



League
of American
Orchestras

AN UPDATE ON THE EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION WORK OF THE LEAGUE OF AMERICAN ORCHESTRAS

Winter 2020

INTRODUCTION

The League of American Orchestras believes that the long-term artistic and institutional health of our nation's orchestras is dependent upon their ability to engage in and sustain a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). As a national service organization for orchestras, the League uses every available channel to elevate these principles to the highest priority in the field. We have firmly called attention to the opportunities inherent in the pursuit of these ideals; created forums for dialogue, reflection, and debate; generated data to inform action; and provided resources and tools to facilitate change.

EDI work at the League is executed by the League staff under the leadership of its President and CEO, Jesse Rosen. In 2017, the League created a Senior Advisor for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion role, which was filled by Jessica Schmidt. Karen Yair, Vice President of Knowledge, Learning, and Leadership, and Lee Ann Norman, Director, Learning and Leadership Programs, also support this work. EDI work at the League is guided and overseen by the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee of the League's Board of Directors. It is also inspired by the experience of the volunteers from across the nation and from across different sectors who serve on the League's National Diversity Task Forces. The equity, diversity, and inclusion work of the League of American Orchestras is supported by generous grants from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation.

What follows is an overview of the League's EDI work; the most current details of the work, e.g., number of people served, grants awarded, can be found on the League website at americanorchestras.org.

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PROGRAMS

The Catalyst Fund, made possible by the generosity of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, is a three-year pilot program that awards annual grants that aim to build the internal capacity of member orchestras to advance their understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion and to foster effective EDI practices. With a grant from The Catalyst Fund, orchestras engage an EDI consultant to help them advance their commitment to EDI. For example, Catalyst funding might support an orchestra in developing an EDI audit and plan; in undertaking a strategic program of coaching, mentoring, or training for staff, board members, and musicians; or in estab-

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lishing a consortium of regional orchestras to identify and address shared professional development needs. Successful applicants must demonstrate their commitment to authentically advancing and sustaining EDI efforts, and to building an organizational culture in which equity, diversity, and inclusion are central. In addition to receiving a grant, orchestras receive—through funding from the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation—facilitated peer support via participation in grantee convenings, both online and at the League's National Conference.

The National Alliance for Audition Support (NAAS) is an unprecedented national initiative to increase diversity in American orchestras. It does so by offering Black and Latinx musicians a customized combination of mentoring, audition preparation, financial support, and audition previews. NAAS is made up of The Sphinx Organization, the lead program administrator and fiscal agent for the

Alliance; the New World Symphony, America's Orchestral Academy; and the League of American Orchestras, representing 700 orchestras. A group of Black and Latinx professional musicians serves as thought leaders, guides, and advisors for the Alliance, and an advisory team comprised of orchestra executive directors, personnel managers and higher education leaders provides input. NAAS is supported by a four-year grant of \$1.8M from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation as well as contributions from orchestras across the U.S.

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The Women Composers Readings and Commissions Program is an initiative of the League of American Orchestras, in partnership with American Composers Orchestra, and supported by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation. Since 2014, the Women Composers program has significantly expanded the repertoire, resulting in important world premieres by women commissioned by orchestras of all sizes across the country.

PARTNERSHIPS

Part of the League's strategy for mobilizing its members around EDI has entailed creating partnerships. Musicians and staff from the **Sphinx Organization** and **the Gateways Music Festival** have participated and been showcased at League conferences, and the League maintains active communications with their leadership. They provide the League with broader insight and perspective on the

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experiences of Black and Latinx musicians and on a wide range of issues including leadership, advocacy, communications, tenure, and auditions. The League has also promoted programming resources from the **Center for Black Music Research**, the **Rachel Barton Pine Foundation**, and the **Institute for Composer Diversity**. The League also has a relationship with the **National Association for Latino Arts and Culture** (NALAC).

The League has forged a deep reciprocal relationship with **the American Federation of Musicians** and its classical music subsets, **ICSOM** and **ROPA**. The League sought their engagement in 2016 as it renewed efforts to engage the field around EDI.

Union leaders were highly responsive and have participated in every major League EDI convening since that time. They have been at the table as major national initiatives, such as The Catalyst Fund and the National Alliance for Audition Support, were taking shape. Most recently they have agreed to partner with the League in the creation of a survey instrument to measure the participation and outcomes of musicians from underrepresented communities in orchestra auditions.

The current alignment of national musician leadership with the League and its membership around EDI goals is a unique opportunity to work with the broader musician community. The League has been invited to speak about its EDI goals and activities at both the ICSOM and ROPA conferences in August 2019. These are gatherings of local bargaining unit representatives from the 150 largest budget orchestras. The League is also organizing visits to orchestras from NAAS leaders to further engage musicians and to engender support for pursuing EDI goals within their orchestras.

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RESOURCES

The League is committed to building and making accessible to the field a wide array of EDI resources. These offerings currently include:

An online **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Resource Center** for orchestras.

Two major quantitative and qualitative studies on diversity in orchestras that were instrumental in focusing the field on EDI issues and provoking informed action to address the critical need for greater diversity and inclusive practices:

Forty Years of Fellowships: A Study of Orchestras' Efforts to Include African-American and Latino Musicians (2016)

Racial/Ethnic and Gender Diversity in the Orchestra Field (2016)

Regular and numerous articles about EDI that have been featured in various League publications such as *The Hub*, *Notes for Executive Directors*, *League Leading*, *Orchestra Boardroom*, and *Symphony* magazine. With a circulation of 13,000 and estimated readership of 48,000, *Symphony* magazine has been a primary tool for the League in highlighting and disseminating EDI practices, perspectives, and resources, and for keeping EDI in the forefront of orchestra priorities. In fact, since 2014, the League has published 54 EDI-related feature articles and 55

EDI-related short news items in the magazine. Members report using *Symphony* articles to kick off EDI retreats and discussions.

CONVENINGS

The League builds and produces forums that place equity, diversity, and inclusion at the center of consideration and shared discussion. The League has produced four consecutive National Conferences with a major focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion.

A **National Diversity Forum** was first held at the League of American Orchestras National Conference in December 2015; the last forum was held in June 2018 and has since been replaced by integrating EDI content throughout National Conference programming.

Every Conference since 2016 has had EDI as a primary focus and has served to introduce new voices, perspectives, and practices; Conferences have also served as the primary incubator of national efforts for advancing EDI work across the field. In 2018, for example, each of the featured speeches was given by a musician of color, contributing to a new responsiveness and action-oriented focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion through the lens of artistry. The speakers were: Vijay Gupta, Violinist,

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Los Angeles Philharmonic and Founder, Street Symphony; Yo-Yo Ma, Cellist; Jennifer Koh, Violinist; Anthony McGill, Principal Clarinet, New York Philharmonic; Demarre McGill, Principal Flute, Seattle Symphony; Jeri Lynne Johnson, Founder and Artistic Director, Black Pearl Chamber Orchestra; and Mei-Ann Chen, Music Director, Chicago Sinfonietta. In 2019, the featured speakers were Giancarlo Guerrero, Music Director, Nashville Symphony; Alex Laing, Principal Clarinet, Phoenix Symphony; Tania León, the renowned composer and conductor; and Joan Tower, the renowned composer.

The League has also hosted frequent EDI sessions and discussions at a variety of other convenings, including but not limited to:

Constituency meetings, e.g., gatherings of executive directors

The Essentials of Orchestra Management program

The Emerging Leaders Program

The League has created an **ALAANA** (African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American) **orchestra administra-**

tors' group, which, in addition to its intrinsic value for its members, provides important insight for the League about these important constituencies.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY

The League continues to advocate for advancement of EDI best practices through its public voice. Thought leadership and advocacy activities have included **public statements** and publications, found on our website, on issues ranging from homogeneity in American orchestras to the travel ban executive order, to the racist events that unfolded in Charlottesville, Virginia, and more. This aspect of the work also includes important EDI commentary in the League's national magazine, *Symphony*, and in **media outlets across the country**, such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and other outlets, including national broadcast news programs.

INTERNAL WORK

Against the backdrop of the League's external-focused activity, important work has been taking place within the organization itself. League staff have established an **internal EDI staff group** and have participated in workshops to create a common baseline of understanding of key EDI concepts and establish effective EDI practices. Issues addressed range from white supremacy culture to implicit bias.

AN INTERNAL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

At its January 2019 meeting, the League of American Orchestras' Board of Directors adopted a strategic framework for the League's work in advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion in the orchestral field. "Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: An Evolving Strategic Framework" outlines why EDI is important to the League, and why the League thinks it's important for all orchestras. The document was created based on survey and stakeholder focus group input during a listening, learning, and planning process. The process was undertaken to better understand how to support members in addressing EDI within their organizations. The framework provides a definition of terms, as well the **League's vision, values, goals, and strategies related to EDI**. While it was designed for use by the League, the framework may inform or inspire similar reflections, conversations, and statements by member orchestras, who may adapt as much of the framework as they wish.

The vision the League wishes to achieve with this framework is that "Orchestras attain unparalleled heights of artistry and celebrate broad-based audience and community engagement, having understood, embraced, and acted upon principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion. The League's authentic practices are a model for orchestras and its programs are fully deployed in support of orchestras' progress in EDI."

The framework's **indicators of progress** are excerpted below as they apply to the activity describe in this update:

- Orchestras develop greater understanding of the nuance and complexity of EDI, e.g., recognizing the unique dynamics of race and ethnicity in orchestras and acknowledging that they are two of many intersectional characteristics of personal identity.
- Orchestra boards, staffs, and musicians are better aligned in their understanding of and commitment to EDI as a central organizational value.
- EDI principles are modeled holistically across the actions of orchestras.
- Orchestra programming and engagement with the community are built around an authentic, ongoing commitment to EDI.
- Internal organizational structures such as staff recruitment and retention, auditioning, and board development and retention incorporate best practices in EDI.
- Orchestras become more demographically diverse on stage, on staff, and in the board room.

- Orchestras build consistent and sustainable space and resources for thinking, learning, and action around EDI.

A FRAMEWORK FOR MEMBER ORCHESTRAS

Currently in development, an EDI Case Statement and Guide is a next step in advancing the League's EDI vision and serving the field in building momentum and resources around EDI efforts. A Working Group of eighteen board, musician, and staff leaders from the field began meeting in 2019 to generate a shared statement summarizing how and why an authentic commitment to EDI helps an orchestra to better achieve its mission. The Guide is intended to serve as a foundation and springboard for dialogue among board members, staff members, and musicians within individual orchestras, inspiring reflection, shared understanding, and authentic action around EDI. It will offer catalytic support to orchestras as they arrive at their own individual conversations and understanding about EDI, providing sample answers to questions such as: "What we are talking about when we refer to EDI and why does it matter for orchestras?"