



Symphony Music Director and Conductor Scott Seaton wore more hats than usual during the 2020-21 season. In addition to conducting, he did sound/video editing, hosted online interview segments (such as with violinist Summer Sun above) and joined an ensemble as a player.

at the height of the pandemic, resulting in very spirited performances. Some players shared a space for their contribution—like mother-son cello-flute duo Ruth and Anthoni Polcari on Heitor Villa-Lobos’ “Jet Whistle, II & III”—while others tracked their parts separately and played split screen to impressive effect (especially clarinetist Bruce Belton, who accompanied several versions of himself).

The intimate nature of *Conversations*, which included personal introductions by the musicians, played into the revamped season’s *Rediscover* theme. In the absence of getting to experience the full orchestra together this year, Seaton said the idea was to “rediscover” the most important part of the symphony—the players—both through the season’s small-scale performances and via the many “Musician Accents” video segments that were released between shows. The 20- to 30-minute clips of Seaton interviewing individual musicians were part of the symphony’s full commitment to the virtual model, which also included the “Just Ask” program (an online Q&A between viewers and Seaton plus a guest soloist), re-release of archive concerts, interviews with board members, online performances and outreach with local schools. All told, more than 50 releases went online during the pandemic.

“This layer of technology is here to stay,” admitted Quivey, who stressed that

the online work and the connections it’s provided between the organization and the community fit right into the mission of providing access to the symphony.

Quivey also said, at this point, as the group looks ahead to next season, they will continue to program flexibility into all of their planning. It’s still unknown when the symphony will be able to play live and in-person.

“I really miss the audience in the same space. It’s amazing how stark it is when they’re not there,” she said. “There’s an energy missing that I really really look forward to when we are able to be back. I hope that what we take away from it is acknowledging that specialness always—not just the first time back—but we can hold that and remember that every time that we’re on stage.”

“Nothing replaces live music,” added Seaton, who said he’s looking forward to the day when the symphony gets to perform Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*, the grand chorale work that has been rescheduled several times throughout the pandemic and is tentatively booked as the finale for the 2021-22 season. “That concert has shifted names many times, and we’re calling it *Unstoppable Beethoven*.”

The *Ninth* is an enormous production that adds a choir to the stage alongside the full symphony, and it would, most appropriately, come at the end of a season that will be titled *Crescendo*.

“We’re starting on a small scale and going all the way to the grandest of scales,” said Seaton. “It’ll be this time that everyone comes back together.” □

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