

# Providing Relief to the Arts in the Middle of a Pandemic



## ARTIST RELIEF TREE



The Artist Relief Tree logo  
( **Artists Relief Tree** )

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The pandemic has not only deprived concert and opera lovers the opportunity to enjoy live performances in traditional venues, it has also created tremendous economic hardship for artists of all sorts, as well as for the many, many people who work in the venues where they perform, from box office employees to stagehands to administrative staff.

A wide variety of relief organizations have sprung up since March to provide financial and other types of COVID-19–related assistance to those in need in the music world. Some funds — such as [Foundation for Contemporary Arts](#), [New Music Solidarity Fund](#), and [The Actors Fund](#) — are national. [Artist Relief Tree](#) is helping artists worldwide, while the [Sony Corporation](#) also has established a global relief fund, one of whose goals is to provide support for up-and-coming members of the creative community

New York and Los Angeles chapters of the [American Federation of Musicians](#) union are providing COVID-19 relief assistance to members, while arts groups in states across the country also are offering aid. Some symphony orchestras — such as Maine’s Portland Symphony Orchestra, Missouri’s Springfield Symphony Orchestra, and North Carolina’s Winston-Salem Symphony — have established their own COVID-19 relief funds. Nor are singers or opera troupes being ignored: Opera San José, in California, has set up a fund, while the Boston Singers’ Relief Fund is providing assistance to New England–based classical singers.

Artist Relief Tree was launched as a Facebook fundraiser on March 11 by Morgan Brophy, Wolf Trap’s assistant director of artistic administration, and Andrew Crooks, an assistant professor of music at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. Since its inception, Artist Relief Tree has received thousands of requests for assistance from artists all over the world who work in opera, theater, music, dance, and the visual arts, among other disciplines. Brophy says Artist Relief Tree’s goal is to raise \$1 million to aid the 3,500 people on its active request list; an additional 14,500 are on a waiting list. Each one receives what she calls a “\$250 solidarity donation.”

“Even though this is not a large sum of money, it can make quite a difference to a lot of people,” says Brophy. “We cannot hope to replace an artist’s lost income entirely. Our mission is to promote sharing our collective resources to help keep the artistic community alive. ... Like the tree in our name, we want to bring each root and branch of our community together to support each other. To that end, we are offering

solidarity donations for any artist who applies, as long as we have funds to give.”

Performers who have endorsed Artist Relief Tree range from musicians Ani DiFranco, Brian Eno, Ben Folds, Rhiannon Giddens, Missy Higgins, Mike Posner, and Regina Spector to opera singers Frederick Ballentine, Renée Fleming, John Holiday, Isabel Leonard, and Ryan McKinny.

Another emergency funding initiative, The New Music Solidarity Fund, was launched via the efforts of Marcos Balter, Julia Bullock, Claire Chase, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Du Yun, Reena Esmail, Judd Greenstein, Nico Muhly, Andrew Norman, Christian Reif, Christopher Rountree, Caroline Shaw, Conrad Tao, Seth Parker Woods, and New Music USA. It is extending help to less-secure individuals within the new-music community; organizers and contributors also hope to lay the groundwork for a new financial and cultural framework that insures the stability of these musicians.

Many artists — including Balter, Chase, Susie Ibarra, Jen Shyu, Rebecca Sigel, Nadia Sirota, Tao, and Third Coast Percussion — have raised money for the New Music Solidarity Fund by turning online concerts into fundraisers. Organizations such as the [OmniARTS Foundation](#) have also raised funds independently through streaming events. As of late May, when it concluded fundraising, the New Music Solidarity Fund had exceeded its initial goal of \$100,000, as well as its subsequent one of \$500,000, ultimately collecting \$508,000, which it is distributing in \$500 grants to 1,016 applicants.

Tao says the fund’s strategy from “day one” was to assist “people who play new music, who are among the most vulnerable. They often have given up a lot to devote their lives to play the music of our time. It’s not exactly a glamorous world, no one plays new music for the money. It’s full of young students who very likely have been left in the lurch by all this.”

At age 26, pianist / composer Tao — who made his Carnegie Hall debut last fall and has been commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, among

others — says he has “more resources” than many of his peers, for whom “losing one month of gigs is existentially threatening.” He says he was “really grateful to everyone who helped us meet our goals. I’m so grateful to know that people can show up for each other in this way. It means a lot. It gives me such a real sense of strength.”

A longtime part of the entertainment industry, The Actors Fund (which was established in 1882) serves all professionals — not just actors, and not just those on stage or in front of the camera — working in film, theater, television, music, opera, radio, dance and more, through programs that address this community’s unique needs. A national organization with offices in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, The Fund directly serves thousands in person and via its online resources. In normal times, it provides a wide variety of services, including social services, emergency financial assistance, career counseling, employment training, health insurance counseling and enrollment support, affordable housing, senior care, and financial planning and management services. It also runs a senior care home in Englewood, New Jersey.

In March it began raising money for a COVID-19 emergency relief fund, through special livestreamed events such as a one-night-only return of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and an ongoing series, \_\_\_\_\_, which is livestreamed daily and hosted by SiriusXM host Seth Rudetsky and his husband, producer James Wesley. Series guests have ranged from Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tina Fey to John Lithgow, Audra McDonald, and Will Swenson.

As of June 11, The Fund had provided \$12.7 million to close to 11,000 people through its own funds and those of the 12 partner funds it administers; the latter include those of the American Guild of Musical Artists, SAG-AFTRA, Producers Guild of America, and International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees.

Actors Fund chairman Brian Stokes Mitchell — who has won Tony Awards for his star turn in the 1999 revival of *Kiss Me Kate* and for his charitable

work for The Actors Fund, and who hosted [Lincoln Center's Memorial For Us All broadcast on June 14](#) — says, “We’re all hurting right now, particularly the entertainment community. Broadway will be among the last, if not the last, to come back” from the pandemic, in part because it relies literally on “people coming together.”

Mitchell says The Actors Fund now provides the same types of aid it does in normal times, just “more of it.” The pandemic, he notes, “is not permanent. This is temporary. All things pass. The Spanish flu passed. Ebola, measles, mumps, polio — all things eventually pass either through cures or through herd immunity. We’re going to get to that point as well.”

“The hard part is what do we do in the interim. But eventually, it will be resolved — we don’t know how, we don’t know what it’s going to look like. There’s a little glimmer of hope, this isn’t permanent. It’s a temporary, but large, upset in our lives.”

*Below are of some of the COVID-19 relief funds helping people in the performing arts. We thank them for helping the performing arts community.*

## National relief funds:

[The Actors Fund COVID-19 Emergency Relief](#)

[American Guild of Musical Artists Relief Fund](#)

[Artist Relief](#)

[Artist Relief Project COVID Emergency Relief](#)

[Artist Relief Tree](#)

[COVID-19 Fund @ Sweet Relief](#)

[Equal Sound Corona Relief Fund](#)

[Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grants COVID-19 Fund](#)

[The Lewis Prize for Music COVID-19 Community Response Fund](#)

[#MusicUnited](#)

[MusiCares COVID-19 Relief Fund](#)

[Musicians Foundation](#)

[New Music Solidarity Fund](#)

[Sony Global Relief Fund for COVID-19](#)

# COVID-19 relief funds, by state, alphabetical order:

California:

[American Federation of Musicians Local 47, Burbank, COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund](#)

[City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs / Community Partners Arts Emergency Relief Fund](#)

[Opera San José Artists and Musicians Relief Fund](#)

Connecticut

[New Haven Creative Sector Relief Fund](#)

Georgia

[Atlanta Musicians' Emergency Relief Fund](#)

Idaho

[COVID Cultural Commissioning Fund](#)

Illinois

[Chicago Artists Relief Fund](#)

Indiana

[Indiana Music Industry Relief Fund](#)

[Indy Arts & Culture COVID-19 Emergency Relief Fund](#)

Louisiana

[Culture Aid NOLA](#)

[Feed the Second Line NOLA](#)

[New Orleans Business Alliance Relief Fund](#)

[New Orleans Musicians' Clinic Meals for Musicians](#)

Maine

[Portland Symphony Orchestra Musician Relief Fund](#)

Massachusetts

[Boston Music Maker COVID-19 Fund](#)

## **Boston Singers' Relief Fund**

Michigan

## **Michigan Artist Relief Fund**

Minnesota

## **Springboard for the Arts Personal Emergency Relief Fund**

## **Twin Cities Music Community Trust**

Missouri

## **St. Louis Arts and Music Fund**

## **Springfield Symphony Orchestra Musicians' Relief Fund**

New Mexico

## **New Mexico Musicians Relief Fund**

New York

## **American Federation of Musicians Local 802 Musicians' Emergency Relief Fund**

## **Lost My Gig NYC**

## **Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation Emergency Fund for Jazz Musicians**

## **NYC Low-Income Artist + Freelancer Relief Fund**

## **Western New York Arts Emergency Relief Fund**

North Carolina

## **Charlotte Music Community COVID-19 Relief Fund**

## **Durham Artist Relief Fund**

## **Mecklenburg Creatives Resiliency Fund**

## **NC Artist Relief Fund**

## **Winston-Salem Symphony COVID-19 Musician Impact Fund**

Ohio

## **Columbus Artists Relief Fund COVID-19 / Coronavirus**

## **Greater Columbus Arts Council COVID-19 Emergency Relief for Artists**

Oklahoma

[Red Dirt Relief Fund](#)

Oregon

[COVID-19 Oregon Musicians' Relief Fund](#)

[Portland Area Artist Emergency Relief Fund](#)

Pennsylvania

[Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council Emergency Fund for Artists](#)

[PGH Artists Emergency Fund](#)

Rhode Island

[Newport Festivals Musician Relief Fund](#)

Texas

[Banding Together ATX](#)

[Dallas Artist Relief Fund](#)

Washington

[COVID-19 Artist Trust Relief Fund](#)

[4Culture Cultural Relief Fund](#)

[Seattle Artist Relief Fund Amid COVID-19](#)

[Spokane Artists & Creatives Emergency Fund](#)

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