

## Questions and Answers on *Orchestra Facts: 2006-2014*

### November 2016

#### ***What in a nutshell does the report say?***

- There are many facts about orchestras' finances and operations in the report. **Overall, the report tells the story of orchestras' resilience and scope of activity across the country.**
- It demonstrates the depth and breadth of community engagement and indicates a clear recovery from the great recession for the field as a whole; individual orchestras, of course, may have different experiences.
- For a good overview of the report, the League recommends the Summary of Key Findings (pp. 4-5) and the Conclusions (page 20).

#### ***When is it being released?***

- It will be publicly released on November 15, 2016.

#### ***Who will receive Orchestra Facts: 2016-2014 on November 15, 2016?***

- The report will be publicly available to all on the League website.
- We will proactively promote the report to about 40,000 people in the League's database:
  - All who are affiliated with member orchestras – staff, musicians, board members, etc.
  - Others in our database, for example, League donors as well as prospective members, donors, and other friends of the League.
- Journalists at national media outlets will also receive the report.

#### ***Why did the League issue this?***

- While each orchestra has its own unique story to tell, and is subject to the influence of local conditions, national trend data is essential for understanding industry-wide patterns and for analysis, debate, and action.
- There is a great deal of speculation about the state of orchestras in the media and the wider public; much of it negative and generally unsupported by facts. This report allows the League and its members to develop and implement a fact-based narrative of the state of the field.
- This robust analysis will help to shape public dialogue around the role of orchestras, as well as inform the work of orchestras themselves.

### ***What should an orchestra do with this report?***

- We encourage orchestras to share this with their staff, board, and musicians on or after November 15.
- We hope that orchestras will be able to compare and better understand their own data and facts in the context of this big picture.
- The League will use this report to respond to media inquiries and to proactively tell the story to the media. For example, we plan to meet with editorial boards of national outlets to tell the story of orchestras' resilience and scope. Using local facts, a member orchestra may wish to do the same after November 15 through a meeting with its local editorial board or through, for example, an op-ed.

### ***Does the League have specific recommendations for action, based on this report?***

- Each orchestra is different; the purpose of the report was not to be prescriptive – but rather to reveal recent trends and provide a snapshot of where the field as a whole stands.
- We hope that all orchestras will consider their own facts in light of these aggregate facts and will follow the good practices that the League promotes long term, as part of its mission, through meetings, trainings, web resources, and publications.
  - For example, orchestras should consider using [SMART \(the Strategy, Money, and Alignment Readiness Tool\)](#). Its purpose is to help managers improve their understanding of the principles of financial health, including capitalization, and have managers apply those concepts to their strategies, planning, and communications by
    - offering a near-term financial risk assessment,
    - assessing the alignment of resources to longer-term institutional strategies, and
    - providing clear narrative and graphic illustrations to help managers understand and communicate the findings.
- Of course, that's only one step to supporting sound and resilient orchestras. Strong governance practice, innovative and effective leadership, healthy cultures, artistic vibrancy, and authentic community engagement round out today's imperatives. We promote these practices through tools and practices such as:
  - A new comprehensive, authoritative, and free guide, [Effective Orchestra Governance](#);
  - [The American Orchestras' Futures Fund](#) – a grantmaking program whose purpose is to foster innovation and organizational learning;
  - [Reimagining the Orchestra Subscription Model](#) -- a major new study by the League and Oliver Wyman, a consulting firm, which amassed the largest data set from orchestras to date, and points to new strategies for increasing loyalty and frequency;
  - [Pioneering studies on diversity](#) in orchestras;
  - And [meetings and conferences](#) where peers can gather and learn from each other's challenges and successes.
- We encourage everyone from a member orchestra with questions after reading the report to [contact their constituent liaison](#) at the League for more information or for resources that might address their interests.

### **Who is the researcher?**

- The data analysis was conducted by Dr. Zannie Voss, a highly regarded academic researcher at Southern Methodist University. She is also the author of *Theatre Facts* and heads the National Center for Arts Research.
- Dr. Karen Yair, the VP of the League's Knowledge Center, is a co-author of the written report.

### **Were member orchestras involved in the creation of the report?**

- We are grateful to the many orchestras that have contributed to the League's Orchestra Statistical Report, which provides one of the data sets for this report.
- We also thank the committees of member CEO's, CFO's, PR directors, League musician board members, and others (p. 28) who advised on this report from its inception.

### **Why doesn't this report include \_\_\_\_\_? (salaries, details on programming, engagement of volunteers, any other topic not covered in the report, etc.)**

- This report is the first of its kind for the League – a publicly available longitudinal report on the operations and finances of orchestras in the U.S. It's a demonstration of our commitment to transparency and knowledge.
- No report can cover every single aspect of the field – the League thought it was important to focus on operations and finances, and the researcher, Dr. Zannie Voss, determined that the facts examined in this report were the most important aspects of operations and finances.
- Visit the League website for the full range of reports the League has published: <http://www.americanorchestras.org/knowledge-research-innovation.html>.
- The League, for example, has also recently published a comprehensive report on the [subscription model](#) and two [seminal studies on diversity](#).

### **When will the League issue the next edition of this report?**

- We are evaluating how often we will publish a report at this level of detail; the next one is likely to be in three years.
- In the meantime, we will of course continue to keep an eye on developments in the field and annually release topline data, including information on youth orchestras.