

RI ARTS

Newport Music Festival plans a summer of genre-defying concerts

Executive Director Gillian Friedman Fox says she's aiming to "celebrate the diversity of artistic expression within classical music."

By [Alexa Gagosz](#) Globe Staff, Updated February 22, 2021, 6:28 p.m.



Gillian Friedman Fox, the new executive director of the Newport Music Festival, came to Rhode Island in January from the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. NATHAN LUTZ

PROVIDENCE — Newport Music Festival Executive Director Gillian Friedman Fox, who helped the Dallas Symphony Orchestra bridge the gap between contemporary culture and classical music, is launching a summer of genre-defying shows as the Festival begins

and classical music, is launching a summer of genre-defying concerts as the festival begins its 53rd season.

Fox, who is from New Jersey, has received national attention for curating programs that featured cutting-edge artists and visuals as DSO's director of Cotemporary and SOLUNA programs.

She said the 2021 summer programming will combine well-known names with rising stars in shows.

"The Newport Music Festival is a classical musical festival first. But I want to show that you can celebrate the diversity of artistic expression within classical music," said Fox to a Globe reporter Monday evening.

For Fox, it's time to start celebrating classical music in a more-inclusive way.

ADVERTISING



The Newport Music Festival announced Monday that it will present 17 concerts this summer, from July 4 to July 20. Each show will be held outdoors at historic mansions and venues in Newport. The performances will include classics by Beethoven, Bach, and Brahms alongside pieces by composer and violinist Jessie Montgomery, 18th century composer and conductor Joseph Bologne, and pianist Teresa Carreño.

A full program will be announced when tickets go on sale to the public in April.

“People will see that [this season] will not only preserve tradition, but embrace artistic innovation,” she said.

An Opera Night at The Breakers and three free concerts presented throughout the Newport Community will also be announced at a later date. Performances will also take place at Bellevue House, Castle Hill Inn, The Chanler at Cliff Walk, King Park, the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center, Norman Bird Sanctuary, and Rough Point.

Each show will have a limited capacity of about 100 people, with appropriate social distancing between patrons, all of whom will be required to wear masks at all times. Performances will run for approximately 60 to 75 minutes without intermission.

Fox said that the Festival will commission a new work by a Black, Indigenous, person of color, or woman composer as a commitment to the future of classical music. The new work, which has not yet been announced, will be premiered this summer.

“This was something that I was totally vocal about during my interview process. Classical music is very much older, white men. But there’s incredible music by women and people of color,” said Fox. “They’re just not as often programmed.”

Like many other events, the Newport Music Festival was cancelled last summer, though the organization rolled out a mini, three-day show at The Chanler, which Fox said sold out.

“That was truly a test for the organization,” she said. “And it gave me confidence that there was so much demand.”

The announcement of the summer 2021 season is a sign of hope for other businesses in the Newport area, which [relies heavily on tourism](https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/02/22/metro/newport-music-festival-plans-summer-genre-defying-concerts/).

“As soon as we knew we were moving forward, I wanted to get this news out there. People want to look forward to something,” Fox said. “It’s time to bring life back to Newport.”

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