The Years that Changed America

The ’60s

Inspired by Robert A. Caro

January 14–March 24, 2018
It was a time of turmoil. It was a time of change. A nation looked inward, reevaluating what it was and what it hoped to be. Half a century later, the cultural and social upheavals of the 1960s in the US and abroad inform nearly all aspects of our lives. For the first time, Carnegie Hall has looked to a figure outside the music world—Pulitzer Prize–winning author and journalist Robert A. Caro, famed biographer of Robert Moses and Lyndon B. Johnson—for inspiration in creating a festival, turning our attention to this singular decade.

The festival inevitably touches on the turbulent spirit of the ‘60s: the quest for civil rights, equal rights, and social justice; the empowerment of a young and restive generation; the division wrought by a distant war; and the emergence of a radical new aesthetic in reaction to modernism. Music was at the center of all these struggles and a meaningful vehicle to inspire change.

Among Carnegie Hall’s offerings, two programs in the festival explore the nexus of music, protest, and social change: one featuring David Crosby with Snarky Puppy and guest artists, and the other led by composer, music director, and producer Ray Chew with a lineup of prominent fellow artists. There is also a performance by the Philip Glass Ensemble and new works premiered by the Kronos Quartet—one referencing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, and the other based on the work of author and activist Studs Terkel. Pianist Matthew Shipp and the legendary Roscoe Mitchell—a proponent of the free jazz movement that flourished in the ‘60s and a founder of the groundbreaking Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians—perform together for the first time. Other highlights include performances by Icelandic psychedelic pop band múm, the socially and politically minded singer-songwriter Bhi Bhiman, and a multimedia concert that focuses on musical responses to the Vietnam War.

This special exploration of the 1960s extends citywide with music, lectures, panels, exhibitions, films, and more, thanks to partner programming created by leading cultural institutions, including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Apollo Theater, the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, Keyes Art Projects, The Museum of Modern Art, New York City Center, New-York Historical Society, The New York Public Library, New York University, and The Paley Center for Media.

To understand where we were then, to understand where we are now, The ‘60s festival provides a guide to the years that forever changed America.
Friday, February 16 at 8 PM
Stern Auditorium / Perelman Stage
PHILIP GLASS ENSEMBLE:
MUSIC WITH CHANGING PARTS
Philip Glass and the Philip Glass Ensemble
San Francisco Girls Chorus
Lisa Bielawa, Artistic Director
Additional artists to be announced

PHILIP GLASS
Music with Changing Parts
The Philip Glass Ensemble returns to Carnegie Hall after more than a decade's absence to perform one of the composer's early masterpieces, the groundbreaking Music with Changing Parts.

Philip Glass is the holder of the 2017–2018 Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall.

Saturday, March 10 at 10 PM
Zankel Hall
BHI BHIMAN
The son of Sri Lankan immigrants, American singer-songwriter Bhi Bhiman has drawn comparisons to 1960s icons Nina Simone, Curtis Mayfield, and Woody Guthrie. With a unique and haunting voice that’s been called “as earthy as it is ethereal [and] as puckish as it is wise” (The Washington Post), Bhiman writes soulful pop-folk songs that artfully combine the personal and the political through stories of the human condition.

Presented by Carnegie Hall in partnership with WFUV.

Saturday, March 24 at 2 PM
Zankel Hall
THE VIETNAM WAR:
AT HOME AND
ABROAD
Friction Quartet
John Monsky, Narrator
Additional artists to be announced
Program to include

GEORGE CRUMB: Black Angels
The Friction Quartet performs George Crumb’s amplified string quartet Black Angels, a searing response to the Vietnam War. The program also features live performances of pop and folk music from the 1960s—from Pete Seeger to Woodstock—coupled with photographs and film footage. Narrated by John Monsky, the creator of this multimedia presentation and others like it at the New-York Historical Society, this event captures the war’s intense emotions on the battlefield and at home.

Photos: Mitchell by Ken Weiss, múm by David R. Marotta, Glass by Raymond Meier, Bhiman by Alejandro Gonzalez de la Pena, Monsky by David Beyda Studio.
Festival Partner Programming

The ’60s festival extends citywide through events at prestigious partner organizations, including music, lectures, panels, exhibitions, films, and more.

In December 2017, as a prelude to The ’60s festival, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater—presented by New York City Center—performs a program that includes Revelations, a seminal work from 1960, choreographed by the dance troupe’s founder and rooted in African American spirituals, song-sermons, gospel songs, and holy blues. Ailey himself said that one of America’s treasures was the American cultural heritage, which was “sometimes sorrowful, sometimes jubilant, but always hopeful.”

The Apollo Theater and WNYC invite you to the radio station’s longstanding annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration as part of the Apollo’s Uptown Hall series. Co-hosted by Brian Lehrer and Jami Floyd, and marking the last year of Dr. King’s life, this free event features musical performances, and brings together audiences from Harlem and around the city with scholars, community leaders, and activists to engage in conversations that examine the future of social justice movements following the 2016 election and the inauguration of a new President of the United States.

The Apollo Theater also presents Soundtrack ‘63, a live multimedia performance with a large ensemble that celebrates the Civil Rights Movement from 1963 onward to the present day. This cultural and artistic retrospective showcases everything from the black empowerment songs of James Brown to today’s Black Arts Matter movement and outcries for justice for Mike Brown. It includes a host of artists whose work breathes new life into the sights and sounds that shaped the music of an era, ranging from jazz, hip-hop, soul, and poetry.

The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law hosts a series of public conversations that examine the legacy of some of the decade’s monumental legislative achievements, including the Voting Rights Act and the Great Society programs. The center engages historians, advocates, lawmakers, the media, and other thinkers as part of the discussions on key anti-poverty programs, civil rights protections, and other 1960s-era reforms.

Keyes Art Projects highlights the work of various artists and themes from the ’60s in collaboration with a number of New York City–based galleries, including Berry Campbell, Mark Borghi Fine Art, and Sundaram Tagore. It also offers a tour of artists’ studios, including some in SoHo and other Lower Manhattan neighborhoods—creative laboratories and affordable epicenters of experimentation in the ’60s and beyond. These working spaces include those of artists Ronnie Spector, Judith Murray, Peter Reginato, and Robert Yasuda, as well as members of the artistic community at Westbeth.

The Museum of Modern Art presents screenings of films from the ’60s. The New-York Historical Society presents the exhibition The Vietnam War: 1945–1975, a groundbreaking exploration of the war’s causes, conduct, and consequences on the battlefront and the US home front. The society also offers a number of programs that range from an examination of the political, social, and cultural history of the ’60s through conversations with singer-songwriter and activist Judy Collins, and a discussion with Constitutional scholar Akhil Reed Amar about civil rights and the Constitution; to film screenings; events for families about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s activism against the Vietnam War; a family book club, and additional talks and lectures. In addition, the New-York Historical Society hosts an installation in its new Center for Women’s History, featuring figures of second-wave feminism who brought the topics of family, the workplace, reproductive rights, and other women’s issues into the mainstream.


New York University offers an exhibition, Narrative and Counternarrative: (re)defining the 1960s, drawn from the Fales Library & Special Collections, NYU Archives, and Tamiment Library & Wagner Labor Archives. From sanctuary and gallery to courtroom and classroom, it explores the places in New York City where the complicated history of the decade unfolded and the actors engaged in creating that history.

The Paley Center for Media screens 1968 television programs from its archives—including a historic special report from Vietnam by Walter Cronkite and an episode of The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour—to look at how the medium reported the news and how it adapted to the changing national mood.


A complete schedule of festival events will be announced in the coming months.
Carnegie Hall subscription packages, including The '60s Sampler, are currently available. Single tickets for all Carnegie Hall events go on sale to subscribers and members on August 21, and to the general public on August 28. Please note that tickets for partner presentations will only be made available through the box office of each specific partner.

For more information and updates in coming months, visit carnegiehall.org/60s or call CarnegieCharge at 212-247-7800.