New York, NY (July 6, 2016) – The League of American Orchestras’ 71st National Conference in Baltimore, June 9-11, has attracted notice from the field and beyond for its urgent and unflinching focus on diversity and inclusion in America’s orchestras. Nearly 1,000 orchestra stakeholders – orchestra managers, musicians, staff, trustees, and volunteers – from across the country attended the Conference, titled “The Richness of Difference.” This was the first time a League Conference took place in Baltimore, and also the first time a Conference was devoted to the topic of diversity.

“The energy in the rooms was palpable, as our members advanced this critical work in the areas of diversity and inclusion,” commented League of American Orchestras’ President and CEO Jesse Rosen. “We tackled the issue of diversity from multiple
dimensions, and were sustained by the encouragement and inspiration we received from our stellar speakers and our hosts, the extraordinary Marin Alsop, the musicians of the Baltimore Symphony and the entire Baltimore Symphony Orchestra organization.”

Conference attendees came away with inspiring personal stories from celebrated speakers The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings, U.S. Representative (MD-7); Earl Lewis, President of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; DeRay Mckessons, Civil Rights Activist; and Dr. Monique Chism, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Programs, OESE, U.S. Department of Education. League of American Orchestras President and CEO Jesse Rosen laid out the context for the three-day orchestra field convening in his introductory remarks on “The Richness of Difference.”

Attendees also experienced moving performances from the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, music director Marin Alsop, the Baltimore Symphony Youth Concert Orchestra, BSO associate conductor Nicholas Hersh, and members of the BSO’s OrchKids program. An array of sessions provided them with ideas and solutions to take home, and best practices around diversifying their stages, staffs, audiences, and boards.

Video of the impassioned keynote speeches, a moving performance of Brian Prechtl’s “One Baltimore” from the Opening Plenary, and key diversity sessions is now posted on the League of American Orchestras’ post-Conference web page.

**Awards:**

Association of California Symphony Orchestras (ACSO) executive director Kris Sinclair, who is retiring after more than thirty years at the organization’s helm, received the Gold Baton at the Luncheon and Annual Meeting on June 10. The League’s highest honor, the Gold Baton has been bestowed annually since 1948 for distinguished service to America’s orchestras.

The event also included the presentation of the League’s new Ford Musician Awards for Excellence in Community Service, awarded to Penny Anderson Brill, viola, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (Music and Wellness Program); Shannon Orme, bass clarinet, Detroit Symphony Orchestra (Neighborhood Residency Initiative); Jeffrey Paul, principal oboe, South Dakota Symphony Orchestra (Lakota Music Project); Brian Prechtl, percussion, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (OrchKids); and Beth Vandervennet, cello, Oakland Symphony (Music for Excellence Program [MUSE]).
The League of American Orchestras leads, supports, and champions America's orchestras and the vitality of the music they perform. Its diverse membership of more than 2,000 organizations and individuals across North America runs the gamut from world-renowned symphonies to community groups, from summer festivals to student and youth ensembles, from conservatories to libraries, from businesses serving orchestras to individuals who love symphonic music. The only national organization dedicated solely to the orchestral experience, the League is a nexus of knowledge and innovation, advocacy, and leadership advancement. Its conferences and events, award-winning Symphony magazine, website, and other publications inform people around the world about orchestral activity and developments. Founded in 1942 and chartered by Congress in 1962, the League links a national network of thousands of instrumentalists, conductors, managers and administrators, board members, volunteers, and business partners. Visit americanorchestras.org.

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