



Henry Lewis, Los Angeles Philharmonic, hired 1948



Elayne Jones, NYC Opera Orchestra, hired 1949



Charles Burrell, San Francisco Symphony, hired 1949



Donald White, Cleveland Orchestra hired 1957



Sanford Allen, New York Philharmonic, hired 1962



Wilmer Wise, Baltimore Symphony hired 1965



Joseph Striplin, Detroit Symphony, hired 1972



**Ann Hobson-Pilot,
Boston Symphony Orchestra, hired 1969**



**Robert Watt,
Los Angeles Philharmonic, hired 1970**







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**Anti-Black Racism and
Symphony Orchestras in America**

**League of American Orchestra
Conference Session**

Dr. Aaron A. Flagg

June 4, 2020

Definitions

- **Racism**
 - a **belief** that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.
- **White Supremacy**
 - a **belief system** that white people are superior to all other races, especially the black race, and should therefore dominate society. One of several tenets is white people have their own "culture" that is superior to other cultures.
- **Bigotry**
 - obstinate or **intolerant** devotion to one's own opinions and prejudices.

Definitions

- **Discrimination**
 - the unjust or prejudicial **treatment** of others based on difference.
- **Systematic Discrimination**
 - **patterns** of behavior, policies or practices that are part of the structures of an organization, and which create or perpetuate disadvantage for racialized persons and have a broad impact on an industry, profession, company or geographic area.

Hiring Musicians - The Audition System

- **Black musicians were not permitted to audition.**
 - For over 100 years: From 1820's to 1940's
 - Opportunities to be heard had to come from bold advocates like George Szell, Leonard Rose, and Leopold Stokowski.
 - Racial discrimination, nepotism and favoritism limited access to audition notices and apprentice playing opportunities.
- **One had to be a union member to be hired.**
 - late 19th—early 20th century unions were only for white people.
 - Segregated unions in the 20th century from 1941-1974 offered unequal access to audition notices, opportunities and representation.

Being held to account

- **May 1958**-*Job Status of the Negro Professional Musician in the New York Metropolitan Area* published by the Urban League of Greater New York
 - Documented that the New York Philharmonic, since 1842 and Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, since 1883 had never hired a Black orchestral musician.
- **July 1969**- Racial discrimination case filed against the New York Philharmonic by the New York City Commission on Human Rights
 - Panel ruled not guilty but noted the Philharmonic had “**engaged in a pattern and practice of discrimination**” regarding the hiring of substitute and extra musicians: an old-boy system that usually relied on the students of players.
- **March 1989**- State legislators threatened boycotts and withheld monies from Detroit Symphony Orchestra until they hired a second Black musician.

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

Definitions

- **Diversity is**
 - difference represented within a given setting.
- **Equity is**
 - creating fair access to opportunity
 - achieving parity in outcomes and experiences
- **Inclusion is**
 - when different identities experience a sense of belonging and feel valued.

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8 Ways to Combat Anti-Black Racism

1. **Center the people** who are being harmed to understand and work from their perspective.
2. **Learn the history** of systematic discrimination (unjust treatment) to be able to empathize with Black people.
3. **Grow your awareness** of words, behavior, assumptions, and processes that communicate racist beliefs of superiority or inferiority.
4. **Stay open** to new perspectives on the familiar to remain vulnerable and tolerant.
5. **Find your own way** to stand up against racism in your life, your community, your organization and our country.
6. **Be an ally**, increase the number of allies, and support them.
7. **Embrace discomfort** and demonstrate a deep, unwavering commitment to the goals of equity and inclusion.
8. **Develop mechanisms** to keep yourself accountable, educated and sensitive to the journey of others.

A few books to explore

- *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* by Robin DiAngelo and Michael Eric Dyson
- *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F. Saad
- *The Music of Black Americans: A History* by Eileen Southern

Musicians Pictured in 3 Collages

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of American
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Booker Rowe
James Jenkins
Joy Payton-Stevens
Anthony McGill
Wesley Sumpter
Kai Rocke

violinist
principal tuba
cello
principal clarinetist
percussion
bassoon

Philadelphia Orchestra
Jacksonville Symphony
Seattle Symphony
New York Philharmonic
Los Angeles Philharmonic
Minnesota Orchestra

Kenneth Thompkins
John Lofton
Sonora Slocum
Joseph Conyers
Billy Hunter

trombone
bass trombone
flute
double bass
principal trumpet

Detroit Symphony Orchestra
Los Angeles Philharmonic
Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra
Philadelphia Orchestra
Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

Titus Underwood
Alex Laing
Adedeji Ogunfolu
Judy Dines
Tage Larson

principal oboe
principal clarinet
french horn
flute
trumpet

Nashville Symphony
The Phoenix Symphony
Pacific Symphony
Houston Symphony
Chicago Symphony