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'It's been an emotional roller coaster': Stern Grove concert series canceled

By **Dan Gentile**, SFGATE Published 9:38 am PDT, Thursday, May 14, 2020



The San Francisco Symphony performs as a part of the annual Stern Grove Festival in 2016.

Bad news for Bay Area music fans: The beloved annual Stern Grove Festival is canceled due to the restrictions caused by the coronavirus.

The outdoor summer concert series announced this morning that it will call off its entire 2020 season. According to executive director Bob Fielder, the decision is unprecedented.

"I don't think even think we've ever had a rainout before in 82 years," he told SFGATE. "To have the whole season be scrapped, that's... a thing."



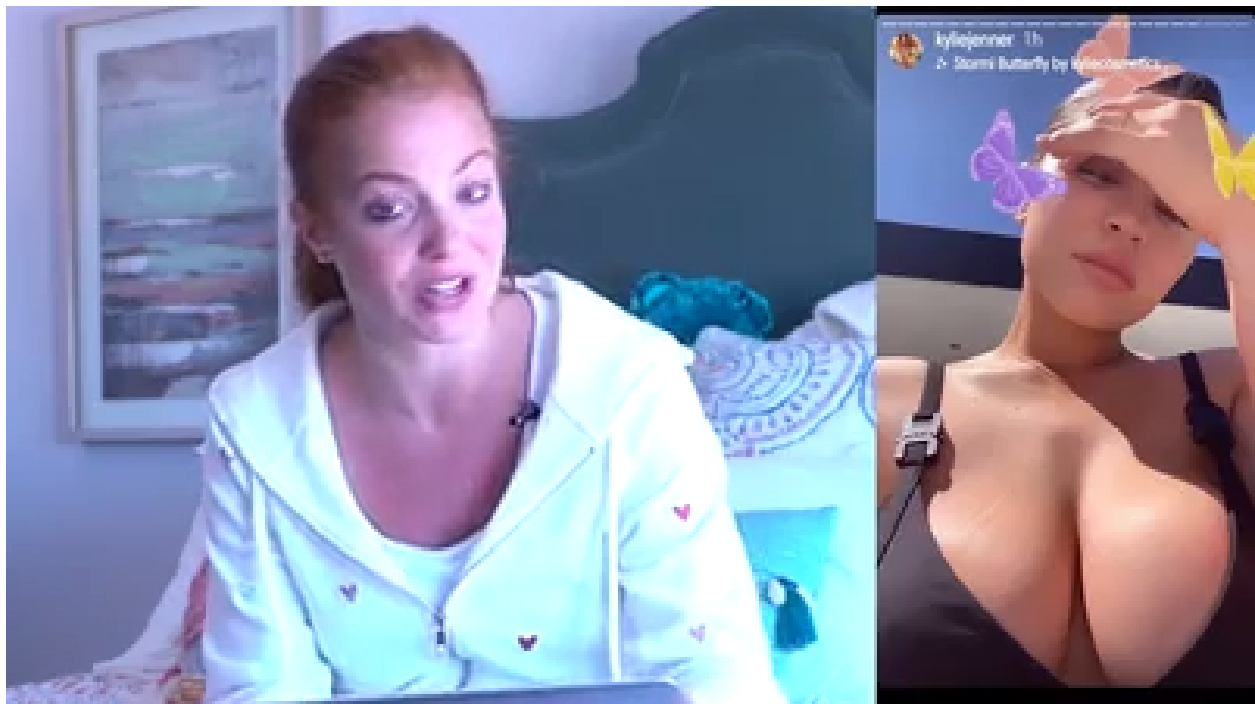
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This year the Sunday concert series was to feature a diverse array of talent that was to include Animal Collective, Jimmy Cliff, Cuco, Billy Ray Cyrus, Macy Gray, Hanson, Tank and the Bangas, San Francisco Ballet, San Francisco Symphony and Bay Area funk legends Tower of Power.

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"We were really looking forward to this season," Fielder said. "We had great diversity, every single week was a different genre and style of music. We had a lot bigger names than we usually get, and we were going to try our first country show ever."

Unfortunately, given the popularity of the concerts and lack of assigned seating, social distancing wasn't considered a possibility. Instead of the wildly popular outdoor

concerts, Stern Grove Festival will stream a "Best of the Fest" virtual video series



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"We're all just really to some degree playing a waiting game in a holding pattern," says Fielder. "It's been an emotional roller coaster."

The series generally brings in over one million dollars of revenue to the organization, which they hope to offset by donations (which will be matched by an anonymous donor). Regardless, they hope to keep their six full-time employees although they will not hire an estimated 100 seasonal staff members.

As for now, the park is still open to neighboring residents, although the parking lot is closed to discourage overcrowding. Despite the setback, Fielder is excited about the digital programming and optimistic about the future of the festival beyond this year.

"Tune in to our virtual concert series this summer. We'll have some enjoyable and fun programming to deliver to people, and hopefully bring some smiles to people's faces. We hope that everyone stays safe and we'll be back better than ever in 2021."



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Dan Gentile is a digital editor at SFGATE. Email: Dan.Gentile@sfgate.com | Twitter: @Dannosphere

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