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25 U.S. Orchestras to Receive Catalyst Fund Grants from League of American Orchestras to Advance Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Within Their Organizations

Disbursing 76 Grants over Three Years, \$2.1 Million Grant-Making Program Has Helped Create Change in the Orchestra Field Through Programming and Policy Changes, Organizational Alignment, and Fostering of Community

New York, NY (May 20, 2021) – The League of American Orchestras has awarded grants to twenty-five U.S. orchestras to strengthen their understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and help transform organizational culture. Ranging from \$15,000 to \$19,500 each, the one-year grants comprise the final round of [The Catalyst Fund](#), the League’s three-year, \$2.1 million grant-making program, made possible by a generous grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with additional support from the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation.

“American orchestras have made a strong commitment to embrace equity, diversity, and inclusion and reverse decades of inequity on-stage and off – an imperative made even more urgent by the pandemic’s disproportionate impact on communities of color,” said Simon Woods, the League’s President and CEO. “This is a long-term journey, but it starts with taking immediate action and creating organizational momentum. We’re grateful for The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation’s long-standing support for the orchestral field, and for the strategic vision that has allowed this group of orchestras to model what change looks like for our entire field through their Catalyst Fund grants.”

The Catalyst Fund has made a strong impact on the field, with several orchestras receiving multiple grants over three years to sustain their work. Since its launch in 2019, 76 Catalyst Fund grants were awarded to 49 orchestras of all sizes and types, each demonstrating a strong commitment and dedication to EDI work and an increased awareness that systemic change requires a sustained effort over time. More than 80% of first-year grantees reported making either policy or programming changes as a result of their funded work, with most engaging board and musicians alongside staff.

“We’re at the beginning of a long journey, but this grant program is helping us make the alignment we need to be self-aware as an institution, to look at ourselves with objective eyes to the extent that we can, and to really move this work forward. I think the first step is alignment and The Catalyst Fund has really done it for us,” said Alan D. Valentine, President and CEO, Nashville Symphony, a Catalyst Fund grant recipient in 2019 and 2020.

EDI practitioners are central to The Catalyst Fund grant program, helping orchestras implement a range of organizational development activities involving musicians, staff, board, and, in some cases, volunteers and community leaders. These include anti-bias trainings, institutional audits, the creation of formal EDI plans, and work to build consensus and integrate EDI into mission statements and culture. Community building is also a key component of the program; The Catalyst Fund Learning Cohort, made possible by the generous support of the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation, enables past and present grantees to interact with colleagues through remote and (pre-pandemic) in-person convenings, peer learning, and a dedicated web-based forum. Applications were reviewed by an independent panel of EDI experts and practitioners in the arts and orchestral fields.

The Catalyst Fund is informed by earlier dialogue and research. A major national convening co-hosted by the League and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in December 2015 was catalytic in launching national task forces and annual convenings to engage orchestras in EDI efforts. Two important League studies, *Racial/Ethnic and Gender Diversity in the Orchestra Field*, and *Forty Years of Fellowships: A Study of Orchestras' Efforts to Include African American and Latino Musicians*, further served to inform and stimulate action. In April 2018 the League launched, in partnership with The Sphinx Organization and the New World Symphony, the National Alliance for Audition Support, a national initiative that offers Black and Latinx musicians a customized combination of mentoring, audition preparation, and audition travel stipends. Additional information on these programs and other EDI activity, including the League’s guide, [Making the Case for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Orchestras](#), its [EDI Strategic Framework](#), and articles, webinars, and other materials, is available from the League’s online [EDI Resource Center](#).

2021 Catalyst Fund Grant Recipients

Adrian Symphony Orchestra (MI)
Arkansas Symphony Orchestra
Berkeley Symphony (CA)
BRAVO Youth Orchestras (OR)
Charlotte Symphony Orchestra (NC)
Chicago Sinfonietta (IL)
Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras (IL)
Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra (OH)
Contemporary Youth Orchestra (OH)
Grant Park Music Festival (IL)
Kennett Symphony (PA)
Lexington Philharmonic (KY)
Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra (CA)
Los Angeles Philharmonic (CA)
Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra (WI)
New Haven Symphony Orchestra (CT)
New World Symphony (FL)
New York Philharmonic
North Carolina Symphony
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PA)
Princeton Symphony Orchestra (NJ)
St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (MO)
San Diego Symphony Orchestra (CA)
San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory (CA)
Virginia Symphony Orchestra

The **League of American Orchestras** leads, supports, and champions America's orchestras and the vitality of the music they perform. Its diverse membership of more than 1,800

organizations and individuals across North America runs the gamut from world-renowned orchestras to community groups, from summer festivals to student and youth ensembles, from conservatories to libraries, from businesses serving orchestras to individuals who love symphonic music. The national organization dedicated solely to the orchestral experience, the League is a nexus of knowledge and innovation, advocacy, and leadership advancement. Its conferences and events, award-winning *Symphony* magazine, website, and other publications inform people around the world about orchestral activity and developments. Founded in 1942 and chartered by Congress in 1962, the League links a national network of thousands of instrumentalists, conductors, managers and administrators, board members, volunteers, and business partners. Visit americanorchestras.org.