

## Statement on Racial Discrimination

Through listening to underrepresented voices in our field; centering equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in our programs and convenings; and researching our shared history and heritage, the League of American Orchestras is developing an understanding of the breadth and depth of systemic racial inequities that exist in the orchestra field.

The current pandemic and the growing recognition of disproportionate police violence against Black people shine a light on America's long history of systemic inequities for the Black community in particular. This history includes chattel slavery, Black Code and Jim Crow laws, redlining, school segregation, voter suppression, and the prison-industrial complex. This challenging history and the current environment make it essential for us to assert our deepening commitment to be an advocate for and a credible partner with Black people and associated organizations as we seek a more equitable and diverse future for America's orchestras.

### **The League of American Orchestras acknowledges, accepts responsibility for, and apologizes for the role it has played in perpetuating, excusing, and participating in systemic discrimination based on race within the orchestral field.**

The staff and Board of Directors of the League have failed to sufficiently understand that systemic anti-Black racism and its resulting discrimination are rooted in a belief system, white supremacy, into which all of us, and the field itself, were born. Consequently, the League has not been sufficiently engaged in challenging this racism within the broader field and the exclusion of this community as full participants.

The impacts of our actions have included the loss of valuable musical and other creative contributions by generations of Black people, the disenfranchisement of fellow Americans, and redirected career trajectories, all resulting in fewer people engaging with the musical culture we all share and love. This ultimately diminishes the vibrancy of the art form and, therefore, undermines the orchestral experience for everyone.

The League recognizes the existence of many forms of discrimination in America that hurt our fellow human beings. In addition to race, these include discrimination based on ethnicity, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religion, and socio-economic status. The orchestra field must continue its fight against all forms of discrimination to help heal our society and allow all people to be fully seen and heard.

In America, the symphony orchestra field includes youth, community, academic, and professional orchestras; conductors; administrators; musicians; volunteers; board members; and unions. The field has allowed injurious practices and tropes to persist, such as the unfounded and disrespectful belief that diversity of personnel and/or programming can only be achieved at the expense of quality. The field has also played an active role in excluding Black musicians, composers, administrative staff, community members, and audience members from auditioning, creating, performing, managing, governing, and even listening to orchestral music. These actions stem from our country's history of racism, which results in racial and ethnic discrimination. These actions are also counter to our belief in the shared value of all music to, by, and for all people.

We believe we must respond with meaningful action to the entrenched reality of systemic discrimination toward Black people in American orchestras that has led to their significant underrepresentation in all roles in our field.

All orchestras, each in and with their own communities, must discover their unique paths to greater inclusion and equity, which will allow them to better see, understand, and engage all of their diverse stakeholders.

We understand racism is structural and can be practiced by people of all races. It is not the primary responsibility of people of color to explain where white-dominant institutions have fallen short, or to educate those institutions on how to become more equitable in practice. We must bravely face our past failures and acknowledge the generational harm caused by them. We hold ourselves accountable and invite our members to do the same.

Therefore, we declare our commitment to inclusion and reconciliation. We choose to move fully and without delay toward absolute diversity and equity within our field; and henceforth to respect the value and boundless creative capacity of every human being.

*This statement was adopted by the Board of Directors of the League of American Orchestras at its June 25, 2020 meeting.*

To that end, the League will:

**Match our commitment with our financial resources**

**by** allocating 10% of our budget (about \$700,000) to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and anti-racism work both internally and on behalf of members.

**Support and advance orchestras' anti-racism and EDI work by**

- holding essential field-wide conversations that identify and challenge the systems that perpetuate discrimination,
- fostering learning and action through peer dialogue,
- providing access to professional EDI expertise, as we currently do through our Catalyst Fund, and
- growing and updating our EDI Resource Center.

**Model the change we envision by** creating an inclusive culture, building systems that support racial equity, and further diversifying our staff and board.

**Build sustained capacity across our organization**

**by** engaging professional expertise and starting this fall with ongoing anti-racism training for staff and board and updating our strategy.

**Pursue collective action and partnerships** with the AFM, ICSOM, ROPA, and other organizations to advance racial equity practices across the full spectrum of people in orchestras, as we have done as a founding partner of the National Alliance for Audition Support.

**Address discrimination in orchestras against all underrepresented members of our community by**

centering the voices of Black and other underrepresented artists and leaders in our National Conference, ongoing learning events, and across advocacy and communications platforms, including *Symphony* magazine.