

# Chamber**Music**

THE 2022 MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

# Time to Heal

Live music is returning  
but the recovery has just begun.



# Time to Heal



A year and a half after Covid-19 first emerged in the United States, the performing arts are still facing deep challenges. A summer and fall that once seemed full of promise—cancelled events rescheduled, in-person seasons resumed—quickly gave way to new uncertainty, as dangerous and highly-transmissible variants of the virus took hold across the country. Though dramatic and heartening progress has been made—at the time of publication, more than two-thirds of the nation’s adults were fully vaccinated—the road ahead for in-person performance, the very lifeblood of our field, remains fraught.

Amidst all this uncertainty, one basic fact keeps asserting itself: our field needs to heal. A life in the arts, always full of precarity, has never been easy. Add to that a host of new challenges—disrupted routines, financial stress, widespread grief,

newfound childcare burdens, or, for many, a mounting combination of the above—and the psychological toll is hard to overstate.

That’s why, for this issue, we’ve decided to focus on healing and recovery, broadly defined. We’ll hear from artists working to build new support networks within the field; experts on anxiety and stress; educators working to lift up those often overlooked by institutional supports; and thinkers dreaming of an arts economy where stress, exhaustion, and burnout aren’t so commonplace.

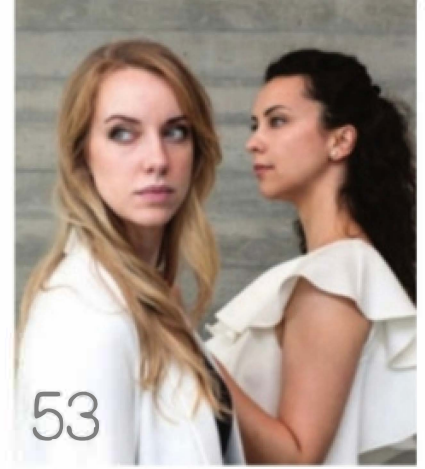
Remarkably, even in the face of such incredible obstacles, many of the artists and administrators featured here have turned their focus outward, working tirelessly to bring the healing effects of music to those who need it most.

Have a story of your own to share? Let us know at [chamber-music.org/extras](https://chamber-music.org/extras)



# ChamberMusic

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The classical-crossover ensemble Time for Three after a performance at Renown Regional Medical Center in Reno, NV.

# Turning Outward

BY Vivien Schweitzer

*With concerts cancelled or postponed, many chamber musicians refocused their efforts on bringing music to Covid-19 patients and frontline workers. Some found new audiences along the way.*



Below: The Vega String Quartet performs at a vaccination site in Atlanta (left); Time for Three performs for hospital patients in Reno, NV (right). Opposite page: Anna Petrova and Molly Carr of Project: Music Heals Us work with displaced populations in Denmark (left); The Overlook performs outside the Morris-Jumel Mansion in New York City (right).

The pianist and teacher Will Ransom, director of the Emory Chamber Music Society of Atlanta's recently-inaugurated Music for Healing initiative, likes to begin programs by telling audiences: "there are two kinds of people in the world. People who love chamber music and people who haven't heard it yet."

Even with venues shuttered, the pandemic has, paradoxically, enabled the society to bring chamber music to a new audience. The Vega String Quartet, which currently serves as the society's resident ensemble, attracted a major donor for community initiatives that Ransom has long wanted to establish but has been unable to afford. The funding allowed the Vega to begin performing at Emory's vaccination center in January, piquing interest from listeners who had never attended a chamber music concert.

Performing for patients and frontline workers virtually, and at vaccination centers in person, has proven such an emotional and rewarding experience that it has inspired many ensembles to make outreach concerts a more integral part of their careers. The violist Yinzi Kong, a member of the Vega Quartet (and who is married to Ransom), said she has been deeply moved during the pandemic by how appreciative listeners have been. The quartet sometimes plays individual movements instead of a whole work, which she believes can remove what she calls the "burden" of attending a formal classical concert. People can relax and aren't worried, for example, about transgressing concert protocols such as clapping at the 'right' moment. At the vaccination center, listeners sometimes approach the ensemble and say things like "wow, I never knew this music existed. Tell us more." They take brochures about upcoming concerts, said Kong, adding that "We can definitely be hopeful that we'll see some new faces in our concert hall" as venues begin to re-open.

Ransom added that in addition to providing performance opportunities to musicians with diminished outlets, outreach

initiatives are very attractive to donors as well. The cellist Andrew Janss, executive director of Project: Music Heals Us, a non-profit founded in 2014 that has presented more than 1,000 free concerts and programs in prisons, hospitals, shelters, refugee aid centers, and prisons in the U.S. and abroad, noted that his organization doubled its income after the publication of a *New York Times* article documenting its virtual concerts for Covid-19 patients and hospital staff.

Pre-pandemic, much of the organization's work was programmatic, such as its prison programs built around Beethoven's music, but performances during Covid have often been what Janss calls "patient preferential." Participating musicians are asked to offer a wide range of pieces and genres and—assuming the patient is conscious—to ask what the individual would like to hear. The majority request something calming. Mr. Janss has played solo repertory ranging from the Bach cello suites to the Marine Hymn, a request from a patient whose brother had fought in Vietnam. Earlier in the pandemic, the violist Molly Carr, who teaches at the Juilliard School and Bard College and is the founding director of Project: Music Heals Us, performed with her husband, the cellist Oded Hadar, and the pianist Anna Petrova while quarantining at Petrova's house.

"There's a reason for me to play better, not just because I have to be better in my career, but because this person needs me to do that right now," said Carr. That mentality, developed in the years she has been playing concerts with the organization, has given her a strong purpose and direction as a musician that has become even more pronounced during the pandemic. She is inspired when she can "see the reactions elicited by this music that we've been pouring our heart, soul, blood, sweat, and tears into and that at a certain point we take for granted. When you experience that it's almost like a drug: you want it more and more. And I realized that this is why I do what I do. This is why I keep at it. My life has changed, and





**“I’ve been a professional musician for about 15 years. It’s not that playing concerts was a mundane everyday occurrence, but it was my job. Since the pandemic, I just feel so much gratitude to be able to share music with people every single time.”** – Laura Metcalf



my career path has changed, and I just want to aim more and more towards those situations and those circumstances where I am able to use my art to make a difference in someone else’s life,” she said.

In September 2020, Music Heals Us launched its Vital Sounds Initiative and distributed \$80,000 in grants as artist fees for virtual concerts arranged by ensembles and organizations such as Imani Winds and Challenge the Stats, an organization that works to empower BIPOC artists. The organization offered a second round of grants in September 2021 to continue the virtual concerts. Other programs will also be expanded via virtual platforms, including the Novel Voices Refugee Aid Project, which Carr and Petrova founded in 2018 to increase visibility through the arts for displaced populations. The Carr-Petrova Duo has taught and created music with refugees in (among other locations) Denmark, Bulgaria, and the West Bank. The program has morphed into the Covid-era Novel Voices: Distance Learning, and Carr, Petrova, and their colleagues will offer weekly digital music lessons, masterclasses, and teacher-training workshops to young refugee musicians, chamber ensembles, and organizations that lack sufficient resources and local faculty. These include a youth chamber orchestra in El Salvador and the Edward Said National Conservatory, a Palestinian school with branches in Ramallah, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Gaza City. “We will take a lot of lessons from this year and this digital excursion,” said Janss.

The violist Elise Frawley, a faculty member at the 92nd Street Y, performed chamber music at Rikers Island and the American Cancer Society before the pandemic. She said that Covid “caused a lot of soul searching” among musicians. “If we can’t use our craft the way we normally do, how can we be useful? Being able to contribute to people’s wellbeing is very meaningful and at the core of why people go into performing in the arts,” she said. Frawley and her friends have performed string quartets by Brahms, Beethoven, and Dvořák in city-run vaccination centers under the auspices of Music for the

Soul of NYC’s Health + Hospitals Heroes, which offers paid, union gigs organized by the Mayor’s Office of Media and Entertainment, NYC Health + Hospitals, the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City, and AFM Local 802. They were Frawley’s first live performances since March 2020. She said that the pandemic has propelled her love of chamber music “as a way to build common bonds with audiences who may not be the typical subscription concert goer” and to bring classical music “out of its ivory tower.”

Cellist Laura Metcalf performs at vaccination centers with The Overlook, a string quartet dedicated to performing works by Black composers. The group formed during the pandemic and made its debut playing outside in streets and parks. “We felt that there was an appreciation for what we were doing and that it was something that people really needed. I think all of us working musicians have had the experience where we’re playing ‘quote unquote’ background music and people aren’t really listening,” she said. “I’ve been a professional musician for about 15 years. It’s not that playing concerts was a mundane everyday occurrence, but it was my job. Since the pandemic, I just feel so much gratitude to be able to share music with people every single time, whether it’s on stage or at a vaccine site.”

For Kong, the pandemic has certainly changed her outlook on performing chamber music in non-traditional venues. In the past, she said, “when we brought music into prisons, hospitals, and nursing homes, it was always as if we brought music to offer the patients. We were the giver. This time, it feels so different because we are all in it together and we are now also the receivers. We are being healed by music as well.”

*Vivien Schweitzer is a music critic and the author of A Mad Love: an Introduction to Opera, which was published in September 2018 and named one of the Ten Best Books of September by the Christian Science Monitor. She is also a pianist who loves playing chamber music.*