assessing student learning. She led studies on the early development of artistic and symbolic capacities. Later, she focused on design, implementation, and evaluation strategies that help cultural organizations and communities. Importantly, the strategies examine and improve how people gain access to learning, culture, and creativity both in and outside of formal institutions. Carnegie Hall has commissioned numerous research studies with WolfBrown, and Dr. Wolf has conducted evaluations and published findings on Carnegie Hall's Lullaby Project, PlayUSA, NYO2, and programs serving young people involved in the justice system.

Dr. Steven John Holochwost

Dr. Steven John Holochwost is Principal and Director of Research for Youth & Families at WolfBrown. He works with programs designed to improve the lives of vulnerable children and youth and is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Lehman College. There, his research focuses on the effects of the environment, particularly poverty and parenting. He considers the voluntary forms of self-regulation (e.g., executive functions) in childhood and examines the involuntary activity of neurophysiological systems that support self-regulatory abilities. Dr. Holochwost's work at WolfBrown examines the efficacy of educational interventions for children in poverty in an effort to understand how poverty impacts child development—and how programs that expand educational opportunities for children can mitigate those effects. He earned his Ph.D. in developmental psychology from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill where he was a National Science Foundation Fellow. He also holds a master's degree in public affairs from the Fels Institute at the University of Pennsylvania.