

## ART MATTERS to Conventions & Tourism

### Long Beach Symphony Brings Statewide Industry Conference to Downtown

■ By **KELLY RUGGIRELLO**  
Executive Director, Long Beach Symphony

Like a professional sports team, a major arts institution can draw broad public attention and contribute to the economic vitality of a city center. The Long Beach Symphony will achieve both next month as host to nearly 300 orchestra executives at the 47th Annual Association of California Symphony Orchestras (ACSO) Conference. The conference, held Aug 6–8, will take place in Long Beach and will showcase the City and its orchestra. A conference like this puts Long Beach at the center of classical music. It is prestigious and highly coveted to serve as host orchestra and city.

“We couldn’t be prouder that the Long Beach Symphony, a widely admired community institution here in our city, is serving as host orchestra,” Mayor Robert Garcia said in a letter he penned to conference delegates.

community, our corporate partnerships and our ability to draw people together that gives the orchestra the power to impact the city.

Over the last year, the Symphony has drawn national attention in its search for a new music director. We invited 10 renowned guest conductors from all over the country to the podium to take a crack at the coveted position.

Our 81st annual concert series kicks off on October 10 at the Terrace Theater, when we’ll welcome guest conductor Edwin Outwater back to the podium and celebrate concertmaster Roger Wilkie on his 25th anniversary season. This is a time of renaissance in the Symphony’s history and we have 11 exciting concerts in store for a wide diversity of audiences.

The Symphony is also venturing deeper into the community with free concerts at local venues, including a new partnership with the Downtown Long Beach Associates and RiotStage to recreate the iconic Beatles’



Conference attendees hail from Northern, Central and Southern California orchestras such as the LA Phil, San Francisco Symphony and San Diego Symphony. In addition to their stay at the Westin Long Beach, where they will discuss best practices with other experts in the field, they will attend a Long Beach Symphony chamber concert performance aboard the Queen Mary, enjoy a special reception at the Aquarium of the Pacific and eat at local downtown restaurants as part of the total conference experience. It is our collaboration with our com-

rooftop performance of their Let It Be album. This FREE, Live After 5 performance at the City Place Parking Garage on August 13 at 6 p.m. is open to the public and not to be missed.

We love to bring opportunities like the ACSO Conference and free collaborative public concerts to our City and to continue to look for more opportunities to bring rich and interesting cultural experiences to the region.

For more information about the Long Beach Symphony, please visit [www.lbso.org](http://www.lbso.org). ■

## Saving the Past to Build a Better Future

■ By **SARAH BENNETT**  
Arts Council for Long Beach Contributor

The City of Bell Gardens had a property it didn't know what to do with – a historic hundred-plus-year-old house on a large plot of land in a now-industrial part of town that had been vacant for nearly 25 years. Is it worth restoring and turning back into a museum or should they tear it down and build something new?

It's exactly the kind of conundrum Katie Rispoli lives for.

Through her nonprofit We Are The Next, Rispoli works directly with cities to generate economic-minded solutions for aging historic properties, and specializes in construction management of such sensitive projects.

“They have a derelict building on a major corridor and they could be filling it with a commercial tenant,” she said. “Taking city money and turning it into a museum won't make them any money. They want to see this building saved, but they really have to be practical.”

Bell Gardens officials said they need a new headquarters for the Parks and Recreation Department, but allocating the money to build one proved to be difficult. Rispoli noticed the mansion had a half-dozen bedrooms upstairs that without additional construction could be used as offices; the dining room made a perfect conference room; and the kitchen, a break room for staff.

“It's the perfect setup for a Parks Department headquarters and here was the city of Bell Gardens desperately trying to allocate funds to build some new \$2 million facility when they had this perfect place two blocks from City Hall,” she said. Rispoli estimates that if the plan is approved, utilizing the existing structure will cost the city about half their original estimate.

Rispoli's Long Beach-based We Are The Next is on the forefront of a growing movement away from traditional historical preservationism, which mostly champions to get buildings landmark status and advocates for their conversion to cultural centers and museums.

Instead, as one of the first graduates of USC's Heritage Conservation Program, Rispoli's agency specializes in creative solutions that call for the re-use of old structures in ways that celebrate their history while keeping their existence economically viable.

She began her career working on adaptive re-use projects at JR van Dijs (the firm behind restorations of the Art Theatre, the Psychic Temple building and more) and helps find the economically viable middle ground between municipalities and preservationists. From her role in managing the relocation and re-assembly of Long Beach's Southern Pacific Railroad Depot earlier this year to working with Taco Bell on determining restoration feasibility of the chain's original location in Downey, We Are The Next is changing the financial future of cities by protecting their pasts.

“Historic preservation inherently describes preserving things, like in amber. It sounds like you're stopping change,” Rispoli said. “Really, preservation is about managing change – making sure economic growth can continue but maintaining a cultural backbone. It's not something they teach in business school.” ■



## Gallery Corner

The Museum of Latin American Art has two new exciting exhibits on view, both of which commemorate post-Revolutionary art from the United States and Mexico. *Miradas: Ancient Roots in Modern and Contemporary Mexican Art* focuses on paintings, prints and photographs that have been created over the past 80 years by artists of Mexican descent. Some of the artists with work on display include Rufino Tamayo, Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Judith Hernandez and Carlos Almaraz. *Raúl Anguiano: Retrato de un Maestro*, is a centennial exhibition of work by Mexican artist Anguiano who was a notable painter and muralist during major art movements in the 20th century. The exhibitions are on view through September 27. Two additional exhibits, *Korda* and *Transformations* are also currently showing, through September 6. For more information, please visit [molaa.org](http://molaa.org).

