

August 9, 2018

This edition of the *Update* newsletter brings you a few reflections and recaps on EDCE sessions from the League's 2018 Conference in Chicago (click [here](#) for the constituency agenda with descriptions). Writers in this issue are:

- [Creating the Greatest Impact: Chicago 2018 - Jon Weber](#)
- [The CE/Ed Conversation: Has it changed? - Julian Dixon](#)
- [The Broader Picture - Daryn Bauer](#)
- [A Conversation on Cultural Citizenship with Yo-Yo Ma - Catherine Beeson](#)
- [A Culture of "Us" - Maria Araujo](#)
- [Young People's Concerts - John Elliott](#)
- [Connecting with Musical Inspiration - Kathryn Schwarzmann](#)
- [Diving into DEI - Jamie Allen](#)
- [The Conversation Continues - Jennifer Harrell](#)



**Creating the Greatest Impact: Chicago 2018**

by Jon Weber, Director, School & Family Programs  
*The Chicago Symphony*

It was a dual honor to host Education and Community Engagement (EdCE) colleagues in Chicago, after working with the EdCE [Leadership Committee](#) to plan our constituency sessions. On one hand, I was eager to take a seat and learn from an impressive lineup of presenters. On the other hand, I was excited to welcome an amazing group of peers and friends to my hometown and to share highlights of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's education and community programming with them.

Playing double duty (as host and presenter) stole time that I would have otherwise spent attending sessions. I regret that there was not nearly enough time to discuss the issues and challenges that drive us in our work or to catch up over coffee or a beer. I was nevertheless moved to tears by the keynote speakers, stunned by virtuosic performances, challenged by the report of the Diversity Working Group, and amazed by the wisdom, creativity, and commitment embodied by colleagues from orchestras large and small. I left the week a bit exhausted, but with a tremendous sense of gratitude to be part of this community of professionals dedicated to serving their communities through music. I look forward to continuing the conversations that started in June over the course of the coming year. (A list of the opportunities for ongoing dialogue and learning are included in [Jennifer Harrell's post](#) below.)

There is a long list of essential thank yous: Jennifer Harrell, my wonderful co-chair of the Leadership Committee; the other seven members of the committee, most of whom planned *and* facilitated sessions at Conference; Najean Lee, our intrepid liaison to the League, who kept us on target and on time; my colleagues at the CSO's Negaunee Music Institute, for their organization, presentation, and hospitality, especially around the EdCE Half-Day; and the League staff, volunteers, and all the staff of the Palmer House Hilton, who made us feel welcome and helped us find our way.

---



### **The CE/Ed Conversation: Has it changed?**

by Julian Dixon, Senior Director, Community Engagement & Education  
*Sacramento Philharmonic & Opera*

As with many conferences, it is always exciting to be surrounded by hundreds of colleagues in your field. Folks who can relate to "what" you do, share know-how, and who understand the "why" we do what we do. You soon feel not so isolated and that you belong to something greater than yourself, greater than your department team, and even greater than your organization.

To me this feeling was somewhat contained within our breakout group. Being in Community Engagement & Education (CE/Ed), I often felt that our sessions were basically "preaching to the choir." Our discussions were often about how we seemed to be operating in silos, particularly within our organizations. We sought advice and strategies from each other on how to best convey to other departments and to our leadership and boards that our CE/Ed programs could be better utilized to connect our orchestras to our communities. Many of us felt like we were waving our arms at passing ships as we stood on the beaches of our small islands, feeling overlooked and left to our meager resources.

In more recent years, perhaps growing out of the influence of the El Sistema movement in the late 1970's and with the emergence of Teaching Artistry as trumpeted by Eric Booth, there was a realization that CE/Ed programs needed to become more than just sending a few musicians to play Mozart in a school or busing children to a concert hall and asking them to sit and behave while and orchestra played Vivaldi's Four Seasons.

Educators in the field later began to understand that we needed to create more inter-active and engaging experiences. Our programs needed to be more "genuine and authentic." With that at the core, our programs could help address persistent issues of relevancy, equity of access, inclusivity and diversity and more. We were advocating that CE/Ed programs could become the face and heart of an organization as we create story and demonstrate messaging. Community Engagement and Education programs would become less of an accessory, but more of a driving engine that helps performing arts organization be more in service to a community. CE/Ed can bring in wellness on so many levels, informed by music therapy. We can advocate for music and arts education. The orchestra would foster more diverse relationships with more collaboration. When done well, including working in tandem with other departments, it is believed that donors and sponsors would respond to the stories, the images, and the messaging generated by such programs. Communities could foster deeper relationships with their orchestras and in time what follows is the "icing on the cake." Audiences would grow, tickets would sell, and support would broaden. There is no silver bullet or one size fits all, for all communities are different, but the key is listening to your community, working together, and doing what fits in order to achieve that authenticity.

But this time around at the 2018 Chicago Conference, things felt very different! A realization and sense of transformation was beginning to take hold beyond our peer group. There seemed to be no need for a hard sell of what CE/Ed programing could do for an organization. I could actually sense a noticeable shift in mindsets across the conference. A shift that our orchestra field was

asking the right and hard questions of ourselves. How can we do better at being more relevant and reflective of our broader communities? How can we rethink our role in our communities particularly in a more "genuine and authentic" manner? As Yo-Yo Ma stated, "We need to decide on what is important verses what is urgent!"

Perhaps the fact that the League chose "Creating the Greatest Impact!" and related topics, notably on [Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity](#), was what spurred this feeling of change and hopefulness.

I could see these signs of transformation and shift...

...in the many faces elated to have a "merged" session of the Marketing and CE/Ed groups amongst the other "joint constituency" meetings;

...in the thoughtful reactions to an innovation session showcasing a [project](#) where video images, captured by hundreds of Florida community members were incorporated into a musical composition;

...in the seasoned minds who were impressed by an articulate, young musician who gave a [presentation](#) on the National Youth Orchestra's mini-master classes for YouTube;

...in the watery eyes, profoundly touched by the [presentation by Vijay Gupta](#) on Street Symphony's embracing homelessness;

...in the applause honoring the great work by the [Excellence in Community, Ford Musician Award winners](#);

...in the heartfelt reaction to the personal story of immigration and acceptance by [violinist, Jennifer Koh](#);

...and as seen in the proud smiles of an older generation as they watched the next generation of musicians perform with the CSO-Connect.

At moments, things were rather confusing and challenging much like the layout of the lovely Palmer House Hilton, rebuilt in 1873 from the ground up after the Great Chicago Fire in 1871, where navigating to the session rooms often felt like walking within an M.C. Escher Stairs painting. (Thankfully there was wonderful help from the many volunteers to point us in the right direction.) But despite this, almost at every turn, whether sitting across a round table or at a turn of a corner; or while waiting for an elevator or lounging in the lobby; or over a plate of food at a post-concert reception or at a vendor table...

I would often find myself immersed in an engaging conversation centered on the topic at hand.

The 2018 Chicago conference provided much direction and inspiration, and it challenged attendees to consider their role in "Creating the Greatest Impact!" It was most fitting that Yo-Yo Ma's presence bookended the conference, having spoken at the [Ed/CE Half-Day Pre-Session](#) and at the [Closing Plenary](#). He shared great inspirational words of wisdom and thought, laying a path and pointing us in a forward direction to continue the conversation and follow-up with the work.

I returned home to Sacramento, CA with a sense of being part of a movement, a cause, and empowered to create history and help transform a tradition.

---



### **The Broader Picture**

by Daryn Bauer, Community Engagement Manager  
*The Florida Orchestra*

Preparing to attend my first League of American Orchestras Conference, I would be lying if I said I wasn't nervous. It was going to be the largest conference I have ever attended, rubbing elbows with some of the biggest names in the orchestra world. My conference experience began with the EdCE Half-Day Session, where I immediately felt welcome by all of my colleagues who work in this department. We were the first constituency to hear Yo-Yo Ma speak. He set the tone for what would be many more inspiring conversations and sessions through the next few days. A few take-aways are below.

- "We must continually invent to meet the current needs of our society."
- When Yo-Yo was asked how he got to where he is today, his response was not what I expected. He talked about how he had early exposure to questions he didn't know the answer to, and that bugged him. So he would continue searching for these answers. As I meet more people who are really good at what they do, I am reminded that intelligence does not consist of what you know, it's about being honest about what you don't know, asking the right questions, and taking advantage of opportunities to find those answers.
- "Figure out the people and respond with music."

I was most impressed to learn about the amount of EdCE work happening around the world. We are so hyper-focused on what is happening in our own communities, in our own cities, in our own neighborhoods, and responding to those needs, as we should be. It was refreshing to take a few days to step back and look at the broader picture of the impact of symphonic music as it is now, and ponder what it should be. I left with more questions than answers, but a little bit of a clearer idea of what questions need to be asked.



### **A Conversation on Cultural Citizenship with Yo-Yo Ma**

by Catherine Beeson, Director of Community Education Programs  
*Colorado Symphony*

I'll just start by stating the obvious. The EdCE group is the best group to be in at conference. Friendly brilliant colleagues, free flowing ideas, and renewed energy for the "why" of the good work we do makes our conference time extra special. The Chicago conference was marked by all of this, and we got to kick off our time with a [half-day session](#) that featured Yo-Yo Ma speaking to exactly these things. AWESOME. Jesse Rosen did his best to interview Yo-Yo, but in true form the answers to Jesse's questions were long, florid, and ranged widely. We were all treated to pure inspiration with a fair amount of solid advice. Here are some highlights.

"What is culture anyway? Consider it as the invention of everything that we, people, conceptualized and made physical."

"Are you getting people to be curious, active, engaged? God gave you imagination, so your work should utilize it!"

"The organizations that 'get it' understand that this work is less about subscriptions and more about opening people to their place on the continuum of genius."



"We really have to commit to separating the important from the urgent. Always prioritize your why over your to-do list."

"I think it's time to retire the word 'excellence'. Also, 'best'. Comparative terminology is false measurement. Instead measure with values and presence. It's much more important to show up and to keep showing up. Mister Rogers was fond of saying that there is something special, excellent, best within each of us. When we subjugate ourselves we make space for others to give their excellence a place to shine."

Ahmad Mayes of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra asked how we could better use our community assets for programming rather than the more typical 'visiting missionary' role we often fall into. Yo-Yo's advice was "Work with community members on their needs first and the music part will follow. The music part of things is just the tip of the iceberg. Work on a human scale, not on the 'product'." He further remarked that Chicago Symphony's Notes for Peace project is an example of meaningful work on something with a sharp political context. The project brings authentic resources of the Chicago Symphony to partner with the St Sabina Church community to address the personal impact of gun violence. He paraphrased activist Lilla Watson's quote, "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

Not satisfied to simply accept applause and say goodbye, he issued a challenge as he was leaving the room. "Think about what you can do to connect with your specific community and broadly as a group", then excitedly over his shoulder he added "Does your city have a river?!"

And in a flash he left us flooded with possibility.

*Photo credit: Dan Rest*



### **A Culture of "Us"**

by Maria C. Araujo, VP Education & Community Engagement  
*San Diego Symphony*

How does it feel to enter the stately and bright conference room at Symphony Center to find it buzzing with Orchestra Education and Community Programs Department colleagues? To be then delighted by the arrival of Yo-Yo Ma as unannounced guest speaker and hear his greeting stating he finds, in the Learning and Community programs of orchestras, often their most relevant work? Resonant opening that was followed by an invitation to reflect profoundly on our understanding of culture, its relevance to our vitality, and its pervasive invisibility/absence in the main discourse about our lives and work.

Detailed presentations on Community Engagement projects like the Initiative for a More Peaceful Chicago of the Negaunee Music Institute and CSO Partners which builds on musical encounters and song writing in response to community grief from lives lost to gun violence were followed by those of other orchestras supporting equity via literacy for children and families in stress, initiatives for the incarcerated, and for homeless populations and youth in alienation. We witnessed evidence of orchestra programs of imponderable human connection. Furthermore, Yo-Yo advised us (and I paraphrase) to retire words like Excellence, Top of the World, World Class and akin descriptions about orchestral work. After all, we are all beautiful "...remember Mr. Rogers? ...on the outside and in the inside" Encouraging all to shift focus and make the audience members "the most important people in the room."

Subsequently Chicago Civic Orchestra members and school teachers demonstrated Arts Integration projects in city schools. Topics ranged from the role of biological cells in an organism and that of musical motifs in Beethoven's 5th symphony, hydraulic matters, and Smetana's *Moldau*.

It was an extraordinary afternoon and through it all was the driving inquiry: What is culture? May we invest in it as a source of deeper connection with our communities? What are the issues--particularly the challenges--in our communities? Can we design engagement programs after listening to these, showing up, and working to be part of the solution? The practices showcased at this meeting and the exchanges that followed were lively. There was activation, an energy and excitement in the audience that was palpable. The issues presented were meaningful. And, no doubt, the work undertaken required daring thinking and risk-taking. Yet, over and over, results proved compelling and relevant. How may orchestras create memories through civic engagement? How may they connect personally, acting beyond traditional programs and settings, with new audiences? Do we make the point to listen sufficiently to our communities? Can we create a culture of "us"?



### **Young People's Concerts**

by John Elliott, Director of Education & Community Engagement  
*Portland Symphony Orchestra*

While there is a long and well established history of Youth or Young Person's Concerts (YPC) taking place at orchestras across the country, I suspect that many organizations, mine included, face new challenges each year in making these performances relevant, impactful, and well attended. So, of all of the things I was excited for at my very first League Conference, Friday's YPC session stood as one that I especially excited to attend.

The YPC session featured our colleagues from the Dallas Symphony, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and the Florida Orchestra and each panelist was a wealth of great information. Having the chance to hear from organizations that are working on a larger scale than my own provided some much needed clarity on what it would look like to grow our YPC programming in new directions. One thing that I took away and applied to my programs immediately was the formation of a teachers' group to guide the creation of support materials. Another great area of discussion that took place was around the efforts that each organization is undertaking to poll their audiences, both teacher and student, in surveys included in the teachers' materials. This has supplied the panelist organizations with a ton of great information about ways in which they can improve their programming. Having this kind of guidance from a larger organization and access to their EdCE leaders is exactly the kind of thing that makes these conferences so special.

---



### **Connecting with Musical Inspiration**

by Kathryn Schwarzmann, Director of Education and Community Engagement

*Madison Symphony Orchestra*

This was my second League of American Orchestras Conference and a special one, returning to Chicago where I had found my own musical inspiration. On Thursday morning, I chose to attend PLATFORM: The Orchestra in Society, a presentation of four innovative approaches with the power to significantly alter my perspective about my work in the community. The information provided by Aubrey Bergauer, Executive Director of the California Symphony, in Audience Development: The Long Haul Model gave me general ideas that laid the foundation for truly innovative work specific to my organization. Bergauer led the California Symphony through the "Orchestra X" project, a study searching to understand how new concert attendees really felt throughout their experience with the orchestra.

Orchestra X stemmed from the belief that "Quality is measured by the individual receiving the experience," and the study allowed us to see into the minds of those attending a first concert. Bergauer talked about the relationship between the quality of music education and concert attendance ("It's not basic if it was not taught in the first place."), calling for simple and easily accessible information about music on a program. Tips included providing a story behind the piece, avoiding technical musical language, giving piece running times, and outlining what to expect in the concert. Further, informative functions should be evaluated regularly to make sure they are working in practice: "Just because a function exists doesn't mean people use it." Potential audience members are intelligent and want to be able to access information about their experience quickly, without having to sift through buried or incomplete information. Provided resources should contain connections that are easy to find and expand accessibility. This could mean linking a piece to another informative website or providing a sidebar of program notes. Orchestra newcomers will love the music if we do well at connecting them with it. It must be true, when it comes to music listening, that "There is nothing difficult – there is only the unknown." Everyone should have a chance to find his or her own musical inspiration, and this PLATFORM segment showed me a path to helping make this a reality.



### **Diving into DEI**

by Jamie Allen, Director of Education

*Dallas Symphony Orchestra*

Issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion were definitely top of mind for many in Chicago, and thinking around this created a robust through-line for the sessions, even those which were not designed to address these issues.

Acting as a tone-setting prelude was the Listening & Planning meeting on Wednesday morning that provided an open forum for ALAANA (African, Latinx, Asian, Arab and Native American) administrators from a variety of orchestras to share their experiences, perspectives, questions, challenges, and successes. The two hours passed quickly by as the shared stories shone a bright spotlight on an area of our field that is all-too-rarely considered or discussed during the busy day-to-day work of keeping an orchestra afloat. These narratives – often deeply personal – revealed a need to both question traditional lines of thinking, and consider a shifting of organizational priorities. Sheila Jones concluded the session with an inspiring look into the birth and growth of the Chicago Symphony's African American Network.

In the next day's Diversity Forum Update, Jessica Schmidt provided a [snapshot](#) of where the League currently is in terms of developing systems and resources that can help orchestras move DEI closer to the core of their mission, followed by a deeper dive, led by Nina Sanchez and Ryan

Blocker from Enrich Chicago, into what true racial equity looks like in an organization, and what are the important questions that need to be asked in order to start achieving that goal.

Sessions like these helped to shape and inform other conversations throughout the conference, including the announcement of the [National Alliance for Audition Support](#), plenary sessions, and ways to meaningfully include DEI language into a revised Statement of Common Cause.

---



### **The Conversation Continues**

by Jennifer Harrell, Director of Education and Community Partnerships  
*Knoxville Symphony Orchestra*

One of the things I most treasure from my experiences at [Conference](#) (and aptly mentioned in most of the submissions for this newsletter) is the opportunity to share rich conversations with each of you about the challenges and successes of our field. It can be very difficult to balance the programs that are happening today with the ones that need to happen a month or two months from now, all while planning those that are a season or two seasons in the future! I have found that the opportunities offered by the EdCE Leadership Committee help me to stay grounded, and many times force me to think a bit about overarching questions and trends in our field (something that is hard to find time to do otherwise).

I invite you to join in these opportunities, close your office door or put on your head phones for an hour, and interact with colleagues across the country face-to-face via the Zoom video conferencing that we use for some of our EdCE Peer Calls. Our constituency took a few moments at the end of Conference to outline topics of interest for these calls including:

- Continuing the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Conversation around fellowship programs and internships for ALAANA arts administrators
- Capacity – how are other EdCE departments are structured and how do we build capacity?
- The intersection between Development and EdCE – what does the conversation around grant making/writing/grant funded initiatives look like for your orchestra?
- Young People's Concert Database – the discussion of the best structure for this resource and its uses continues...
- Open Topic Peer Call – organized by orchestra size to discuss topics of interest from those on the call

We would like to hear from you! Please join us on Peer Calls; on League360 -- suggest topics of interest to begin discussion threads; or if you are new to the field or would like to discuss ideas with a colleague – request a Peer Advisor! On behalf of the EdCE Leadership Committee we exist to advocate for the work that *all* of us do every day; let us know how we can help! And, I look forward to welcoming you all to my home state – Tennessee – for Conference 2019 in Nashville!

---

[Donate](#) [Join the League](#) [Subscribe](#) [americanorchestras.org](http://americanorchestras.org)