

The Miami Herald

Wednesday, April 25, 2018



A New World Symphony performance is Wallcast outside the New World Center in Miami Beach. Photo: Rui Dias Aidos

New World Symphony: Classical music and a genius for community building

By Sean Erwin

As the New World Symphony (NWS) — Miami's premier symphony orchestra — celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, think of the Doppler effect. It describes how sound changes pitch relative to the listener's position. And sound itself also travels far.

Interviewing former NWS fellows, one quickly learns that the orchestra not only changed Miami's music scene, it transformed the performance of classical music nationwide. NWS did this by acting for three decades as a cross between a think tank, research center and business incubator.

From the outside, the orchestra mission looks straightforward — to mold graduates of elite conservatories and university music programs into the ultimate orchestra players while also fielding a world-class performing ensemble.

What happens on the inside is another matter.

As Marc Damoulakis, principal percussionist of the Cleveland Orchestra and a New World fellow from 1999-2003, explained by phone: “New World [grooms] people a way to be in the music world — it’s not about being timid. Individuality and creativity and soloist qualities are valued on all levels of the institution.”



*Marc Damoulakis, principal percussionist for
The Cleveland Orchestra.*

Fellows join the orchestra for terms of three years with an occasional fourth. Most are already technical whizzes and strong musicians who then are taught as fellows how to converse with the public, meld into an ensemble, speak to journalists, generate interesting programming ideas, schmooze with donors and teach.

Damoulakis also emphasized the importance of founder, conductor and artistic director, Michael Tilson Thomas and his impact on the contemporary classical music scene. “Before NWS nothing existed like it,” he says. “Michael Tilson Thomas was here rehearsing in Cleveland last week and there were 10 of us in the Cleveland Orchestra that had gone through New World. And that number is higher in some places.”

Also astonishing is New World’s reputation for cutting-edge programming at a time when classical music faces declining audiences. Between 2010 and 2014, The New York Times reported concert attendance declined nationwide by 10.5 percent.

“New World is unique,” continues Damoulakis. “There is not a single concert programmed because they need an audience. Of course there would be no concert without an audience, but the season programming is not set with solely the survival of the orchestra in mind.”

And for Damoulakis the institution’s progressiveness as a whole is a reflection of its leader. “There are really no other places like New World and it has a lot to do with Michael Tilson Thomas, who is ever pushing the envelope. He’s the hardest working man in show business.”

Other former fellows echo Damoulakis’ praise.



*Michael Tilson Thomas conducts the New World Symphony in a performance at the New World Center in Miami Beach.
Photo: Rui Dias Aidos*

Speaking by phone, Teddy Abrams, music director of the Louisville Orchestra and NWS conducting fellow and assistant conductor from 2008 to 2011, says that “some of the people who play music and have incredible sounds are not some of the people who know how to be engaged with audiences in a way that is special and unique to them.”

For Abrams, New World teaches musicians to think big. “NWS showcases that the world of music stretches far beyond the basic requirements of whatever your specific job is. It says, ‘Let’s think about the big picture and think about what we contribute to that.’”

Part of what makes NWS special is its genius for community building, Abrams believes. It does this by side-stepping classical music’s typical ivory tower atmosphere. At the New World Symphony Center audiences view free simulcast performances from Soundscape park. NWS even premiered a new symphony, “Miami in Movements,” in October inspired by sounds and images crowd-sourced from the iPhones of Miamians.

“The audiences of the future are right there, in the community,” says Abrams. “You want them to have a relationship to you as the people making the music. You want them actually connecting to the music, not just listening to it, but involved with it and making it. New World thrives on that dynamic between the people and the audience.”

This explains why Abrams was so quick to found Louisville's innovative MakingMUSIC program that offers children in area schools a music education that starts by having them make and play their own instruments — out of garbage.

But for Abrams, NWS's greatest impact lies in how it acts as a kind of crucible for generating new directions for the music industry as a whole. "What they provide as a research and development engine is critical to the classical music world. The way they relate to the entire industry and the genre is unique. It is going to provide options for the future for us."

That future may involve making directors of orchestras stars in their own PBS series as Abrams was in the 2015 PBS series, "Music Makes a City Now," which documented his first year with the Louisville Orchestra.



Katie Wyatt, executive director of El Sistema USA, a national program using music to further social equality.

And it may involve creating new spaces for classical music altogether outside the narrow confines of the professional classical musician as it did for Katie Wyatt, a former viola fellow with NWS who now serves as executive director of El Sistema USA, a national program using music to further social equity.

Recently El Sistema made news with the passing of its famous founder, Venezuelan conductor Antonio Abreu, who founded El Sistema in 1975 to bring music instruction to economically disadvantaged youth in Venezuela. Today, the program has grown to over 400 programs worldwide.

When asked what impelled her to devote her energies to expanding the availability of El Sistema after New World, Wyatt explained that “when I was at New World, for one program Michael Tilson Thomas engaged in a major project unearthing and playing pieces by Tomashevsky and Zemlinsky.

“These were Jews persecuted during the Holocaust, and it was music by them that Tilson Thomas had uncovered. The pieces may even have been written while the composers were in concentration camps. We played them paired with Messaien’s ‘Quartet for the End of Time.’”

This experience functioned like an epiphany for Wyatt. “Our work on those pieces taught me that even in the face of disaster music is the last thing to go. Even in emaciated death-camp conditions, people have to express themselves.

“My time at New World really encouraged and prepared me to think outside the box,” continues Wyatt, “and to think about how success is a combination of how preparation meets opportunity. The New World Fellowship encouraged you to think about your career as a musician in both traditional and non-traditional ways. Nearly as many NWS fellows pursue entrepreneurial careers as a result of their training as pursue traditional careers.”

Wyatt then outlined a vision of the transformative potential music holds for communities: “Music is for social justice and social change and freedom of expression. It is about an agreement on how we want to better ourselves as a human race and a people. Music is that place of expression where we can all come together and agree to move this idea forward.”

Online:

<http://www.miamiherald.com/entertainment/performing-arts/article209841734.html>

Forbes

Wednesday, April 25, 2018



The New World Symphony Wallcast concert. Photo by Rui Dias

The New World Symphony Brings Classical Music Into The Digital Future

By Stephan Rabimov

Classical music gets a bad reputation. At a time when electronic music is ubiquitous and digitization reigns supreme, it's hard to imagine classical music as a relevant art form for youth. A quick glance across the rows at a typical concert hall will yield an unsurprising truth about classical music audiences: young people are conspicuously absent. The dissociation of youth and classical music runs deep. In some places it takes on a more radical approach, when classical music is used to repel teenagers from loitering in public areas. Despite the gloomy depictions above, one place is breaking this stereotype with fanfare: The New World Symphony's [The Firebird](#) concert recently played to a full house. With beach towels and lawn chairs in tow,

hundreds of young people gathered together in [SoundScape park](#) to experience glorious renditions of Igor Stravinsky's *Scenes de ballet* and Claude Debussy's *Fantaisie*. For the [New World Symphony](#) (NWS), the question isn't whether or not classical music is relevant, but rather, how to make it relevant.

Founded in 1989 by prolific conductor Michael Tilson Thomas and Lin and Ted Arison, NWS is a cornerstone of Miami Beach arts and culture. As America's Orchestral Academy, NWS consists of 87 young musicians who are granted Fellowships lasting up to three years. The institution, now celebrating its 30th anniversary season, was conceived to provide post-doc training for top graduates of music programs to prepare them for leadership roles in professional orchestras and ensembles. Each year more than 1,500 music graduates audition for a Fellowship, but only about 35 are chosen. Graduates of the prestigious program go on to win jobs at world-renowned symphonies, including San Francisco Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Kansas City Symphony, and Los Angeles Philharmonic.



Michael Tilson Thomas

In its early days, NWS was a developing/emerging organization that functioned out of the Lincoln Theatre, a 1930s era cinema house. In October 1989, the historic building underwent a nearly million-dollar renovation and restoration project. Bathrooms and closets were converted into rehearsal spaces, the exterior was restored to its original appearance, and a spacious, 713-seat hall was built. But after two decades of renovations and rewiring, NWS was ready to expand into a new center that would ultimately be more conducive to their mission and the future of classical music.

Today, NWS has a new home. Designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Frank Gehry – the mastermind behind the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and the Walt Disney Concert Hall – the New World Center is an attraction unto itself. When Gehry and Thomas were conceiving the

center's design, they knew they wanted to create something that would challenge the stuffy customs of traditional concert halls as well as evoke new life into the art form. "They wanted to create a very different place that would make people curious about the music and what's happening inside, a place where they would be able to see behind the scenes" said Craig Hall, Vice President for Communications of NWS. "They wanted something that would invite people in to cross that threshold."

It's easy to see how the New World Center has the potential to be a game changer in classical music. The enticing complex features a towering glass façade that exposes the entire lobby so visitors can get a rare glimpse of the everyday routines of the Fellows. Rehearsal spaces are enclosed in glass and audience members walking into the hall from the parking garage can see the players prepare before the concert. "This is the only performance space in the world where you can see the musicians before you see them on stage," Hall said. Even the 756-seat concert hall was built to break down the emotional barrier that separates musicians and their audiences. Small balconies placed around the hall allow musicians to scatter through the audience during a performance, and on stage, ten individual lifts that swivel and shift let audience members walk in between the orchestra and stand for the ultimate immersive experience. "The reality of traditional campuses and concert halls is that there are people inside and people outside," said Howard Herring, President and CEO of NWS. "[At NWS], we are trying to break that idea of insiders and outsiders."



*The New World Center Atrium
Photo by Claudia Uribe*



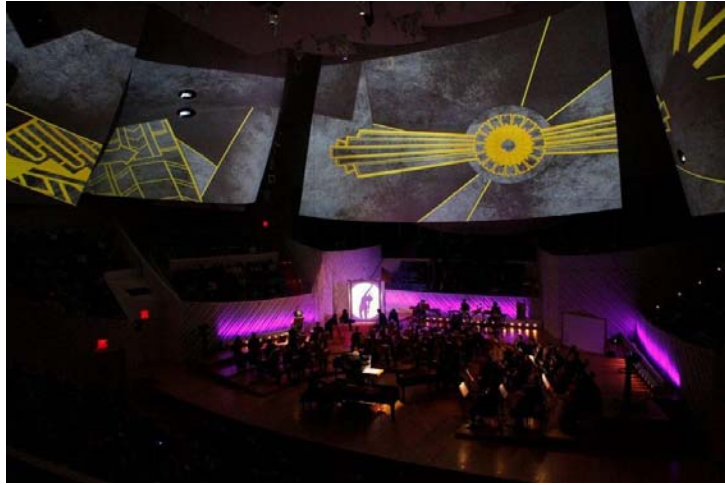
The New World Symphony WALLCAST concert at New World Center. Photo by WorldRedEye

While the center's design offers visibility into an art form that's often perceived as concealed and old-fashioned, it's the magnificent 7,000-square-foot projection wall that overlooks SoundScape park and serves NWS's [WALLCAST series](#) that attracts the public. The WALLCAST series, which will be held 11 times this season, invites people of all ages to experience classical music – aurally and visually – in a casual and comfortable outdoor setting. Attendees bring their folding chairs and

picnic blankets to the park to watch live feeds of performances for free. This approach to casual and democratized access has helped NWS engage the community and draw in new audiences. "We didn't want the center to say to patrons, 'wear a suit and tie, sit up straight, clap when we tell you to clap, don't talk to your neighbor,'" Hall said. "Even so, some people may not be able to attend concerts. By

bringing the music outside, people don't necessarily have to cross that mental and physical threshold. They can experience classical music out here, the way they want to do it. They can bring kids, pets, and wine. They can talk and enjoy the weather. It brings the community together in a new way."

NWS features a multitude of concert formats and community activities to showcase the various ways people of all backgrounds can appreciate classical music. The academy's late-night PULSE series converts the center into a nightclub setting that combines lounge-style lighting, art videos, alternating DJ sets, and performances by the orchestra ensemble. NWS has also teamed up with



Michael Tilson Thomas and America's Orchestral Academy in Antheil's 'A Jazz Symphony'.

Jackson Health System to present monthly [Yoga Mornings](#) at SoundScape Park. "There's no one magic bullet," Hall said. "There are a lot of different things you have to do because there isn't just one community, there are dozens of communities in the city. If you want to be successful in engaging them, you have to do a multitude of things. You meet them where they are."



Side by Side rehearsal

necessary professional developmental and communication skills to thrive as an independent musician without depending on the traditional structures of the industry. "It's great to leave here and move on to an orchestra, but what you really need to be prepared for is how to be comfortable as an artist in the world," Herring

Still, getting people through the door is only half the battle. Music is a highly competitive profession, and today, landing a job requires skills beyond technical expertise. At NWS, Fellows follow a 35-week experimental curriculum that lies outside the lines of traditional conservatory training. Along with in-depth technical training, Fellows focus on finding their own voice as well as gaining the

said. "You have to stop and think, 'who am I as a player? What do I have to say? How do I say that?' It's a deep internal understanding of oneself."

Launched in Fall 2016, NWS and the [Northwestern University Kellogg School of Management](#) will host an entrepreneurial program for all first-year Fellows. "We are training leaders," Herring said. "Part of leadership is representing the art form. We teach our Fellows to engage with the public every day and to think outside the box. Academic work is inward focused. It's our job to help them turn that inward focus outward, to create new ideas."

The Fellows themselves are also afforded the ability to conceive, design, and execute parts of their own programming. The academy's New Audience Fellow Initiative allows select Fellows to seek out new audiences with a production of their own design. In that way, the audience becomes a focal point in the decision-making process. "It's design thinking," Hall said, "It's about figuring out what audience is not being represented in our concert hall. If we want them to like what we do, you have to figure out what it is that they like and then you design the program around that."

Always forward-facing, NWS is resolute in embracing technology and using it as a tool to reach new listeners and explore the future of online music education. Technology capabilities abound throughout the New World Center. Private practice rooms are equipped with interactive video screens, state-of-the-art recording and web-casting

infrastructure, and Internet2, a computer networking consortium

that offers exceptionally fast network connection. With Internet2, Fellows can receive training from professionals around the world, including members of professional orchestras like the Vienna Philharmonic. The performance hall features five overhead video screen "clouds" for surtitles, film montages and animations. The [Knight New Media Center](#), founded by the Knight Foundation in 2008, is where ingenious digital content comes to life. With four video suites, a production booth, and a robotics system, the media center provides an essential component to the NWS experience. By incorporating a wide variety of visuals alongside the music, NWS aims to generate new ideas about the way music is taught, presented, and experienced. "Some people respond to listening, and others respond to visuals. The



Igor Stravinsky's Circus Polka at the New World Center, animation by Emily Henricks. Photo by Rui Dias.

opportunity here to express music aurally and visually just opens up access to many more people,” said Hall.

With music streaming services revenue at all times high, it is clear that the musical genre can be relevant in a digitized world for all generations with a fresh approach to innovation. However, the experience remains richer if one breaks the current mold and experiences music live in all its original glory. “I think the spectrum for new opportunities is enormous,” Herring said. “Musicians are inventive and compelled to share, they will figure out new ways to engage.”

Online:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/stephanrabimov/2018/04/25/the-new-world-symphony-brings-classical-music-into-the-digital-future/#f20c5a01f80c>

LIMELIGHT

AUSTRALIA'S CLASSICAL MUSIC AND ARTS MAGAZINE

Tuesday, March 27, 2018

New World Symphony: Education's New Age of Enlightenment

Concerned for classical music's future? Take a look at Michael Tilson Thomas's Miami-based academy.

By Clive Paget

Walking through the airy, light-flooded halls of the New World Symphony's faculty building in downtown Miami Beach, you pretty quickly get a sense that this is far from your run of the mill conservatorium. It's home to around 90 students, many of who you can peer in on as they practise inside the glass-walled rehearsal rooms, but these are no ordinary rooms, and this is no ordinary college of learning. Oh, and by the way, there is no residential musical faculty here.



New World Center, Miami Beach

Instead, NWS fellows (as they are known) are taught by a combination of visiting guest artists and hi-tech, interactive, long-distance coaching sessions. Their teachers include senior musical pedagogues from all over America (or even further afield), plus the careful guiding hand and sensitive, forward-thinking ministrations of founder and Artistic Administrator, conductor, composer and impassioned educator, Michael Tilson Thomas.

NWS is essentially a geographically-led model, hence its technical solutions should be of interest to a large and awkward-to-get-to

country like Australia. This kind of approach, for example, would enable a musician in Perth to be coached by a mentor in Sydney. But it isn't just the mechanics that make this institution a beacon for education in the modern age, it's the methodologies too, ranging from the practical and pragmatic to the downright holistic.

The academy boasts a three-pillar curriculum that sees, in addition to musicianship, the students embracing 'engagement' and 'entrepreneurship'. Thus curricular activities focus on broader career skills such as how to talk to audiences – including journalists! – without feeling self-conscious, and how to curate programs around what audiences actually think and want. They are encouraged to consider thorny issues like what happens when you change the time of a

performance and how close should audiences be to the performers. Coaches come in to help with an enlightened range of activities such as wellness – there are regular yoga and meditation classes – audition preparation and community engagement. Fellows can receive help from a performance psychologist and even unwind with a bit of swing dancing.

Tilson Thomas, or MTT as he's known to everyone on campus, founded New World Symphony in 1987. He'd been involved for some years at the Boston Symphony's Tanglewood music festival working with highly talented young musicians, many of who had just graduated from the top US conservatories. And yet many of them either didn't know what they would do next or simply planned to muddle along until an audition turned up. "There was one ace percussionist who was so happy because he had this part-time job at Domino's Pizza, which meant he would have the rest of the time to prepare for auditions," MTT tells me, relaxed and chatty in his spacious office-cum-eerie on NWS's topmost floor. "I was personally struck that all these wonderful young people needed some place where they could pay attention to developing their talents as they needed to be developed."



Michael Tilson Thomas. Photo © Art Streiber

In other words, the level of unpreparedness was tangible. Something clearly was missing. That's where Israeli businessman and arts philanthropist Ted Arison came in. "Ted loved music – he had played when he was a young lad in Israel – and he really wanted to do something for young musicians," MTT explains. "He read in an interview I had given that it would be wonderful if such an academy existed and that our nation really needed it. So, he called up Solti and asked him if I were on the up and up, and Solti gave me a good report, I guess (we got along very well, Solti and I). Shortly thereafter I was asked to come have a meeting with Ted. He said, 'So what's this idea?' I had really prepared not at all for this meeting, so I said, 'Well, it's something like this and like this...', and whatever I said, he said, 'Great, we'll do that'".

Arison, who died in 1999, left Israel in 1952 for New York. A natural entrepreneur, he co-founded Norwegian Cruise Lines in Miami back in 1966 and then Carnival Cruise Lines in 1972. "Ted was a very magnetic personality and a very powerful businessman, but also someone of immense heart," says MTT who remains close to Arison's widow Lin, also a NWS co-founder. "He won me over to this idea, and drove me around this area in Miami, which was very, very depressed at that point. They said the arts are going to be part of the process of transforming this whole area, which is indeed what happened. It was a very quick start-up. Ted said, 'I want to hear music three months from now'. So, I was like Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland, calling up everyone I knew from Tanglewood and saying come down here and let's put on a show."

For the first two decades the organisation made the best they could out of an old 1930's movie house where rehearsals might take place in closets, or even bathrooms. But MTT and the Arisons dreamed big and when an old parking lot became available in central Miami Beach they made



Tilson Thomas's office at New World Center

their move. By happy coincidence, MTT was an old friend of Frank Gehry, the singular architect of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. In fact, Gehry used to babysit the fledgling conductor back in the 1950s! "If I'd trust the future of classical music to anyone, I'd trust it to you," were Gehry's words as he came on board for three years of planning plus three more to construct the ambitious, six-story, 100,641-square-foot building.

As you approach, the New World Center appears to float like a beacon of airy white concrete and glass above a 2.5-acre park dotted with waving palm trees and sculpted grassy banks. Coming in at a surprisingly reasonable \$160 million, the Arison Arts Foundation put \$5 million towards the new building, while a glance at the acknowledgements board in the spacious foyer reveals a remarkable \$100 million anonymous donation, the kind of 'naming-rights-free' support an arts company's dreams are made of.

Inside, the 750-seater concert hall at the heart of the building is remarkable in itself. The acoustics were designed by Yasuhisa Toyota, the acoustician on Walt Disney Concert Hall (cited in interviews with the likes of Emanuel Ax as a real musician's favourite). The steeply banked seating (no seat is more than 13 rows from the stage) is easily manoeuvrable and flexible performance platforms can be changed mid-concert. A total of 14 projectors can throw video, ranging from close-ups of musicians to complementary art projects, onto huge sail-like panels suspended from the ceiling. Even the seat fabric is Gehry designed in what can truly be described as an immersive experience. "Michael wanted it that you would be unable to be passive about the music," is how NWS Executive Vice President and Provost John Kieser puts it.

In fact, although MTT suggests that he was clearer about what he *didn't* want the building to say, there were some very definite priorities in his vision for the precinct. Most rehearsals take place in natural light – "that really does have an effect on your spirit," he says. The music library is on the roof, forcing players up from the depths to study. He also wanted full-on engagement between the student body and a local community who, since they can literally look through the walls, would hopefully be curious to see behind the scenes.

But it isn't just the inside that matters. From the outset, MTT and Gehry envisioned various means whereby the music could more directly engage with the people of Miami. Enter 'The Wall': a 7,000-square-foot (650 m2) projection screen that forms the right-hand end of the outside of the building itself and is believed to be the



NWS Fellows perform a Philip Glass string quartet with complementary video

largest permanently established projection surface in North America. A concert shown on the wall is now known as a WALLCAST®, a term that has been officially trademarked by NWS as a mark of their outstanding success.

For audio, a whole half acre of the park has been designated as the SoundScape area boasting a Meyer technology sound system incorporating 167 individually tuned speakers. High-definition video presentations are augmented by the use of scannable QR codes enabling the audience outside to dial up information on the musical works being performed. As proof, an impressive relay of a recent concert proceeds to show off the finest open-air sound system I've ever heard.

Sensitively manipulated by the NWS sound technicians, soft music can be lifted to avoid impinging traffic noise while a subtle nudge at the climax of the finale to Mahler's Fifth Symphony



*A New World Symphony WALLCAST®.
Photo © Rui Dias-Aidos*

raises goose bumps. By the end of the 20-minute demonstration we've attracted a polite and inquiring crowd. The park itself became a gathering spot in the wake of tragedies like the Orlando shooting and Hurricane Irma and it now regularly fills with up to 2000 bystanders, their picnics and their pets. A regular WALLCAST® can happen up to twice a month. Statistics prove how atypical this audience is with 45% of attendees non-white, while 75% would not consider purchasing a ticket for an indoor concert. Impressively, they take their litter home.

But what of the student body? Lunch with a couple of articulate fellows show them to be both engaging and engaged. Around 1,300 applicants per year compete for approximately 28 places in the New World Symphony, making it harder to get into than any Ivy League university. That means over a three-year span there are an average of 85 fellows in the program, though some depart early as musicians on the course are actively encouraged to audition for professional orchestral jobs. A successful fellow pays no fees, instead receiving a stipend of \$500 a week plus an apartment nearby. All that comes out of an annual budget of \$16.5 million, 20% of which comes from ticket sales and hires while the rest is made up of endowments and fundraising. When performing, these young players frequently look elated. Either there's something in the water or the program agrees with them.

The educational philosophy stems from MTT himself who describes his own teachers as being very much involved in 'musicianship'. "I'm very theatrical by nature, but I also have this intellectual perspective because all of my teachers constantly stressed what was going on in the design of the music," he explains. "That has led to the central questions at this academy. When anyone brings a new piece to me I'm always saying: 'OK, these are the things we have to think about. One: what is happening? What's the melody, what's the harmony, what's the bass line, what's the phrase structure? Question number two: Why is it happening? To what purpose is it happening? We have this chord here and suddenly we have a substitute chord here. Or we have five bars here, now suddenly we have six bars. Why are these things going on? And then question number three – which I so often find no one has ever been asked – is: And what does all of this mean to

you? And then question number four is what are you going to do about it?' It's very simple and it always comes down to those four questions."

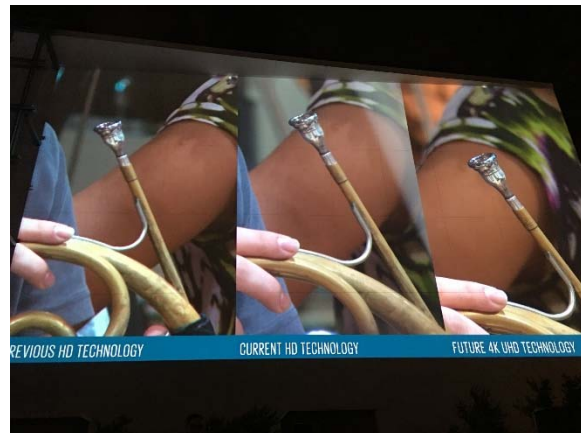


MTT conducts Ted Hearne's Miami in Movements

Supporting the MTT philosophy is one of the most forward-thinking and technologically sophisticated learning systems in the world. All rehearsal rooms are wired for sound and lights. To enable distance teaching to be done with the minimum delay – and imagine for a moment the difficulties of playing a duet with your teacher in Canada when you are out of sync by even half a second – the latest microphone, camera and high-speed internet technology is constantly being sourced to ensure the best possible learning experience. And it's not just a one way street. If another institution has the kit, NWS fellows can coach less experienced students in other locations. The tech discussion ranges across the differences and benefits of Polycom, Cesnet and LOLA (that's LOW Latency audio visual streaming, the latest Italian designed Windows-based system that has a maximum latency of 3 milliseconds). It may sound complex, but these things matter a lot at NWS. "If you have LOLA, MTT can conduct your youth orchestra," Kieser says, putting it neatly into perspective.

Outside of the practice rooms, the tech spec goes on and on. At any given time, the concert hall can mix 20 to 40 microphones, while 12 robotic cameras are on hand to capture the action. The projection system is so state of the art that it approaches the point where accompanying videos can practically follow the musicians. A video team of seven are on site plus scorereaders to help with coordination. MTT himself has a healthy wariness about the potential for too much projected content to distract, believing that music must always be chosen that is truly enhanced by video. Nevertheless, NWS commissions – like Thomas Adès' *Polaris* that opened the Center – have always included a visual component, and as an impressive firing-on-all-cylinders demonstration inside the hall proves, for NWS, the sky is the limit.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. "Imaginative, flexible and happy to be challenged," is how orchestral managers generally describe NWS fellows. MTT believes in encouraging students to "paint outside the lines". If they get stumped on one side of the line, he suggests, "you take yourself over to the other side and take a look at it from a different perspective." He also fosters students to have enthusiasm not just for their own work but for other peoples – not an easy lesson for competitive young people to learn. Yet learn it they do, and the statistics reveal an



Video technology demonstration on the NWC wall

impressive hit rate with 10 to 12 NWS alumni to be found on average in most of the major US orchestras.

Walking across the landscaped lawns on a sunny winter morning in Miami and gazing up at Gehry's edifice, coolly confidant in its alabaster majesty, it's easy to be seduced by MTT's enlightened educational vision. If I sound like a convert, well damn it I am. Fine though they undoubtedly are, Australian educators from conservatoria to symphony orchestras could do worse than get in touch and book themselves in for a tour. Not only are these folk farsighted, they are equally keen to spread the word.

Online:

<https://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/features/new-world-symphony-educations-new-age-enlightenment/>

Tuesday, February 13, 2018



The New World Symphony's popular WALLCAST™ events attract passersby as well as picnickers in the surrounding park who take in live concerts beamed from inside the New World Center. (Photo by Rui Dias-Adios)

New World Players Light the Way for a New Generation

By Barbara Jepson

MIAMI BEACH — This might be the wave of the future for American symphony orchestras: Concert stages bathed in atmospheric lighting. Abstract patterns projected on three sides of the hall. Classical music accompanied by specially created video images, or new compositions in which visual elements are an integral part of the piece. Free live simulcasts that beam indoor performances to listeners in an adjoining park. A mixture of traditional and alternative concert formats geared to audiences of different ages and tastes.

But all the above is already the norm for performances by the [New World Symphony](#), an orchestral academy where 87 select annual “Fellows” learn to ace auditions, adapt to different conductors, and assume leadership roles in the classical music arena.

While U.S. orchestras have been exploring ways to attract new audiences for decades, the NWS is without doubt one of the most imaginative in methodology, particularly since the 2011 opening of its impressive [Frank Gehry-designed facility](#), the [New World Center](#), which contains sophisticated camera and projection systems that reportedly supersede those of other U.S. orchestras. It has also spearheaded a 4-year, multi-orchestra study with arts consultants [WolfBrown](#) that has had a major impact on the staid symphony world.



NWS artistic director Michael Tilson Thomas. (Chris Wahlberg)

“They brought to these experiments,” said [Jesse Rosen](#), president and CEO of the [League of American Orchestras](#), “the kind of discipline and rigor that often doesn’t happen. And they’ve firmly established the viability of mixing up the concert presentation experience.”

Funded by the [Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#), the [Kovner Foundation](#), and the [John S. and James L. Knight Foundation](#), the studies statistically measured which alternative concert formats brought in the most first-time visitors, and characterized attendees by age, ethnicity, and degree of satisfaction with the event. At the NWS, the mix now includes 30-minute “[Mini-Concerts](#)”; free, outdoor [NWS WALLCAST™](#) concerts; and PULSE, a late-night series with a club-like ambiance that juxtaposes DJ sets and classical music selections. Listeners can drink, text, or post on social media during performances. A subsequent [WolfBrown research report](#) on the WALLCAST™ events noted that of all the NWS formats, PULSE attracts the youngest audiences (53% of those attending from 2011-15 were under 45) and the most racially diverse (39% of those attending from 2013-15 identified themselves as non-white).

According to New World’s president and CEO [Howard Herring](#), more than 850 representatives from 230 international arts organizations have visited the New World Center to attend a performance and learn about the organization’s programs. Among them is southwest Florida presenter [Artis-Naples](#), which on January 30 announced an \$150 million master plan for its cultural campus in southwest Florida that will include an ascending terraced courtyard with a screen inspired by NWS WALLCAST™ technology. The [Kennedy Center](#) also plans to build an outdoor wall for simulcast and video events as part of its ongoing [\\$136 million expansion](#).

The NWS was co-founded 30 years ago by artistic director [Michael Tilson Thomas](#); about 90 percent of its 1,030 alumni make their livings from music. As an educational institution, it operates on a different economic model than professional symphony orchestras, unencumbered by union

contracts. And it has gradually evolved into an incubator for new ideas. In its reach as well as in the high caliber of performances heard during an institute of the Music Critics Association of North America from February 2-4, the NWS is punching way above the weight of its \$16.5 million annual budget.

One part of the New World's success reflects the intrepid, multi-faceted personality of Tilson Thomas himself. Reared in a family with theatrical roots, he was programming environmental happenings and cutting-edge music as early as the 1970s, when he led the "[Spectrum Concerts](#)" as associate conductor of the [Boston Symphony Orchestra](#). In recent years, the conductor and composer has brought some of the NWS concepts to the [San Francisco Symphony](#), where he has been music director for 23 seasons. In 2014, the San Franciscans launched the sell-out [SoundBox](#) concerts, which present new music in a high-tech, club-like setting. According to an SFS spokesperson, the 2018-19 season will offer 23 concerts with projection or multimedia elements, most of them on the subscription or SoundBox series.

Another part of the NWS success story is the philosophy of audience development espoused by its leadership, essential at a time when audiences for classical music in general, and symphony orchestras in particular, are declining. "You must go far beyond the concept that if you play well, you will attract a following," said Herring. "You have to turn that around, and think about invitation, access, penetration, and relevance. You must build new bridges, you must engage people where they are. We've said, can we bring in the yoga students of Miami? Can we bring casual strollers who are walking Lincoln Road?"



Audience development: Yoga and classical music at the New World Center. (NWS)

Such considerations became the impetus behind monthly [yoga classes](#) presented by a healthcare organization at the New World Center with live accompaniment by NWS musicians and the popular WALLCAST™ events, which attract passersby as well as those who picnic in the surrounding park while listening. The goal is not to turn these attenders into subscribers, but to broaden interest in classical music in the Miami community.

Miami in Movements, the centerpiece of a New Work program of three world premieres witnessed on February 3 (see the CVNA review [here](#)) exemplifies continued endeavors along those lines. The piece, by composer [Ted Hearne](#) and filmmaker [Jonathan David Kane](#), utilizes videos submitted by the public as well as filmed interviews and other footage. Funded by the Knight Foundation, it was part of an effort, according to Foundation Vice President of Arts [Victoria Rogers](#), to help Miami be a city that produces art, not just consumes it.

The 756-seat hall was attractively downlit in purple that night, and changing geometric patterns in purple, pink, or white appeared on the largest of five projection “sails” designed by Gehry. These visuals vary week to week to create a hip, stimulating vibe as listeners enter the hall.

When the video and musical elements are conceived collaboratively, as in *Miami in Movements*, they enhance each other, forming a memorable, and at times,

moving, whole. But on February 2, [MCANA Institute](#) participants had witnessed excerpts from two instrumental works to which visual elements had been added: a movement from Philip Glass’ [String Quartet No. 2](#), “Company,” and an excerpt from George Antheil’s [A Jazz Symphony](#). There, the engaging images relegated the music to mere accompaniment, at least for this Baby Boomer.



'Miami in Movements' featured visual elements on five projection 'sails.'
(Gregory Reed)

On both occasions, the sense of creative ferment, of ideas being developed, refined, or discarded, was strong. The NWS commitment to connecting with new audiences is impressive and provides hope for the longevity of a much-loved art form. Yet the performances left me with a tinge of sadness because instrumental music doesn’t seem to be enough for younger audiences. More and more, the lines between orchestra performances and contemporary opera are blurring, changing the notion of what a symphonic work can be. Of course, the NWS still does topnotch traditional-style concerts with no video accompaniment. Yet 20 years from now, will such absorbing, composer-focused music-making even exist?

Online:

<https://classicalvoiceamerica.org/2018/02/13/new-world-players-light-the-way-for-next-gen-ears/>

The New York Times

Seeking Orchestras in Tune With Their Diverse Communities

By [MICHAEL COOPER](#)

APRIL 18, 2018

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/18/arts/music/symphony-orchestra-diversity.html>



The cellist Patrice Jackson performing in 2002 in an annual competition for young black and Latino string players organized by the Sphinx Organization. Credit Andrew Sacks for The New York Times

Orchestras are among America's [least racially diverse institutions](#). African-American musicians accounted for only 1.8 percent of the nation's orchestra players in 2014, according [to an industry study](#), which found that the figure had not grown in over a decade. Three national organizations aim to change that, announcing on Wednesday that they are joining forces to try to help more African-American and Hispanic musicians audition for and land coveted orchestra jobs.

The new initiative — created by [the Sphinx Organization](#), the [New World Symphony](#) and [the League of American Orchestras](#) — will train musicians for auditions, pair them with mentors, showcase their work in concerts and give them stipends to travel to auditions. It is the latest effort to diversify American classical music, which has lagged behind other fields. Women have made great gains in orchestras in recent decades, especially since the advent of blind auditions, in which job applicants try out behind screens. But racial diversity

has been slow to come to American orchestras, which are looking less and less like the cities in which they play.

Orchestras remained 85 percent white in 2014, according to the league, and most of their modest rise in racial diversity in recent years was driven by an increase in the number of musicians of Asian or Pacific Islander heritage. Hispanic musicians made up only 2.5 percent of orchestra players in 2014, up from 1.8 percent in 2002. Small orchestras were more racially diverse than large ones.

The program, being called the National Alliance for Audition Support, will begin in June, when 18 string players will go to Miami to train with the New World Symphony, a renowned orchestral academy, at a three-day intensive course in preparing for auditions. “There’s a good bit of that that’s musical training, but there’s also psychological training,” said Howard Herring, the president of New World, who said that the players would all sit through mock auditions that seek to replicate real ones.

The Sphinx Organization, a national group based in Detroit and devoted to fostering diversity in music, will administer the program, and give concerts to showcase the musicians to the industry. Afa S. Dworkin, the president and artistic director of Sphinx, said in a statement that it was “a critical time for all of us to act with renewed commitment and drive to help our orchestras to be more reflective of their communities.”

The orchestra league, which has made diversity one of its main issues, will work with its 700 member ensembles, which will provide funding and mentors, Jesse Rosen, its president, said. He said that he had been encouraged by the enthusiasm orchestras have shown for the program. “We are encouraged, because we got 100 percent yeses,” he said in an interview. “People said ‘This is very important, and we want in.’”