

# Spring 2021

# IMPACT REPORT

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## Awards and Accolades

### Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards

- *Radiolab*, [The Other Latif](#)
- *Radiolab*, [The Flag and the Fury](#)

### 2021 GANYC Apple Awards

- Nominee: Outstanding Achievement in NYC Radio Program or Podcast (Audio/Spoken Word), [Mostly Mozart Festival](#)

### City & State

- Goli Sheikholeslami was included in City & State's [2021 Telecommunications Power 50](#), a list honoring the industry's leading figures in New York.
- For the second year in a row, Goli Sheikholeslami was included in the [Women's Power 100](#) list.

### Washington Post: The Fix's 2020 List of Outstanding Politics Reporters to Follow in Every State

- Karen Yi and Brigid Berlin

### National Edward R. Murrow Awards

- Podcast: WNYC Studios and OSM Audio, [Dolly Parton's America](#)
- Feature Reporting: Shamari Ridley, Radio Rookies, [Trying to Graduate From High School at 21](#)

### New York Press Club Awards

- Podcast: Ilya Marritz, Andrea Bernstein, and ProPublica, [Trump, Inc.](#)
- Political Coverage: Jose Olivares with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, *The Intercept*, NBC News, Univision, WNYC, and Latin American media partners, [Solitary Voices](#)
- Critical Arts Review: Sara Fishko, Olivia Briley, Wayne Shulmister, and Karen Frillmann, [Warhol's Work](#)
- Documentary: Sara Fishko, Olivia Briley, Ed Haber, and Karen Frillmann, [Shell Shock 1919: How the Great War Changed Culture](#)
- Entertainment News: Sara Fishko, Olivia Briley, Wayne Shulmister, and Karen Frillmann, [Oscar and Nat](#)
- Heart of New York Award: Sara Fishko, Olivia Briley, Wayne Shulmister, and Karen Frillmann, [Wright and the Guggenheim](#)

## Cultural Partnerships

- The WNYC Race & Justice Unit, WNYC Studios, and The Public Theater came together to present [Romeo y Julieta](#), a groundbreaking bilingual audio revival of the Shakespeare classic, starring Lupita Nyong'o and Juan Castano, and directed by Saheem Ali. This production followed the success of last summer's [Free Shakespeare on the Radio](#), which transformed The Public's beloved summertime tradition for the radio, resulting in a **62% increase in WNYC listenership**.
- Alison Stewart and the *All Of It* team partnered with the New York Public Library to get New Yorkers reading together through the ongoing [Get Lit](#) reading club, offering free e-books and rich conversation with some of our brightest literary lights. **Three Get Lit titles are on the Library's all-time top 100 e-book checkouts**, a measure of the series' reach and impact.
- The Jerome L. Greene Space continued its [Food for Thought](#) partnership with the **Museum of Food and Drink (MOFAD)**, exploring the profound connections between food, art, and culture. Recent events have spotlighted Filipinx cuisine, sustainable food production, and the overlooked history of African American whiskey distillers.

# Newsroom Reporting



**WNYC**—Throughout the pandemic, the people of our region have demonstrated the importance of our work by turning to us in greater numbers, now more than ever. This past November, **for the first time in our history, WNYC-FM reached the #1 position for all radio stations in the New York market** during the important Morning Drive time-slot, and we have maintained that position ever since. We've also seen dramatic growth on Gothamist, where **website traffic during winter 2021 was up 50% from winter 2020**.

In February, WNYC announced [two new hosts](#) of our flagship news programs. Award-winning journalist **Michael Hill** is the new voice of *Morning Edition*, and WNYC veteran **Sean Carlson** is now the permanent host of *All Things Considered*, a role he has been filling since **Jami Floyd** left to lead the WNYC Race & Justice Unit in September.

**The Brian Lehrer Show** helped New Yorkers reflect on the solemn one-year anniversary of the pandemic through two powerful initiatives. In partnership with local news site THE CITY, we convened [Reading Their Names](#), a community memorial where callers and listeners “gathered” on the radio to read aloud some of the 30,000 names of those New Yorkers we have lost to the virus. On March 18, our producers traveled to our transmitter at the top of the Empire State building to store the WNYC [2020 Time Capsule](#), an archive of stories and lessons from this past year that will be sealed until March 2030.

## 2021 Municipal Elections Reporting

- The 2021 municipal elections are likely the most consequential in our lifetimes, with 41 of the city’s 59 elected positions open. **As we embark on a critical pandemic recovery, these elections have the power to remake our city, and the WNYC newsroom is ensuring that New Yorkers understand the issues on the ballot and the tremendous stakes.** To set the stage, we’ve relaunched our [Politics Brief](#) newsletter and produced a series of accessible explainers—breaking down the job descriptions of our [Mayor](#), [Comptroller](#), [Borough President](#), [Public Advocate](#), and [City Council Members](#).
- Reporter **Brigid Berlin broke the story** of a year-long dispute about ballot counting between the City and State Board of Elections. This ongoing disagreement threatened to add more chaos and confusion to the first year of ranked-choice voting in NYC. In response to the story, the [State BOE agreed to the city's vote-counting software at the heart of the stalemate](#), reducing the likelihood that the city would rely on hand-counting in upcoming elections.
- To help New Yorkers keep track of the Mayoral race, Gothamist created a useful breakdown of [every candidate running](#) and an ongoing guide to upcoming [debates, forums, and appearances](#).

## Breaking Local News

- **The WNYC newsroom has been a leader in reporting on Governor Cuomo’s alleged sexual misconduct.** We have delivered [exclusive accounts](#) from current and former Cuomo staffers about the toxic Albany workplace culture, and [ongoing coverage](#) of the mounting impeachment inquiry against the Governor.
- WNYC has remained a leader in **criminal justice reporting, producing investigations that have led to direct changes in policy.** Recent work includes coverage of the police disciplinary records that have been released under a [new state law](#) for increased accountability.
- WNYC obtained previously undisclosed records from the Civilian Complaint Review Board to [identify the police officer](#) who used the white power sign during Black Lives Matter Protests in the summer of 2020.

# Newsroom Reporting



## National News Coverage

- In the run-up to the presidential election, WNYC launched [America, Are We Ready?](#), a series of weekly live national call-in specials hosted by Brian Lehrer, carried on 104 stations in red and blue states across the country. Originally slated to air through the inauguration, we responded to the national turmoil spurred during the Capitol insurrection by extending the series through the first 100 days of the Biden-Harris administration.
- The newsroom has produced significant coverage on the insurrection, including an [influential series of reports](#) from [On The Media](#) about Zello, a tech platform that has become a home for militia recruitment and organizing efforts long before January 6. Their work led [Zello to delete numerous channels](#), allowed the [FBI to identify multiple insurrectionists](#), and was cited in a federal indictment.
- Across our platforms, WNYC covered the insurrection's local angles, with stories about local politicians and [law enforcement members who participated](#). Brian Lehrer also hosted a gripping conversation with [Representatives Hakeem Jeffries and Kathleen Rice](#) about the horror of that day and the next steps for Congress.
- Throughout the political turmoil of the last several months, [Tanzina Vega](#) and [The Takeaway](#) have been a leader on the national news landscape, analyzing our multiple crises through lenses of race, class, and gender. Following the insurrection, [The Takeaway](#) hosted celebrated author [Dr. Ibram X. Kendi](#) to discuss America's history of white supremacist violence. Vega has also been leading a national conversation around what she has termed the "[pandemic wall](#)," exploring the national [mental health pandemic](#) that is taking place alongside COVID-19.

## Reckoning with Race, Justice, and Inequality in NYC and Nationwide

- In February, [The United States of Anxiety](#) produced the [Future of Black History](#), a series on the complicated origins of Black History Month. The series engaged listeners and experts, including cultural historian [Saidiya Hartman](#), on the lessons Black History can lend to modern racial justice movements.
- Before the horrific shootings at three Atlanta-area spas, the newsroom was reporting on a wave of attacks against Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities in the [New York area](#), and largely unmet [demands for action](#). In the days immediately after the attacks, our reporters covered the reverberations and [fears of additional violence](#) in those communities.
- In 2019, criminal justice reporter [George Joseph](#) broke the story of the internal databases held by local District Attorney offices, of [police officers with questionable credibility](#). As a result of his years-long investigations, multiple portions of these lists have been made public, including two substantial releases in February from the [Queens](#) and [Staten Island](#) District Attorneys.
- In partnership with [Esquire](#) and Gothamist, Joseph also produced a long-form narrative piece about the [rampant police corruption in Mount Vernon](#), building on his ongoing work, which has led directly to [disciplinary action against offending officers](#).

# Newsroom Reporting



## ***COVID-19 Reporting: Civic Information***

- In January 2021, noted journalist and pathobiologist **Nsikan Akpan joined us as our new Health and Science Editor**. Akpan now oversees our robust and deepening reportage on COVID-19, climate change, and other public health issues.
- In the first confusing days of the vaccination effort, Gothamist produced a [guide to vaccine registration](#) that has been updated as eligibility has changed. The team also reported on Mount Sinai's [cancellation of vaccine appointments](#) and the [racial disparities](#) of vaccine distribution.
- Reporter **Karen Yi** produced a powerful two-part series on the profound toll that COVID-19 has taken on [men in New Jersey's Latino communities](#) and the multiple reasons why COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted the state's [communities of color](#).

# Arts and Culture

**WQXR** :: | 


**WQXR**—The past year's extraordinary events have changed nearly every aspect of our lives, including the art and culture that make our city so vibrant. **As our concert halls were forced to go dark, WQXR's role as a torchbearer for classical music became more important than ever.** We are New York City's only all-classical radio station, and throughout the pandemic, we remained committed to supporting the artists, organizations, and audiences that make up our community. Our 24-hour programming continued uninterrupted, providing connection when listeners needed it most. Meanwhile, our community remained strong. In New York City—unlike other parts of the country—listenership remained steady and resolute, demonstrating the enduring place that classical music holds in the life of this city.

We also recognize the enormous financial challenges that artists and cultural institutions now face, and the opportunity WQXR has to support and sustain them. Toward that aim, our new Chief Content Officer, **Ed Yim**, launched **WQXR STAR (Salute to the ARTs)**—an ambitious plan to sustain local artists, orchestras, and nonprofits through complimentary on-air promotions, access to our platforms for individual artists to create and curate, and sustained partnerships with our city's most beloved institutions.

- **Project Airlift**: Revenue from live events has dwindled, and marketing budgets have been cut. Through **Project Airlift**, WQXR provides complimentary on-air promotional spots to New York-based cultural organizations—from **Carnegie Hall** and the **New York Philharmonic** to **Flushing Town Hall** and **Snug Harbor Cultural Center**—to ensure they can stay connected with audiences, even while they cannot offer live programming.
- **Artist Propulsion Lab (APL)**: This year has been especially tough on individual musicians, so we created **APL**, a grant program for six early and mid-career New York-area musicians. These six APL artists are violist **Jordan Bak**, mezzo-soprano **Kara Dugan**, flutist **Brandon Patrick George**, violinist **Kelly Hall-Tompkins**, **The Junction Trio** (violinist Stefan Jackiw, cellist Jay Campbell, and pianist Conrad Tao), and pianist **Orion Weiss**. You can hear them on WQXR; in The Greene Space; and also on WNYC's *Morning Edition*, Tuesday mornings in March and April 2021.

## Supporting Artists and Cultural Organizations

- In the absence of live performances, WQXR strengthened its partnerships with organizations to ensure that time-honored series—such as **Carnegie Hall Live** and **The New York Philharmonic This Week**—remain on our airwaves.
- WQXR announced the recipients of the **2021 Avery Fisher Career Grant** during a special one-hour radio show on March 11, hosted by **Elliott Forrest**, and featuring performances by the awardees. We also hosted a virtual ceremony following the announcement, with additional performances and interviews.
- **John Schaefer's New Sounds** kept New York City's vibrant musical community connected over the past year. In October 2020, Schaefer reprised **New Sounds Live**, his regular collaboration with **Brookfield Place**. This special two-part series was broadcast live, without an audience, and featured a performance by **Sō Percussion**. And in January 2021, trailblazing string quartet **ETHEL** joined Schaefer on Zoom to present exciting new repertoire and to chat about the challenges of making music during a global pandemic.

# Arts and Culture



## Community and Connection

- To commemorate one year of the pandemic and look toward the brighter days ahead, WQXR produced "[Music of Comfort and Hope](#)," a **three-day community-curated live radio event** at the end of March. Our **listeners shared over 750 musical works** that provided them with hope and solace, which our hosts played alongside the stories they shared. We also received very positive feedback from our audience, reaffirming what we know to be true: that the power of the live listening experience comes not only from the excellent music we program, but also from the knowledge that we are listening together—with our hosts and producers, and with one another.
- In December 2020, as the classical community celebrated **Beethoven's 250th birthday**, WQXR presented [Beethoven Immortal](#), a five-day radio festival honoring his legacy. Anchoring the festivities were **Marin Alsop's four-part series**, [Quest for Joy](#), exploring how Beethoven's loneliness and longing gave rise to some of his most enduring works; the latest installment of **Terrance McKnight's [Black Experience in the Concert Hall](#)**, featuring pianist **Stewart Goodyear** and violinist **Tai Murray**; and Beethoven-centric episodes of **Clemency Burton-Hill's [The Open Ears Project](#)**.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Throughout **Black History Month**, WQXR celebrated Black artists who helped shape the history of classical music, by presenting special recordings and radio programs all month long. Highlights included [A Beautiful Symphony of Brotherhood](#), a documentary show on **Martin Luther King, Jr.**, and [I, Too, Sing America: Music in the Life of Langston Hughes](#), a radio special focusing on **Langston Hughes's** lesser-known musical compositions.
- We continued to lead important conversations about race in classical music in our editorial content. During **Black History Month**, our editorial team took deep dives into the soundtrack of [Judas and the Black Messiah](#); the powerful work of musician and composer [Alice Coltrane](#); and the particular emotionality of composer and lyricist [Margaret Bonds](#).
- On **International Women's Day** (March 8, 2021), WQXR presented its third-annual 24-hour [Women Composers Marathon](#), featuring over **160 pieces** from around **120 women composers**.

# Arts and Culture

**WQXR** ::

**The Jerome L. Greene Space**—March 12, 2020 was supposed to be the first night of a brief, sold-out run of the powerful theater work [Now That We're Men](#). Instead, it was the last time The Greene Space would have a live audience for an entire year. In the months since, we have presented **over 170 digital programs**, including pianist [Jeremy Denk's](#) journey through Bach's music; journalist [Imara Jones's](#) monthly series of conversations about issues facing transgender communities; and a live presidential election special with [On The Media](#) and a host of fantastic guests. Additional major initiatives include:

- [\*\*First Peoples Week\*\*](#): New York Public Radio's first-ever cross-genre celebration of **North American indigenous life and history** featured Native creators, artists, podcasters, and musicians. The festival included vibrant storytelling; conversations on land treaties, mascots, Indigenous representation; a virtual exhibition by artist **Maria Hupfield**; and a beautiful closing concert by Choctaw singer [Samantha Crain](#).
- [\*\*To America: A Live Performance in Greenwood Cemetery\*\*](#): The day before Halloween, The Greene Space presented an innovative partnership with WQXR and **Death of Classical**, exploring grief and healing through music, dance, and poetry. The special performance was streamed live from Brooklyn's historic **Greenwood Cemetery**.
- [\*\*MLK and the Fierce Urgency of Now!\*\*](#): We partnered with the **Apollo Theater** to present the 15th anniversary of our annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration. WNYC's **Jami Floyd, Brian Lehrer**, and **Tanzina Vega** interviewed a host of brilliant leaders and thinkers—including **Reverend Dr. William J. Barber II, Rep. James Clyburn, Letitia James**, and **Nikole Hannah-Jones**.
- [\*\*Punishment & Profit\*\*](#): Every Tuesday from February to May 2021, Artist-in-Residence **Bianca Tylek** has hosted this important series, exploring the **prison industrial complex**. Advocates, journalists, attorneys, and academics gather to discuss the business of punishment, account for its consequences today, and explore visions for a different future.

# Podcasts



## *Trump, Inc.*

- On January 19, the day before President Biden's inauguration, ***Trump, Inc.* finished four years of stories with a [series finale](#) marking the end of the Trump presidency**. After its genesis as a [single investigation](#), in partnership with **ProPublica** and **The New Yorker**, the project grew to become a leader in the ongoing conversation around corruption within the administration, **winning the prestigious duPont-Columbia Award** among many other honors.

## *Radiolab*

- Radiolab* was honored with [two Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards](#)** for "The Other Latif," the show's first-ever serialized series, and "The Flag and the Fury," an episode about the complicated past of the Mississippi state flag. The duPont-Columbia Award is among the most prestigious honors in journalism, and ***Radiolab* is the first podcast ever to receive two in the same year.**
- In partnership with ***The New Yorker*** and ***The New Yorker Radio Hour***, the show released an exclusive episode about [Facebook's "Supreme Court,"](#) a consequential new oversight board that is adjudicating high-level claims and questions relating to content moderation.

## *The New Yorker Radio Hour*

- Alongside its rich cultural content, ***The New Yorker Radio Hour*** has been producing urgent conversations about the state of our democratic institutions. New Yorker staff members have reflected on the convulsions of former president [Trump's final days in office](#) and delivered a nuanced [portrait of the pandemic's apex](#) a year later. In the most recent episode, host **David Remnick** sat down with **Jelani Cobb** and **Jeannie Suk Gerson** to discuss [HR1, the voting rights bill](#) currently in the Senate, and its implications for the filibuster.

## *The Experiment*

- In January, WNYC Studios launched [\*\*\*The Experiment: Stories From an Unfinished Country\*\*\*](#), a new weekly podcast co-produced with ***The Atlantic***. Hosted by **More Perfect** alumna **Julia Longoria**, ***The Experiment*** wades into the most significant questions of American policy and history through everyday American stories. Episodes have explored [vaccine refusal](#), [the origins of "Hispanic" identity](#), and the durability of the [Lost Cause myth](#).

## *On the Media*

- In January, **Bob Garfield** and **Brooke Gladstone** celebrated [\*\*20 years of \*On The Media\*\*\*](#), reflecting on the evolution of the media beat over the past two decades, and with it, the frame and scope of the show. In addition to covering the Biden transition and the enduring legacy of Trumpism, the team has produced critical coverage of [far-right extremism](#) before and after the Capitol insurrection.
- [\*\*\*La Brega: Stories of the Puerto Rican Experience\*\*\*](#)
  - In partnership with **Futuro Media**, WNYC Studios launched [\*\*\*La Brega\*\*\*](#), a seven-part bilingual podcast series exploring how "la brega" ("the struggle"), has long defined so many aspects of life on the island. Available in English and Spanish, this groundbreaking project has been lauded for centering Puerto Rican stories and the voices who need to be telling them.

# Podcasts



## Aria Code

- **WQXR and the Metropolitan Opera launched the third season of the critically-acclaimed podcast *Aria Code*.** Hosted by MacArthur Fellow and Grammy Award–winning musician Rhiannon Giddens, the ambitious new 18-episode season opened with a moving exploration of “Nessun dorma” from Puccini’s *Turandot*. This enduring ode to resilience has been sung outside of hospitals, inside COVID wards, and from balconies worldwide during the pandemic. **The season will also feature an episode tied to the highly anticipated New York premiere of Terence Blanchard’s opera, *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, based on the powerful memoir of the same name by *New York Times* columnist Charles Blow.**