

*Americans for the Arts presents
The 33rd Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture
on Arts and Public Policy*



Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts & Public Policy

A virtual event with

Vijay Gupta

June 23, 2020

Sponsored By:
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OPENING REMARKS BY ROBERT L. LYNCH



Americans for the Arts Former President and CEO Robert L. Lynch

Hello, everybody. I'm Bob Lynch, president and CEO of Americans for the Arts, and I want to welcome all of you to our first ever virtual presentation of the annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy. While I certainly would have preferred to welcome you all in person to the grand halls of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., it's more important we all stay safe at home during this unprecedented coronavirus pandemic. Although, I have had the pleasure of seeing many of you, maybe more than usually, on our Zoom meetings throughout this crisis.

Now in its 33rd year, the Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy is one of our premier public events, and this year is no exception. In fact, we are also presenting this lecture as the Opening Keynote of our 2020 Americans for the Arts Annual Convention and Public Art & Civic Design Conference. And what a treat to have as our speaker, such a brilliant young artist as Vijay Gupta, who I am lucky enough to count as an inspiration, a messenger of hope for our future, and a dear friend.

One of the up sides of going virtual this year is that thousands more arts enthusiasts, like all of you, are able to participate in these wonderful events. All from front row seats. Over 2,000 people involved overall with our Convention and this lecture.

You continue to amaze me, the stories that I see from folks all across the country, with what you do. You are a significant part of the solutions for our country, and I thank you for that.

We are so grateful to have you with us, whether it's just for this Nancy Hanks Lecture, or whether you are staying on to participate in the rest of our three day Convention, which features compelling sessions and performances, and even networking opportunities.

I congratulate you—each of you here in our gathering of arts leaders, managers, advocates, and local arts champions—for your resiliency and your creativity in these turbulent times. You continue to amaze me, the stories that I see from folks all across the country, with what you do. You are a significant part of the solutions for our country, and I thank you for that.

Before we begin today's program, I want to take a moment to extend our deep gratitude to the very generous sponsors, whose support has made the 2020 Americans for the Arts Annual Convention and Public Art & Civic Design Conference possible.

I first want to express our appreciation to the major supporters of the 33rd annual Nancy Hanks Lecture. Special thanks to Jamie Rosenthal Wolf, Rick Rosenthal, and Nancy Stevens of the Rosenthal Family Foundation, as well as to the entire team at Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schrek, who helped enormously with our public policy work. Your generosity has made it possible for all of us to take part in what will be a very great experience today.

I also want to thank our sponsors, the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities, the Max and Victoria Dreyfus

As the contours of the coronavirus pandemic and its devastating impact on the creative economy wreak havoc on our lives and businesses, the larger issues of social justice and racial inequities, and the abusive treatment of Black, Indigenous, and other populations of color, have demanded that we all actively listen, reflect, and take action.

Foundation, and RBC Wealth Management, who have made this virtual convening a reality. Thank you.

It's important to take a moment to fully acknowledge that we are holding these events at a time of significant upheaval and transformation in our country. As the contours of the coronavirus pandemic and its devastating impact on the creative economy wreak havoc on our lives and businesses, the larger issues of social justice and racial inequities, and the abusive treatment of Black, Indigenous, and other populations of color, have demanded that we all actively listen, reflect, and

take action. We must unite to stop perpetuated systems of oppression and racism and inequality. We must support the Black Lives Matter movement. And please know that many of these societal issues will be addressed by our keynote presenters and other presenters throughout the conference, including today's Nancy Hanks Lecturer, Vijay Gupta.

Now, Vijay is not only a brilliant musician, soulful thinker, and altruistic and highly effective community activist, he's also the youngest member of the Americans for the Arts Board of Directors, but if you saw his bio, you'd know he's always the youngest at everything he does, and he brings that youthful energy and hope for the future to all his good work.

The stars for this lecture were aligned when the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, enthusiastically agreed to provide today's opening remarks, to both set the stage and to introduce you to the words and music of Vijay Gupta.

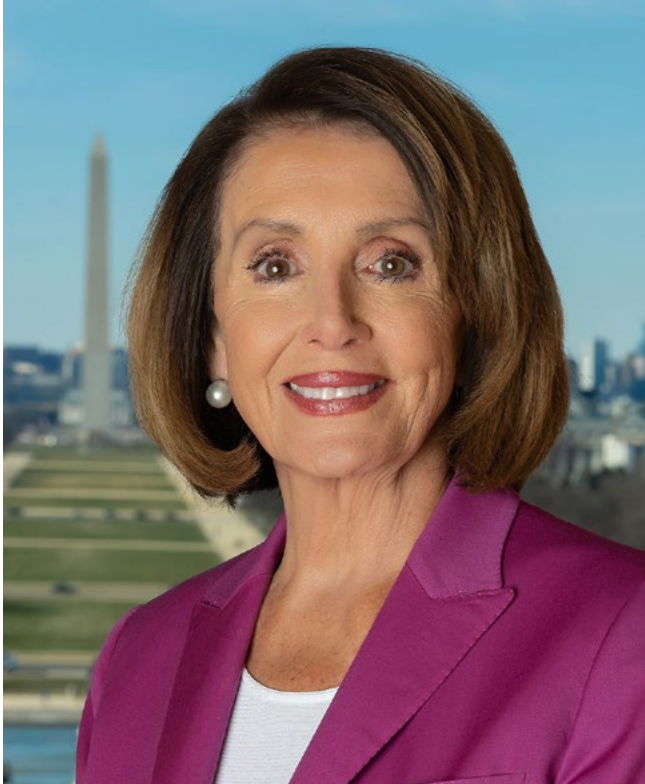
Speaker Pelosi embodies the intellect, the grace, the empathy, and the toughness of true leadership, and it is not an understatement to say she is a national treasure. Plus, she loves the arts, which is fabulous.

So now, please welcome one of the great leaders and legislators that our country has known, the nation's most powerful woman, and the arts community's—and this is true—top front-line negotiator, who has secured billions of dollars of unique relief opportunities, as well as arts opportunities, for arts organizations and gig artists. Ladies and gentlemen, the most Honorable Nancy Pelosi.



Graphic Note by Danielle Iwata.

INTRODUCTION OF VIJAY GUPTA BY NANCY PELOSI



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi

Good morning. It is an honor and, indeed, a pleasure to send warm greetings to the incredible artists and advocates at the Americans for the Arts' 33rd Nancy Hanks Lecture. Thank you, Bob Lynch, for your visionary leadership at Americans for the Arts. You're the best.

For 60 years, Americans for the Arts has been a powerful voice for the arts community on Capitol Hill, ensuring that America's leaders recognize the immense value that the arts bring to our nation. As Americans, support for the arts is in our DNA. The arts have always been integral to our national dialogue and identity.

As President Kennedy said, "The life of the arts, far from being an interruption, a distraction, in the life of a nation, is very close to the center of a nation's purpose." As our nation confronts this challenging time, we look to the artistic community to bring us together and help us imagine a brighter future. But the arts community has been hit especially

hard by the staggering impact of the coronavirus, with millions of jobs lost and billions of dollars in revenue lost.

The arts are not only an essential part of our society, but a critical strength of our economy, both locally and nationally. We must continue to fight for the emergency relief needed now, as well as for long term funding needed to continue your important work. Because a failure to invest in the arts is a failure to invest in America's future.

Despite these challenges, we are so inspired by all the artists who have embraced new media to share their work while social distancing; using their talents to entertain, comfort, and lift up our communities.

Despite these challenges, we are so inspired by all the artists who have embraced new media to share their work while social distancing; using their talents to entertain, comfort, and lift up our communities. Today's Nancy Hanks Lecturer understands all too well the power of the arts to bring us together.

As an acclaimed violinist, and champion for the arts, Vijay Gupta has already made a powerful impact on the artistic community at a young age. Joining the L.A. Philharmonic as the youngest artist ever, he used his compassion for the arts through his Street Symphony initiative. By bringing the power of music to these vulnerable communities, Street Symphony gives them the tools to express their pain, as well as their dreams and the courage to transform their lives.

As our nation thinks about recovering from the current crisis, Mr. Gupta's community based initiative is a model for how the arts can help heal and unify our communities in a way that honors our bedrock values of equality and justice for all.

We're all grateful for Mr. Gupta's tireless work, and I know his timely and important message will inspire and motivate you all.

PERFORMANCE AND REMARKS BY VIJAY GUPTA



The 2020 Nancy Hanks Lecturer on Public Policy, Vijay Gupta delivers his lecture entitled “The Next Response: Practicing the Future Now,” photo courtesy *Los Angeles Downtown News*, Gary Leonard.

The words of the poem “When the Violin” were written in the 14th century, by the Persian, Sufi mystic Khwāja Shams-ud-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥāfeẓ-e Shīrāzī—commonly known in the west as Hafiz. Yet 700 years later, the American experiment and forgiveness don’t really seem to be getting along.

How can we forgive the dream of our nation built on genocide, built by stolen people on stolen land?

How can we forgive eight minutes and forty-six seconds—a knee crushing the life-breath from George Floyd as he cried out for his mother?

How can we forgive the wounds of the past as they bleed into the present?

Yet, Indigenous cultures teach us, in the practices of restorative and transformative justice, that forgiveness does not mean forgetting. Forgiveness is the impossible, audacious choice to take our identity from more than what was done to us, or what we did to others. Forgiveness is the end of letting pain be the only author of our story.

Artists understand forgiveness, because we understand failure. We understand that we will always be humbled by the

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crafts which seem to have chosen us. Writers, weavers, painters, dancers, musicians—we, like some willing Prometheus, submit ourselves to a daily practice of failure. We fail, so that we can fail better. We forgive, so that we can keep making. We make ourselves accountable to the possibility of expressing the unspoken beauty that lies within us. Forgiveness is when the heart sings a new future into being.

The work of the artist and citizen is one: to model—to practice—in our smallest, everyday actions, the world we long to live in. With every breath, every brushstroke, every word, every note—we cast a vote for the future we want to create.

We are called to create America.

We are called to create the *next* response.

We are called to this responsibility beyond our rage, beyond the need for things to change. We are called because of our innate *ability* to respond—the human and artistic abilities we have forged—and which have forged us—through the excruciating crucible of human experience. We are the metabolizers of grief, the witnesses of ecstatic joy. We are *curanderas* and curators, tricksters and translators. Among us



Video screenshot of live performance by Vijay Gupta during the Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy.

are those who dance the *fandango* at the *frontera*, who paint murals in prison, who make poetry from poison. We sing “Hallelujah!” in Skid Row. We are the mushrooms of our society, the ones who feed ourselves from compost, the ones who digest toxins and create nourishment from shit. In the face of all that is broken, we are the laborers of wholeness.

Wholeness, like forgiveness, is a choice. Wholeness is the choice to listen to the symphonic score of our common body—the human body, the cultural body, the body politic, the body of our Mother, Earth. We listen, with all our heart, to the body which keeps the score.

The author Parker Palmer teaches us that the work of wholeness is “create spaces between us where the soul feels safe enough to show up and make its claim on our lives.” The next response is to show up, and to make, of our broken American body still being born, a place safe enough for our souls to claim our lives.

My first violin teacher had an apple orchard in the land of Munsee Lenape people, in mid-Hudson Valley of New York where I grew up. At the end of each lesson, Mrs. Christ would lay out two baskets—one filled with candy, the other with shiny red apples. Because most of her students were four-year-

old tykes like me, the apples usually went untouched.

Mrs. Christ instructed us in something called the “Suzuki Method,” developed by the famous Japanese pedagogue Shinichi Suzuki, who simply called his method “Talent Education.” Dr. Suzuki believed that miraculous talent was innate in every person—if a Japanese infant could learn to speak a language as difficult as Japanese, there was no reason why a child, nurtured by love, couldn’t learn an instrument as difficult as the violin. His aim was to teach more than music—it was to guide parents and teachers in cultivating the beautiful hearts of young people.

I was raised by not one, but two Bengal tigers as parents. After just a year with Mrs. Christ, my parents took me to other Suzuki teachers across the Hudson Valley, eventually to New York City to study with Louise Behrend—who dedicated her life to teaching the Suzuki Method. She was uncompromising. She sang and danced in her lessons. A few years ago, I realized that I teach my students exactly the way she taught me. Ms. Behrend took us—six-, seven-, eight-year-olds, all the way to the stage of Carnegie Hall. There will always be a part of her which lives in me.

As I moved beyond the ten books of the Suzuki Method,

my teachers became even more demanding than Ms. Behrend. Practicing now became a Zen-like discipline: slow was smooth, and smooth was fast—practicing each note, even the silent spaces between each note, like mindful microsurgery. For a boisterous kid like me, slow was boring, and boring was an excuse to read novels and comic books while practicing.

While woodshedding my Tchaikovsky concerto or Paganini Caprices, I would escape into the stories of Greek heroes and Hindu gods, the entire Chronicles of Narnia, Tom Sawyer, The Hobbit, and even the first two and half Harry Potter books. Although The Prisoner of Azkaban did not entirely survive my mother's wrath—it became infinitely easier to read on a music stand in fragments. Of course, now, I mostly practice off an iPad, and I think I read fewer novels and memorize less music than I did as a child.

Another book which made it to my music stand was Farewell to Manzanar, the true story of a Japanese American family living in Los Angeles in 1942. Following President Roosevelt's devastating Executive Order 9066, tens of thousands of Japanese Americans were forced into war relocation camps across the American West. They were fenced in by barbed wire, search lights, and men with guns. Manzanar, in the Paiute land of the Owens Valley of California, in the visage of Mount Whitney and the Sierra Nevada, was an abandoned apple orchard.

During their three-year incarceration, the residents of Manzanar did their best to create a normal life. The Nisei children went to school and played baseball. There was cheerleading and baton twirling. They even formed a dance-band called the Jive-Bombers which would play any popular Glenn Miller tune; all except for the nation's number one hit at the time—"Don't Fence Me In."

Many of the Issei—the first-generation immigrants—were master gardeners. They created parks and fountains and planted vegetable patches called Freedom Gardens. They made tile work and painted watercolors to impress their neighbors. They tended to the abandoned apple and pear trees.

In 1943, a white tower was erected in the cemetery at Manzanar, inscribed with three flowing Japanese characters: "I, Rei, To," meaning "soul consoling tower." While the Issei and Nisei citizens waited out their wrongful incarceration, they cultivated the consolation of their souls. In their longing to be American, they did their best to create a place to belong.

Tonight, in Los Angeles, 66,000 people will be told that they do not belong. The epicenter of the crisis of homelessness in America today, Los Angeles County is only 8% African American, but Black people make up a whopping third of the

homeless population. As early as the 1960s, Skid Row—the 50-square-block neighborhood of downtown LA—was the terminus of "Greyhound therapy," when an institution would buy a patient with a severe mental illness a one-way bus ticket to the city of Angels. Skid Row is often the end of the line for many who are consumed by intergenerational trauma, manifested through chronic addiction and mental illnesses.

Respondents of the study saw the power of art as being core to reclaiming their neighborhood, their cultural lineages, and their very lives, while also challenging a stigmatizing narrative.

Defining a neighborhood by its afflictions is a convenient excuse to erase it. Skid Row is precious land to developers and gentrifiers; especially in the light of the impending 2028 Olympics. But Skid Row could also be considered a recovery zone—one of the largest in the nation—a precious, vital place of new beginnings.

In 2009, Americans for the Arts conducted a case study on the role of arts and culture in Skid Row. Part of the Animating Democracy program, the seminal study, which gathered testimony from community members and leaders of neighborhood organizations, was co-authored by Maria Rosario Jackson—then of the Urban Institute—and my mentor and friend John Malpede, the founding director of Los Angeles Poverty Department, the first theater company to be made up primarily of unhoused people, and the first arts program of any kind for the homeless community of Los Angeles.

Respondents of the study saw the power of art as being core to reclaiming their neighborhood, their cultural lineages, and their very lives, while also challenging a stigmatizing narrative. A community member stated, "We are creating the recovery process... A part of the wisdom that has been discovered and is operational in the neighborhood is that once you are given a safe space, positive things happen."

We ostracize what we consider fragile and criminalize what we call vulnerable. We create the margin, and then push people we call broken into that margin. We define people as problems to be solved, to then erase them by locking them up. But the residents of Skid Row choose to define themselves by their art, by their cultures—and by the possibility of a life which matters.



Vijay Gupta performing with members of his organization, Street Symphony, in Los Angeles, photo courtesy Vijay Gupta.

Since 1985, Los Angeles Poverty Department, which calls themselves the good LAPD has celebrated the art and cultures of Skid Row with projects like “Walk the Talk”—the parade commemorating neighborhood initiatives and the people behind them, an annual two-day “Festival of Skid Row Artists”—which has created a registry of over 800 artists working and living in Skid Row; and the Skid Row History Museum and Archive, a gallery space for Skid Row artists and a center for challenging, generative conversations with community activists and policy makers across the city to create a vision for a healthy, vibrant Skid Row. Skid Row is an artistic ecosystem, composed of the painters of Studio 526, the tile mosaic makers of Piece by Piece, the singers of Urban Voices Project, and the musicians of Street Symphony—just to name a few.

The work of Street Symphony is to create a relational laboratory through music. The music we offer is just the beginning of a dialogue, of a relationship—whether we’re playing Jazz or Schumann at a county jail, singing the “Hallelujah” of Handel or Leonard Cohen at The Midnight Mission, or playing the music of Mariachi, Reggae and West-African traditions on the very streets of Skid Row—the music we play is a conduit of relationship, a way to listen to the voices

and experiences of a community. In Skid Row we were taught that listening is one, sure act of love. Often, we who get to leave Skid Row and return to our homes are the ones leaving with the greater gift.

Today, Skid Row serves as a point of reentry for thousands of Californians emerging from incarceration in the state’s 35 prisons, and from the billion dollar LA County Jail—which is effectively the planet’s largest psychiatric facility. In 2018, Street Symphony started a program called “Music for Change,” supported by the California Arts Council’s Reentry through the Arts Program, which empowers our musicians to engage individuals paroled from life sentences in prison. It was through this program that we met a musician named Duane Robert Garcia, a participant of programs at The Weingart Center in Skid Row. In his youth, De was a radio DJ in his home state of Hawai’i and across the western U.S., before his deployment as a Marine to Vietnam, Okinawa, and Guam.

Our first encounter with De was at Street Symphony’s fourth annual “Messiah Project,” a sing-along of Handel’s “Messiah” featuring solo performances and new works created by and for the Skid Row community. Our performance ran longer than expected, but De, sitting in the second row—sitting in his first



Video screenshot of live performance by Street Symphony musician Dwayne Robert Garcia during the Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy.

concert experience after an incarceration lasting 30 years and 44 days—was shushing antsy social workers, telling them to be patient and enjoy the music.

At the next Messiah Project, De was one of our opening acts, sharing his voice and his story with the people he came to call his new family. Each week, even through COVID, De speaks and sings to us through his phone or Chromebook like some grand priest of music, a constant human reminder of the power of love.

Ladies and gentlemen, my heart bursts with pride to introduce you to my beloved friend and colleague, a true American for his Art—Duane Robert Garcia.

DWAYNE ROBERT GARCIA: Good day, ladies and gentlemen. My name is De Garcia. I'm a musician and an artist in the Los Angeles area. I thank you for letting me be with you this day, and I'd like to share with you my thoughts on music as perfect love.

I found in my life that words that the spirit longs to express are many times in forms we lovingly call music. Single notes, triplets, strung together like a precious pearl necklace adorn the listener's heart and soul. Music stands in the gap, even when the human embrace does not suffice. A first responder, if you will, to the longing of the spirit at the core of who we are.

Our divinity drinks from the fountains of sound, ever refreshing the drought that at times can be a desert of space and time. Music, second to none, stands alone. The go to place accessible to all of us. Knocking at the doors of our being, crying out from the rooftops, and on the highways and byways of all of our lives' experiences. Always eager to please, ever pleasant, kind, and loving. Soothing the troubled waters of our sojourn, onward and upward, wilting and lifting us to crescendo, auditory bliss.

I find music is not necessarily about the gift, but it's about the giver, ever giving glory to the creator. Loving in its expression, music solely gives to all, asking only that we share the unveiling of itself with each other. Music lends grace to the hearers. Music is purity. Music is perfect love.

But the crowd pressed in to see the man condemned to die on Calvary

(Singing in Spanish)

Souls of men made its way through the heart of Jerusalem
(Singing in Spanish)

Came the messiah Christ the King. But he chose out of Israel for you and me

(Singing in Spanish)

All the way to Calvary.

Thank you very much.

VIJAY GUPTA: Dwayne was far too humble to tell you this, but all the incredible visual art you saw on the wall behind him was created by him during his incarceration.

At the end of March, I watched the video of a man named Anthony Almojera, a 17-year veteran EMT and lieutenant of the New York City Fire Department. He spoke of the imminent wave of post-traumatic stress in first responders because of their inability to complete the first response. On top of the horrifying scale of human loss due to COVID, responders are unable to comfort the grieving with the first touch or embrace. In the face of loss, the human touch is as necessary for the responder as it is for the bereaved.

Less than a month after Mr. Almojera's interview, a 23-year-old EMT named John Mondello, the son of a retired NYPD officer, took his own life with his father's gun. He had been on the force for three months.

Like the thread which unravels the tapestry of all grief, the pandemic of COVID and the pandemic of racism have laid bare a fundamental brokenness. As artists, we wake up empty and frightened, knowing that producing some quick commodity of art is not the same as processing our collective grief through our craft. We know that empty statements of solidarity

Music stands in the gap, even when the human embrace does not suffice. A first responder, if you will, to the longing of the spirit at the core of who we are.

and diversity are not enough to undo structures of white supremacy. And even as we are gaslighted into a new "normal," we know that binge-consuming entertainment through an algorithm is not the same as recovering the creative economy of a soul. We can't consume our way back to wholeness.

How might we, Americans for the Arts, stand in the gap of what is broken?

How might we, like the gardeners of Manzanar, create a soul-consoling beauty?

How might we, like those who march and sing in Skid Row, create spaces where our soul feels safe enough to claim this American life, and sing out our next response?



Vijay Gupta composing and performing music at home, photo courtesy John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Another ancient voice from the Sufi world, that of Jalal-al-ud-Din Rumi, teaches us:

Today, like every other day,

We wake up empty and frightened.

Don't open the door to the study and begin reading.

Take down a musical instrument.

Let the beauty we love be what we do.

There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.

As we rebuild the nation for which we stand, the artists of America must kneel and kiss the ground.

We must let the beauty we love—the art we love, the nation we love—become what we do.

We must become America, the beautiful.

We practice the modest, un-applauded integrity between notes and brushstrokes, we practice the relationships between us and our colleagues. We practice listening, and we practice new conversations of accountability between our funders and our communities. We practice standing in the gap across the atavistic fear and sadness and pain which keeps us disconnected from ourselves and from each other. As artists have always done, we practice change. We practice evolution.

We practice a human policy of connection.

It is time to make our garden grow.

(Mr. Vijay Gupta plays a piece of music on the violin).

CLOSING REMARKS BY **ROBERT L. LYNCH**

Vijay Gupta. I thank you, Vijay. Amazing. I thank you for the inspiring lecture and the moving, so moving performances, you know, at the very beginning, the piece “When the Violin” and then your words. That unspoken beauty that lies within us is a great reference to the music that you’ve shared with us today.

A video recording of this event, along with a written transcript of Vijay’s lecture, which is entitled “The Next Response: Practicing the Future Now” will be available on the Americans for the Arts website and our YouTube channel in the coming days.

I also want to thank, once again, Speaker Nancy Pelosi for not only her arts leadership on Capitol Hill, but also for her indispensable national stewardship of our nation during these trying times.

And then for those of you who are staying on for the rest of today’s Annual Convention, we have more phenomenal content in store for you. Starting in just a few minutes, at 12:45 Eastern Time, you can join Vijay for a live conversation and a Q&A breakout session.

Then later this afternoon, at 3:30 Eastern Time, we welcome

six mini keynotes, which we’re calling “COVID Talks,” featuring key leaders in our field.

For those of you who are only joining us for the Hanks Lecture, and some of you have asked about this, I want to thank you, and also encourage you to register for the entire convention to experience more great content from Americans for the Arts over the next three days.

Our Annual Convention is an opportunity to get both inspiring speeches and presentations and crucial hands on training from some of the top leaders in our fields, but you can register for one, two, or all three days of the conference for as little as \$100.

So, visit Convention.ArtsUSA.org to learn more.

Please be on the lookout for a very short evaluation survey to share feedback on this first time virtual Hanks Lecture experience, and we certainly hope you enjoyed it.

And thanks again to our sponsors and for all of you being a part of today’s 33rd annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts & Public Policy and to our speaker Vijay Gupta.

Enjoy the rest of your day and the rest of the conference, for those of you who are staying on. And, please, stay safe. Thank you.

ABOUT THE LECTURER



Video screenshot of live lecture by Vijay Gupta during the Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy.

VIJAY GUPTA believes that the work of the artist and the work of citizenship is the same: to create the world we want to see in our small, everyday actions—one person, one relationship, and one note at a time.

Hailed as “one of the most radical thinkers in the unradical world of American classical music,” Mr. Gupta is an esteemed violinist and speaker. Mr. Gupta’s labor of love lies in the founding and directing of Street Symphony, which brings music to people in shelters, clinics, county jails, and prisons. Mr. Gupta’s work serves to engage people across vast social and economic differences—people who would often never be in the same room together—to create new transformative conversations about belonging and citizenship. Mr. Gupta’s work brings beauty, respite, and purpose to those all too often ignored by society, while encouraging us to reflect on many ways we can all make a difference and truly be citizens in our world today.

Mr. Gupta’s story began just north of New York City in 1987, where he was born to Indian immigrants who immersed him equally in the cultures of West Bengal and Western Europe. Mr. Gupta began playing the violin at a young age, and after only three years of study, auditioned for the Juilliard School of Music Pre-College program. He played his solo debut under the baton of Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, and as a teenager, toured the U.S., Europe, Japan, and his Indian motherland as a soloist and recitalist. As an

undergraduate, he continued to study violin performance while also following a course of study in biology, which led him to research internships at City University of New York and the Harvard Institutes of Medicine where, ironically, he received the most encouragement and support to make a life not as a researcher or doctor, but as a musician. Mr. Gupta continued his musical training at the Yale School of Music before taking an audition for the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra where, in 2007, he became the youngest violinist to win a position in the orchestra’s history.

Soon after joining the orchestra, Mr. Gupta discovered that his new hometown was the epicenter of the crisis of homelessness in America today. Even in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis, thousands of Angelenos sleep on the streets, and even more are incarcerated in the largest county jail system on the planet—effectively our world’s largest psychiatric facility. In 2010, Mr. Gupta started organizing musical events for audiences he would never meet in Walt Disney Concert Hall, performing classical chamber music with his colleagues across the city at homeless shelters, mental health clinics, hospitals and Veterans centers, Los Angeles County jails and California state prisons—and even the very streets of Skid Row.

As a grassroots movement of music, the musical offerings of Street Symphony encompass not only the world of classical and choral music, but the traditions of Mariachi, Jazz, West African drumming, Romani music, folk songs, and most importantly, musical offerings from and by the community of Skid Row—music from people who have themselves experienced homelessness and incarceration. In this radical model of hospitality and exchange, the musicians of Street Symphony share their gifts, and their stage, with the community they serve. They learn and grow with each other. Mr. Gupta says that, often, the professionals are the ones who walk away with the greater gift.

Mr. Gupta is the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, including a 2017 Citizen Artist Fellowship from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and a 2018 MacArthur Fellowship. Each day, Mr. Gupta shares a musical meditation on Instagram centered on the music of Bach, and he encourages you to all follow along @Gupta_violin.

ABOUT THE PRESENTER

With more than 50 years of service, Americans for the Arts is dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. From offices in Washington, D.C., and New York City, the organization provides programs designed to:

1. Help build environments in which the arts and arts education can thrive and contribute to more vibrant and creative communities.
2. Support the generation of meaningful public and private sector policies and increased resources for the arts and arts education.
3. Build individual awareness and appreciation of the value of the arts and arts education.

To achieve its goals, Americans for the Arts partners with local, state, and national arts organizations; government agencies; business leaders; individual philanthropists; educators; and funders. While local arts agencies comprise Americans for the Arts' core constituency, the organization also supports a variety of partner networks with particular interests in public art, united arts fundraising, arts education, local and state advocacy networks, and leadership development.

Through national visibility campaigns and local outreach, Americans for the Arts strives to motivate and mobilize opinion leaders and decision-makers. Americans for the Arts produces annual events that heighten national visibility for the arts, including the National Arts Awards; the Arts and Business Partnership Awards; and the Public Leadership in the Arts Awards (in cooperation with The United States Conference of Mayors), which honors elected officials in local, state, and federal government. Americans for the Arts also hosts Arts Advocacy Day annually on Capitol Hill, convening arts advocates from across the country to advance federal support of the arts and arts education. For more information, please visit AmericansForTheArts.org.



ABOUT OUR PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

The Rosenthal Family Foundation (Jamie Rosenthal Wolf, David Wolf, Rick Rosenthal, and Nancy Stephens) are proud to support the Americans for the Arts 33rd Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy. Established by Richard and Hinda Rosenthal, the Foundation embodies the belief that individuals fortunate enough to receive unusual benefits from a society have the distinct obligation to return meaningful, tangible support to that society—in the form of creative energy as well as funding. The Foundation encourages activity and commentary concerned with constructive social change and recognizes and rewards excellence in individuals and organizations nationwide. Americans for the Arts is particularly grateful to Hinda Rosenthal, who approached the organization about her foundation becoming a sponsor of the Nancy Hanks Lecture 19 years ago, and whose extraordinary support helped the program to flourish and grow into a pre-eminent national forum for dialogue about arts policy.

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ABOUT THE NANCY HANKS LECTURE

Nancy Hanks was president of Americans for the Arts from 1968–1969, when she was appointed chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, a position she held for eight years. Until her death in 1983, she worked tirelessly to bring the arts to prominent national consciousness. During her tenure at the National Endowment for the Arts, the agency's budget grew 1,400 percent. This year marks the 33rd Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy, established to honor her memory and to provide an opportunity for public discourse at the highest levels on the importance of the arts and culture to our nation's well-being.

PAST NANCY HANKS LECTURERS

- 2020 Vijay Gupta, Violinist and Social Justice Advocate
- 2019 Rita Moreno, Award-Winning Actor, Singer, Dancer, Author, Humanitarian, Civil Rights Activist, and Hispanic Heritage Trailblazer
- 2018 Lonnie G. Bunch III and Richard D. Parsons, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
- 2017 Darren Walker, President of the Ford Foundation
- 2016 John Maeda, American designer and technologist
- 2015 Norman Lear, groundbreaking television producer, author, and social activist
- 2014 Maureen Dowd, op-ed columnist for *The New York Times*
- 2013 Yo-Yo Ma, acclaimed musician and arts educator
- 2012 Alec Baldwin, actor and arts advocate
- 2011 Kevin Spacey, actor and Artistic Director of the Old Vic Theatre
- 2010 Joseph P. Riley Jr., Mayor of Charleston, South Carolina
- 2009 Wynton Marsalis, Artistic Director, Jazz at Lincoln Center
- 2008 Daniel Pink, best-selling author and innovator
- 2007 Robert MacNeil, broadcast journalist and author
- 2006 William Safire, columnist and author
- 2005 Ken Burns, documentary filmmaker
- 2004 Doris Kearns Goodwin, journalist and author
- 2003 Robert Redford, artist and activist
- 2002 Zelda Fichandler, Founding Director of Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., and Chair of the Graduate Acting Program at New York University
- 2001 Frank Rich, op-ed columnist for *The New York Times*
- 2000 Terry Semel, past Chairman and Co-CEO of Warner Bros. and Warner Music Group
- 1999 Wendy Wasserstein, playwright
- 1998 Dr. Billy Taylor, jazz musician and educator
- 1997 Alan K. Simpson, former U.S. Senator
- 1996 Carlos Fuentes, author
- 1995 Winton Malcolm Blount, Chairman of Blount, Inc., philanthropist, and former U.S. Postmaster General
- 1994 David McCullough, historian
- 1993 Barbara Jordan, former U.S. Congresswoman
- 1992 Franklin D. Murphy, former CEO of the Times Mirror Company
- 1991 John Brademas, former U.S. Congressman and President Emeritus of New York University
- 1990 Maya Angelou, poet
- 1989 Leonard Garment, Special Counsel to Presidents Nixon and Ford
- 1988 Arthur Schlesinger Jr., historian and special assistant to President Kennedy



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