

**2017**  
**Strategic Conversations**  
**League of American Orchestras Volunteer Council**

**REDACTED MINUTES – CALL #2**

**Volunteer Presidents & Presidents-Elect**

**Wednesday, October 18, 2017**

**12 p.m.- 1 p.m. (Pacific) / 2 p.m. – 3 p.m. (Central) / 3 p.m. – 4 p.m. (Eastern)**

Becky Odland, President, Volunteer Council (VC), greeted participants as they joined the call and welcomed four (4) participants. In addition, three (3) facilitators participated: Tiffany Ammerman, President-Elect, Volunteer Council; Beth Wise, Secretary, Volunteer Council; and Caitlin Whealon, Liaison, League of American Orchestras (LAO) Volunteer Council.

**I. WELCOME AND WORKING AGREEMENT**

Becky thanked participants for setting aside time for the Strategic Conversation calls. She requested that everyone be an active participant, listening as well as contributing. She asked that, when speaking, each participant first state your name. She reminded participants that information from the call remains confidential. She then asked each new participant on the call to introduce herself.

**II. INTRODUCTIONS OF NEW PARTICIPANTS**

**Participant 1**

- The organization was founded in 1949 under a different name and has recently had a name change. The organization does not contribute financially as much as previously, since the orchestra took over the major fundraiser (a Ball) approximately 10 years ago. The Friends do provide enormous support through their five (5) education programs:
- Kinder Konzerts hosts children who come to concert, sit on stage. The program is paired with a selected book each year.
- Kinder Konzerts on the Road, for Pre-K through First Grade, provide a teaching artist in classroom for inner city, underserved schools.
- Learning in the Lobby has educational learning stations prior to family concerts. Activities are tied to a specific book or piece of music.
- Accent is presented six (6) times per year. Musician(s) perform in an architectural space with dinner and drinks. Patrons enjoy up-close and personal conversations with musicians.
- Young Artist Competitions will celebrate their 60<sup>th</sup> year in 2019. Considering some sort of special celebration.

- Current membership is smaller than desired and would like to grow. Last week a fundraiser was held to kick off Kinder Konzerts. The Friends is a separate 501(c)3 and is housed with the Symphony. There is one paid employee.

## **Participant 2**

- The organization began in 1953, and two years later initiated its major fundraiser. They contribute ~\$350,000 annually to the Symphony. There are approximately 600 members, with about one-third active at any given time. The spring fundraiser style show for children (models ages 3-12) is an excellent recruiting tool.
- The President serves a one-year term, and the President and President-Elect are voting members of the Symphony Board (which also includes musician representatives). As orchestra outreach, the league provides dinner to the orchestra on Thursday night before rehearsals. This is greatly appreciated and provides an opportunity to get to know the musicians.
- Obtaining new sponsorship support (not same ones as orchestra) is an ongoing challenge. While the league and the orchestra help each other, their outreach is separate. The league is a separate 501(c)3 organization. The Knights of the Symphony are a brother organization, and there is some crossover.

## **II. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION FROM STRATEGIC CONVERSATION #1**

*How many volunteer members are concert goers? Responses included:*

- Members of organizations get 25% discount on tickets. The orchestra hires ushers (does not use volunteers).

- Part of membership obligation to purchase tickets
- Also membership obligation to purchase series tickets (one Classical or 2 Pops)
- Guild members who usher (saves orchestra ~\$50,000/year) receive free admission.

Those Guild members who do not usher may purchase half-price tickets.

- Orchestra offers first time subscribers a discount. The league occasionally partners with the symphony to give away tickets (raffle, door prize). All members are asked to come to the Halloween concert. There is no ticket purchase requirement.

- No ticket purchase requirement, probably 50% of members buy tickets while other 50% support education efforts.

### Membership

*Why did you become a member of your organization?*

- Personal ask (her friend had a job in mind)
- Personal ask and support for violinist daughter (natural transition)
- Became interested through one of the education projects and friends who were involved
- Personal ask, perhaps because her husband was the first male president of the Guild
- Personal ask as a result of her child's involvement. The wonderful experience made her want to become involved.

- Looking for way to be more engaged after moving to a new town. He joined the Guild who were very happy to have him!

*How easy/difficult is it for a person to volunteer with your organization?*

- Very easy since the organization is by invitation only and has volunteer requirements. There are many varied opportunities so that all can find something suitable.
- The orchestra requests many education volunteers and is always seeking additional people to volunteer.
- There are many opportunities but people expect the symphony to advertise what is available. Many would like to be involved. Since the Guild is a separate organization, some are confused. The Guild might be promoting separately for the Youth Orchestra, e.g. and they think this is only for Guild initiatives, not understanding that the activity is indeed in support of the symphony.
- Greatest recruitment is to host event which includes people outside the organization. Their recent Bridge Tournament raised funds for violins for underprivileged children, and some new people indicated interest in their efforts.
- They have traditionally had a Debutante Ball, which now includes an Honor Guard. Many mothers want their children to participate, and only the children of members participate. The new concert citywide event attracts many outside volunteers, both men and women.
- Many volunteer not only to support the orchestra but also enjoy making friends.

*How does your organization recruit new members?*

- Group has already discussed fundraiser and educational programs as a tool.
- Utilizing a new membership category for another group (Parents Association for the Youth Orchestra – must have a student in the YO) . Their dues are lower (\$25/year) but they still volunteer. Dues for other categories are \$35-\$125, depending on age and activity level. This resulted from a combined effort between two boards. The parents wanted to help out more but regular dues (in addition to Parents Association dues) often prevented their participation. The Guild hopes to keep these members after they no longer belong to the Parents' Association. Also have Under 35 category: if Active pay \$35, after age 35, pay \$50/year. There is also a category with higher rates for those who want to support but do not want to be active volunteers.
- Accent program is an excellent tool. Once people participate, they are hooked. They are working to rebuild membership which decreased during the orchestra lockout a few years ago.

*Intergenerational disconnect - younger members want change, mature members are bound to tradition, less experience in leadership (some in leadership are fairly new)*

- Becky shared some information from an article titled "Volunteer Engagement and Multi-Generational Collaboration" - a study by American University for Global Ties organization.
  - o The Huffington Post says this conflict is really nothing new but that generations should not be generalized (e.g., boomers think millennials are lazy and unengaged and millennials think boomers are closed-minded and rigid.)
  - o The most effective means to recruit millennials are Facebook, website, regular community events
  - o Non-millennials like to join via word of mouth and use their networks (tend to have more powerful networks because have been around longer) to get volunteers
  - o Communication is key to getting generations together
  - o Social events, workshops, speaker events, informal gatherings are all good to get generations together
  - o If in a university town, seek out student volunteers
  - o Great importance of powerful networks, Facebook, community events in bridging the gap
  - o Recognition is the key to retaining millennial volunteers
  - o Mentoring programs (pairing a mature volunteer with a millennial) and using the younger generation as Board members can be effective
- Parties, gatherings can be great. Mature volunteers like face to face, but younger generation prefers Facebook or other social media. Once they get there, they enjoy.
- Do we have problems getting millennials to come to meetings? That seems to always be a problem.
- Yes – They move meetings around (wine bar, coffee shop). This helps some but it is an ongoing problem.
- Separate group of Young Professionals (YPs) get reduced rate concert tickets (pay \$30/month and have free admission). They raise money for themselves (not for the orchestra) but this does increase attendance. The hope is that they will become engaged in the Guild at a later date.
- Had a YP group prior to the orchestra lockout . They arranged their own gatherings and raised funds for themselves. The Friends are working very hard to get younger people into concerts. Using other venues helps.
- Orchestra has used other venues (local Microbrewery, Botanical Garden, General Mercantile Store, etc.) for more intimate concerts. These seem to attract a much younger audience.
- Members have a mandatory meeting requirement but can buy their way out.

*Missions of organizations –*

- Becky looked at participants' websites. She will send her notes with the agenda and minutes and we will discuss next time.

Becky requested that, as homework for next time, participants review each other's websites. All are different, colorful, and contain lots of information. We will discuss these on the next call.

Becky asked if there were any other topics participants wish to discuss next time or in future. Fundraising and formal strategic planning were identified.

Becky thanked everyone for participating and noted that the next call is Wednesday, November 1. The meeting was adjourned on the hour.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Beth Wise, Secretary, Volunteer Council*