



Welcome to American Mosaic from VOA Learning English.

I'm June Simms.

Today, we play some Billboard Award-winning hits.

We also tell about an organization that helps music students prepare for a career in music.

But first, we visit the Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC, as it gets a clean-up from volunteers.

## **Washing "The Wall"**

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, is one of the most-visited places in the nation's capital. It honors members of the United States armed forces who served in the war.

Part of the memorial is two black stone walls made of smooth black stone. They come together to form a "V." On the wall is a list of more than 58,000 names of soldiers who died or went missing during the Vietnam War.

On the second Sunday of the month, from April through October, members of a veteran's group gather early in the morning to wash the walls. They say they do it to show their respect for those Americans lost during the war, which ended in 1975.

VOA's Julie Taboh was there one recent Sunday morning and talked with members of the group.

Under the rising sun, volunteers are putting soap and water on the walls, washing away the dirt. They are members of Rolling Thunder, a group that seeks action and answers about American prisoners of war and those still missing in action.

Right now, group members are washing the so-called "Wall" of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The wall holds the names of the American service members who were killed or went missing in action during the conflict.

Forrest Lingenfelter is a member of the group.

“Rolling Thunder has been allowed the privilege to honor our veterans past and current. That these guys -- and ladies -- aren’t forgotten. They’re never forgotten -- at least they should never be forgotten.”

Al Mori is also another member.

“I do it because I spent three years, almost three years, in Vietnam and I know a lot of folks on the Wall here. We’re doing this for the visitors’ comfort to see the Wall, but at the same time we’re kind of healing ourselves over what happened.”

Member John Einbinder says he is honored to do the work.

“I’ve got one friend on the Wall over there. It’s just a privilege to come down here and keep it clean.”

The memorial was built more than 30 years ago. Millions of people visit it every year. Many come to find the names of people they knew or heard of, often leaving special things like medals or poems or clothing.

Jan Scruggs is a Vietnam veteran who helped create the memorial. He works at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

“This memorial has helped to heal many individual wounds from the war -- psychological wounds -- by seeing the name and touching the name of one of your friends. Many people really do feel a sense of relief after many years. So washing the Wall is kind of part of that too.”

For many members of Rolling Thunder, washing the wall brings them peace.

Again, Forrest Lingenfelter.

“Each one of these guys had a family. And these gentlemen - and ladies - didn’t make it back for that family. They’re not forgotten and this is one of the ways that we ensure that they’re not forgotten.”

Rolling Thunder also started a Memorial Day tradition. Thousands of members from all over the country ride their motorcycles to Washington, DC. Then they ride in a motorcycle parade through the city to honor veterans.

## **Youth Orchestra**

For almost 60 years, the Young Musicians Foundation has helped young people launch careers in music. The Foundation’s orchestra is a bridge between the worlds of young musicians and the music industry.

Conductor Roger Kalia directs a singer as the Young Musicians Foundation Debut Orchestra prepares for a performance. The orchestra includes high school students as young as 15. There are also professional musicians up to age 25. Roger Kalia says they all bring strong emotion to their music.

“There’s a certain amount of energy, an excitement which is just, it’s contagious and I love seeing that.”

The musicians prepared for a recent performance at a local middle school. The music included parts of the opera “Carmen” by Georges Bizet. The 70 member orchestra gets to work with the best musicians in the business.

Flutist Mira Magrill recently performed while other members watched when the group played a piece John Williams wrote for the movie “War Horse.”

“And it starts and ends with a huge flute cadenza, which I got to perform, with John Williams conducting. It was probably the best performance I’ve ever been a part of.”

Such rehearsals help the orchestra learn difficult musical works. Young Musicians Foundation members offer advice to children in local schools. And, the group organizes competitions and provides financial support to help students continue studying music.

Famed conductors Andre Previn and Michael Tilson Thomas led the orchestra early in their careers. Roger Kalia, the current music director, praises the experience.

“This is also for me a training position, and I am learning so much working with these younger musicians.”

The orchestra helps young musicians move from the school or music conservatory to the performing arts center. Julia Gaskill is the foundation’s executive director.

“They build confidence. And their love of music and their natural talent is nurtured.”

Ms. Gaskill says the orchestra is the bridge to a career in, and a lifelong love of, music.

## Billboard Awards

Billboard Magazine held its yearly music awards ceremony earlier this week in Las Vegas, Nevada. Kelly Jean Kelly tells about some of the winners and plays some of their tunes.

Singer/songwriter Taylor Swift was the biggest winner at the Billboard Music Awards. She took home eight prizes. Among them were top female artist and top country artist. She was also honored with Billboard's most important award – "Top Artist." She thanked her fans for, in her words, "making my music the soundtrack to your crazy emotions."

Ms. Swift also won the top country song award for "We Are Never Getting Back Together," from last year's album "Red."

Singer Rihanna also won big at the Billboard Music Awards. She was named top female R&B artist. Her song "Diamonds" won top R&B song. Her album "Unapologetic" won top R&B album, and she was chosen top radio songs artist.



Rihanna released "Unapologetic" last November. Critics gave it high praise. Rolling Stone said the album was "stark, shadowy R&B." The New York Times called the music, "brutish and bruised." "Unapologetic" was Rihanna's seventh album in seven years.

"Top New Artist" is a much sought-after award. Winning it can really brighten an artist's or band's future. Billboard gave the prize to British boy band, One Direction. They also won "Top Duo or Group, and "Top Pop Artist."

None of the five band members could attend the award ceremony -- they were performing in Italy. But Harry Styles tweeted his thanks for the whole group.

Billboard named "Babel" the top rock album. "Babel" is the second studio album from the British band Mumford and Sons. Its first -- "Sigh No More" -- won the same award from Billboard in 2011.

"Babel" also won the Grammy award for "Album of the Year" earlier this year.

We

leave you with Mumford and Sons performing "I Will Wait," from their award-winning album, "Babel."

I'm June Simms. Our program was written by Christopher Cruise and Katy Weaver, who was also the producer. Julie Taboh and Mike O' Sullivan provided additional reporting.

Join us again next week for music and more on American Mosaic from VOA Learning English.