

# How Orchestra Boards Can Advance Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:

## A Guide from the League of American Orchestras

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### I. EDI and Orchestra Boards: An Introduction

The murder of George Floyd in 2020 unleashed massive civil rights protests and a more urgent response to racism. Orchestras, on hiatus in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, found themselves asking serious and course-altering questions about the role of race in American classical music. The League has contributed to this process of coming to terms with the past and present deficits in representation of Black and Latinx people at all levels of orchestras and their audiences, as well as with our shared responsibility for a culture within orchestral music that too often has excluded, erased, and marginalized performers and composers of color. Read more about the roots of this problem and the case for orchestras to address it urgently in these documents:

- [Making the Case for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Orchestras](#)
- [“League Statement on Racial Discrimination”](#)
- [“Anti-Black Discrimination in American Orchestras”](#)

Where do boards of orchestras go from here? How do boards create the space and conditions to have ongoing dialogue and forge strategies for a more just, inclusive, and creatively diverse future? We know that diverse teams and organizations can produce better results than homogenous ones. How do we apply this axiom to classical music?

As orchestra board members who have been immersed in this work, we want to start by giving some pragmatic advice about how to form and maintain an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee of your board, or, better yet, of your board together with other stakeholders such as musicians, staff, and members of the larger community. An EDI Committee won't solve everything, but it is a start to a process that we believe is essential. We think that all orchestra boards should maintain such a committee as a matter of sound governance, just as all boards maintain Finance and Governance

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Committees. EDI should be at the center of American orchestras' strategic priorities, not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it is necessary so our orchestras can thrive by engaging new audiences and becoming even more relevant to the community.

We believe that accepting the status quo on race and other dimensions of diversity is the worst stance that orchestras can take. Society has changed quickly and many members of our audiences—especially the younger ones we seek to engage—will balk at supporting institutions that fail to take EDI seriously. Many of our most vocal and vital constituents want evolution in the repertoire and composers that we showcase at our concerts. They want to hear not only the canonical

works, but also music from American composers of color and composers from other countries that has been historically and unfairly excluded. They also want to see more musicians and conductors of color. Undoubtedly, there is a shrinking but vocal segment of our constituency that wants everything to remain the same, but for the most part, consensus has built around the need to move toward a more inclusive future as we aim to reach wider audiences.

In our view, boards should eschew ideological battles that only deepen divisions and instead focus decisively on the need for change that begins immediately. Institutional change begins at the top. Management and the board carry responsibility for turning good intentions into actions and grappling with hard issues. The work of EDI, however, does not end there for orchestras, but extends to multiple internal and external constituencies.

Change in orchestras necessitates a participatory process that brings together different stakeholders within each organization. Although there can never be total agreement on everything, orchestras function through persuasion and consensus building. Orchestras differ significantly from other types of organizations in that there are so many stakeholders who are essential parts of the whole. No orchestras can play without their violinists and bassoonists or without their CEOs and fundraisers, for example. Orchestras, by their very nature, require the participation (and motivation) of their

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stakeholders, including board members, staff, musicians, volunteers, artistic leaders/ conductors,

audience members and donors, and members of the community. The point is that while delegating all decision-making about diversity to an EDI Committee would be just as inappropriate as making Finance Committee members completely responsible for all financial and investment decisions, we believe that change requires a communal process.

An EDI Committee serves as a space for people related to the orchestra to talk to each other respectfully about equity, race, and other issues of diversity, as well as to work with management to bring diversity initiatives to fruition. We

cannot overstate the need for spaces for people to speak about issues of difference. Through an EDI Committee, we can have

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these important conversations, demonstrating that we are all strong enough to endure and profit from these discussions. The focus of most arts organizations and orchestras currently, in terms of EDI, is race and racism. But there are multiple other areas of diversity—such as gender, class, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and age—that should also be considered and discussed as part of the life and evolution of the orchestra.

EDI Committees can facilitate both understanding and addressing the particular challenges faced by different groups. Prejudice is highly specific to affected groups in ways that can both benefit and hinder individuals, depending on the context, for reasons extraneous to who they truly are or their true talents. Those prejudices— together with unequal access to music education, training, and other resources— affect individuals long before they appear at the orchestra door.

One of the initial steps that most boards take is creating a more diverse board. But it has become clear that diversity does not work on its own without inclusion. Adding board members of color is insufficient if there is no effort to meaningfully include them in the work of the board. Inclusion is focused on making all members of the orchestra community, including the board, feel welcome and offering support as well as opportunities for leadership, connection, and growth. While a board may successfully recruit women and people of color, for example, the effort will not succeed if those board members are tokenized or made to feel unwelcome and constrained.

In our experience, integrating EDI at the board level works best when BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and other people of color) individuals are recruited, welcomed, and offered full participation on the board and in the committees that interest them. Inclusion of new board members begins at recruitment, when they are sought out for the skills and perspectives they bring to the board room, not just for what they represent. Unfortunately, there are too many examples of BIPOC board members in nonprofit organizations who have been recruited and then ignored or sidelined, causing many to be wary of getting involved.

For inclusion and equity to follow diversity, the board must set measurable goals over time. The effort of setting goals and keeping them starts with plans put together by boards and management. An EDI Committee helps to keep diversity issues on the front burner, even as they may fade from the news.

The board should model the kind of organization it wants. It takes persistent and resilient effort at all levels of the organization to advance EDI. Board members play a critical role in creating a culture that nurtures all musicians, staff, volunteers, and fellow board members. And it's critical to engage music directors and conductors in this process, so that those in whom we vest artistic leadership become themselves the leaders of change.

The classical music world is enamored with its European heritage while simultaneously being increasingly eager to explore the omitted and unfamiliar parts of the broader classical tradition. Orchestras can successfully retain and please their current audience while reaching a new, larger audience if they choose to view the world through a “yes/and” lens. We are not suggesting leaving behind the great works of the canon that bring pleasure, joy, and comfort to millions of people, but rather exploring the many exciting and enriching works we haven't heard, and building a new tradition for orchestras that reflects the world we live in. Perhaps we are dreamers, but we have seen it work, in part because as people, we are more connected than we think we are.

Black American composers have always been part of classical music, even as they have been ignored and erased. Latin American and Caribbean classical music traditions have continued in the context of other world classical styles, often incorporating Indigenous and African folkloric elements along with elements of jazz and other musical forms. LGBTQ+ people have always been among our greatest icons. Women have always been part of the tradition but have been ignored or omitted. Some of our most cherished soloists and performers have suffered from disabilities. Diversity is nothing new within the classical music world. What is new is recognizing and valuing that diversity so that we neither frame it as an exception nor deny it.

We should move forward with full confidence that through pragmatic effort, we can further programs and initiatives that bring together the best of classical music for our

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audiences. There is justice in diversity, but there is also the pleasure of discovering new works, new colleagues, and new friends, and of helping orchestras evolve toward a more sustainable future that reflects the true diversity and promise of America.

## II. So You Want to Be a More Equitable, Diverse, and Inclusive Board—Now What?

Now that your board has considered the opportunities and challenges to becoming more equitable, diverse, and inclusive, as outlined in [Making the Case for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Orchestras](#), you might be wondering how to roll up your sleeves and get to work. Whether you are initiating an EDI effort or wish to strengthen an existing one, we suggest the following steps.

### Get Yourself Ready

Recognize that there is a constant need to balance reflection, study, and persuasion with action, urgency, and measurable progress. Every board-led EDI initiative must do both. An important first step is to conduct some self-reflection through personal learning to understand terminology and context. Many excellent resources are collected in the League's online [EDI Resource Center](#).

### Build the Team

Find allies on your board and invite them to help you get started. In our view, that team must include people who do not self-identify as White. While we understand that there are many dimensions of diversity beyond race, race is the dimension in orchestras that has seen the least amount of progress over the years. Each orchestra, however, must reflect on its context to understand the diversity it seeks by understanding which members of its communities are underrepresented so it can center their voices from the start.

EDI efforts function better and stand a greater chance of success when they are conducted through a racially integrated rather than a homogeneous lens. If your board is not currently reflective of all parts of the community, we encourage you to change that quickly or draw in other community members who share a passion for music and equitable practices. A lack of an integrated board should not stop you from forming an EDI Committee, however. You should also consider what education and training such as implicit bias and/or anti-racism training will help prepare your board members. In addition, boards face a

basic question of which aspects of EDI have to be owned by the board or a board committee, as opposed to an organization-wide working group. This is a complicated topic, which we address in Part III below.

### Study the History

Unfortunately, exclusion and discrimination have been common in our field, both historically and recently. One facet of this history is described vividly in the League's *Symphony* magazine article by Dr. Aaron Flagg, "[Anti-Black Discrimination in American Orchestras](#)." Consider how Euro-centric our orchestras have been, with a canonical repertoire based in the idea that fine arts are associated with the European continent and pop or folk arts come from somewhere else, including the Americas. Elevating European art traditions is not arbitrary but intentional, and doing so flattens the distinct traditions of classical music around the

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world to something that is the domain of White people. Acknowledging the long and deep classical music traditions and innovations in the Americas and worldwide will create an enriched orchestral field that can embrace a broad and deep repertoire.

### Gather the Data

It is helpful to have a baseline of data on race and equity in your orchestra. How well are BIPOC people represented in each constituency: musicians, staff, board, volunteers, and audiences? How are you doing in other dimensions of diversity, such as gender, disability, or age? Recognizing where your orchestra is doing well and where it can improve can help you determine the priorities for action and change. Data also helps you measure progress as you set goals and determine quantitative and qualitative benchmarks. Take a careful and thoughtful approach to gathering data, and make sure to get it right.

## Center EDI

If EDI work is viewed as an “add-on” or a separate, standalone effort, its importance will be lost, and momentum will be challenging to sustain. Articulate the relationship of EDI to your mission, artistry, and all aspects of your organization. Have strong answers to questions about why you are doing this work and how it will make your orchestra stronger artistically and institutionally and more valuable and impactful for the entire community.

## Make a Persuasive Case

Review [Making the Case for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Orchestras](#) with your board and other stakeholders. Apply that case to your local circumstances, because every orchestra has different needs and resources. Be sure to emphasize that the rationale is about assisting the orchestra in fulfilling its greatest creative potential and becoming more relevant to the entire community, rather than political correctness. Don’t assume people will “get it” without discussion and learning; but also, don’t assume that some people will “never get it” either.

## Plan from Evidence

To make a robust yet targeted plan that reflects the needs of your orchestra and community, consider discerning your situation by conducting an organizational assessment. You might want to engage an external consultant to complete this assessment with input from all stakeholder groups, providing a comprehensive perspective on the organization. Experience shows that these assessments will point to opportunities for quick “wins” as well as difficult challenges that require resources and sustained energy. Read more about hiring an [EDI consultant from Equity in the Center](#).

## Have a Vision

Try to articulate what will be different about your orchestra—how you work, relate, and engage with constituents and the community—once you achieve the goals of this work by answering questions such as: What is the news article you would like to see years from now about what you will have accomplished? What will success look like and what benefits will it bring to your orchestra and your community? Think beyond programs and demographics to outcomes and impacts.

## Communicate Frequently

People will wonder about the EDI work of your orchestra and whether it will be rewarding and effective. Some will wonder if it’s going to be slow or mere window dressing. Others will assume it is political and performative, designed to take things away (e.g., “They’re going to cancel Beethoven!”). Frequent communication with stakeholders throughout will diminish these assumptions and encourage openness to approaching the work of the orchestra through an EDI lens. It will also help you avoid surprise opinions during planning and implementation discussions. It might be wise to make EDI a regular agenda topic for board meetings.

The EDI Committee is a place to discuss the issues, try out ideas, report on progress, and refine objectives. It helps to create an environment of inclusion and to foster greater conversation and understanding about the needs and concerns of different people within the orchestra. Musicians, for example, may fear for their livelihoods, particularly amidst the pandemic, while others may fear change, and still others will want change to happen quickly. The point is not to ignore anyone’s concerns, but to consider those concerns as part of an ongoing process of inclusion. That will require difficult and tense conversations at times but may also give a great sense of resiliency and strength. Leadership in EDI should consider both the need for process and for actual progress.

### Don't Get Distracted

Try to avoid getting thrown off track with divisive discussions that you can do little about. This is not to say that hard discussions are off-limits; indeed, they are essential to change. Friction is inevitable and should be treated confidentially, civilly, and as an expected part of the process. Having such courageous conversations can help you move toward consensus and action rather than divisiveness and inaction.

### Let's Go!

Fire up for a great journey! We hope all orchestra board members will recognize the imperatives of this work and will move forward with great intention and urgency.

#### MORE RESOURCES ON GETTING STARTED

- [“Considerations for EDI and Anti-Racism Work at Orchestras”](#)
- [“Anxious to Launch a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Program at Your Nonprofit?”](#)
- [“Boards, Governance, and Racial Equity”](#) article by Cathy Trower in *Symphony* magazine, Winter 2021
- Dean of the Preparatory Division at the Juilliard School, Weston Sprott [speaks on the importance of EDI](#)
- Additional [tools and resources](#)

## III. Stakeholder Governance for EDI Action

Board leaders recognize how critical it is to organize any strategic initiative so that all stakeholders are on board and working together. EDI is no different and requires aligned leadership to create lasting cultural change and impactful action.

Is EDI led by a board committee or an organization-wide task force? Which stakeholders must be “on the bus”? Who is accountable for change? How will our orchestra gather community input? Does the leadership for EDI efforts come exclusively from people representing diversity in the organization? We address these governance questions in this section.

### The Board's Role

Many orchestras have a standing board EDI Committee that consists entirely or mostly of board members. Should this committee lead EDI work or merely provide direction and oversight? In our view, the right governance model puts a multi-stakeholder committee or task force—not a board-only committee—at the center of the work. Otherwise, the board claims an outsized role for itself at the expense of others, especially staff and musicians.

While there are pros and cons to other models, we believe the empowerment of all key stakeholders demonstrates equity. The staff and musicians live with the current level of equity, diversity, and inclusion of the organization every day and should not be cut out of a role in EDI planning and decision-making. While the board can set policy and overall direction for the organization, the work of formulating programs and initiatives, setting timetables, and mustering resources should involve all major stakeholders.

Don't hesitate to start your EDI Committee because you don't yet have representatives from all the groups that you would like to see included. Avoid the trap of getting stuck by obsessing with whether your representation is right. As you proceed in meaningfully integrating the board and building relationships with your community, you will find new people to join your EDI Committee.

Other board committees will also play a role in EDI work. For example, the Governance Committee will have to cultivate the candidates necessary to build a diverse board. Indeed, EDI matters may find their way into the work of every board committee. We believe the whole board must take responsibility for this work, not just the EDI Committee.

### Assembling the Stakeholders

Who should be involved beyond the obvious staff and board? The other essential stakeholder group is the orchestra musicians. These artists will always be the most visible and impactful representatives of the orchestra. Board members, volunteers, and staff come and go, but musicians are the long-term permanent core of the organization and have a deep relationship with the community in the concert hall and beyond.

Involving musicians can be tricky or straightforward, depending on the culture of labor-management relations in your orchestra. In our experience, every orchestra has a subset of musicians who are motivated to participate in EDI planning. Ask interested musicians to participate. No matter the form that outreach and recruitment take,

**No matter the form that outreach and recruitment take, musicians should be at the heart of EDI work.**

musicians should be at the heart of EDI work.

It is impossible to overstate the importance of having your music

director on board. In both of our orchestras, the music directors' enthusiastic involvement in EDI work has been immensely valuable. Although change is happening with generational transitions on our podiums, many music directors still come directly from the very traditions and assumptions that we are hoping to open up to new influences and directions. Some may be unfamiliar with [the long history of discrimination in American orchestras](#) and the way it springs directly from decades of broader segregation in society. Invite them to the table and enlist them as allies.

### THE ROLE OF WHITE PEOPLE IN EDI INITIATIVES

The team working on EDI should include a mixture of BIPOC and White people. This ensures that BIPOC voices are at the table to shape EDI strategy and action but are not uniquely burdened with the responsibility to change the system that has inflicted harm on them. It is critical that White people within the organization are invested in supporting and advancing the work, especially since they often have significant positional power that can be used to enable action. Moreover, EDI initiatives typically consider dimensions of diversity beyond race and ethnicity, with leaders with a variety of life experiences contributing their perspectives and talents.

What about community input? Orchestras are community assets, and in general must do better at working with and in communities, so that when the call comes to invite community members to the table for important discussions such as these, it is seen as authentic, not tokenistic. This work lies beyond the scope of this article. Nonetheless, recruiting thoughtful citizens to participate on the EDI task force is a vital step, as is garnering input from the community, perhaps through open forums or an advisory group that acts as a source of insights.

### Accountability for Progress

After setting goals and metrics that the orchestra will pursue, the board should decide who will be accountable for achieving results. Some may conclude that the full board of directors itself, together with the CEO, should be accountable. At a minimum, each major goal should have one or more responsible "owners" who answer for their outcomes.

## WHAT SHOULD ORCHESTRAS MEASURE?

Here are some ideas for what to set measurable improvement goals around:

### Budget

- Percent spent on EDI work (define in advance what counts)

### Staff

- Representation of staff by gender identity
- Representation of staff by race/ethnicity compared to community
- Share of management roles held by people of color
- Percent of promotions and new hires with a qualified diverse applicant in the candidate pool
- Pay equity
- Employee engagement survey results

### Board

- Representation of board members by gender identity
- Representation of board members by race/ethnicity
- Demographics of those holding leadership roles

### Artistic

- Representation of musicians by race/ethnicity
- Representation of guest artists and conductors
- Percent of programmed works by underrepresented composers

### Community

- Outcomes of partnerships

To be transparent with all stakeholders and with the community, orchestras should be prepared to disclose and publicly discuss their results, whether worthy of plaudits or criticism. Corporations have broadly adopted this approach in publishing sustainability and social responsibility reports. While tricky communications issues are bound to arise when results are disappointing, the nature of orchestras as recipients of the public's support mandates some disclosure (not only of EDI results, but of course other data as well, such as financial results).

Accountability reinforces high standards and the sense of shared responsibility that a team needs to produce top results. It should be part of the planning from the outset.

### Subcommittees and Working Groups

At some point in the work of your EDI Committee, you may find that there are so many facets that some smaller groups are necessary to get the work done in manageable pieces. While we don't encourage any orchestra to complicate its structure unnecessarily, you may find that there are many threads to the work that call for small groups. This is an area where each orchestra should decide its structure based on its needs and resources. For example, at the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, the EDI leaders established thirteen subcommittees to divide up the work, with each of these populated with a small number of musicians, staff, and board.



## IV. Navigating Competing Views

If you've discussed EDI in your board, you probably have encountered some level of skepticism, worry, and perhaps even hostility. Avoidance, excuses, and delay are normal facets of the process of transformational change. Recognize that these reactions are common and should not deter you from proceeding to seek consensus regarding action. These reactions are hardly surprising, given the conflicting messages our society sends about history, fairness, and power.

How does opposition show up in conversations within orchestra boards? Board members may speak out against the relevance, importance, or rationale for EDI efforts: "We have more important work to do, such as balancing our fragile budget." "Orchestras are meritocracies, so I don't think we should get political at the expense of quality." "There will always be plenty of White people to come to our concerts." "I don't donate to this orchestra to be told I'm a racist." Or simply, "This is a waste of time."

Sometimes the signs of opposition are less explicit and can be seen in silence, discomfort, and defensive body language. Discussions of EDI, especially across the dimension of race and ethnicity, do make people uncomfortable, and some are poorly equipped to lean into tough conversations about discrimination and unequal opportunity. Predictable reactions of confusion, frustration, guilt, and anger nearly always come up at some point.

We believe that the goal of board leaders in these situations should be to win over people of good will, those whose minds can be opened with effective persuasion and consideration, overcoming initial resistance. Not everyone will support this work, but most will if you approach the topic in a way that creates open minds and opportunities to learn:

- Ask them to learn with you about the context, history, and opportunities before they decide.
- Help them to learn about exclusion and barriers faced by others, so they can start to see the issues.

- [Make the case for why](#) this work will improve the organization.
- Reassure them that this is about fulfilling our greatest creative potential and becoming more relevant to the entire community, not about tokenism or politics.
- Emphasize the enrichment to be gained from a richer, more inclusive vision of orchestras, rather than allowing them to focus on what they perceive will be lost.
- Draw upon the strong interest of the business community in diverse and inclusive workplaces as an indicator of the upside of this work.

In the end, some may remain opposed. Find your allies and work around the opponents. Be ready for reactions such as fear, taking offense, or disengaging.

Some will ask: Will a focus on EDI compromise the artistic quality of our orchestra? Some assume that this is necessarily so, but actually no one is suggesting lowering standards

or abandoning excellence as a value. Rather, the essence of the work is mitigating barriers and working harder to give BIPOC

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people and other underrepresented groups a chance to compete—not choosing less-qualified people, whether for the board, staff, or orchestra. In music, there are plenty of talented performers, composers, staff, and prospective board members of color out there. Make the decision to search for them, encourage them, invite them, and make them feel welcome—so that they can compete on merit.

At some point, you may sense the racist undertone of the assumption that diversity requires a lowering of standards. Ask yourself: Do Black and Brown musicians really have less talent? Do White male composers really write better music? Or is a more realistic scenario that the work of underrepresented composers and musicians has been stifled, diverted, and underappreciated? Until

we can honestly say that all performers, composers, staffers, and board members have had equal access to compete on their qualifications, we cannot blame them for their underrepresentation.

Progress on EDI is about eliminating or at least mitigating barriers to participation, not lowering standards. It makes our orchestras part of the solution, not part of the problem as they have historically been. Perhaps we can take responsibility for fixing the problem rather than blaming it on a “pipeline” of musical talent that provides us with excuses while masking privileges and unequal access with a veneer of excellence.

Some may wonder how EDI work applies in communities without large populations of people of color. Here are three thoughts to consider if opponents argue that EDI work is only relevant in other places. First, most U.S. locations do have significant communities of color, though they may not be as visible as in large cities. Take a closer look. Second, this work is not only about race;

ask whether your orchestra could do better on gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, or other dimensions. In many places, for example, women are well-represented in the audience and on the staff, but men dominate the conducting podium and the repertoire. Finally, there is no good reason why composers of color won't be of interest to mostly White audiences. Just as Wolfgang Mozart is for everyone, Florence Price is for everyone. Performers and composers of color have been wildly popular with White listeners in every other genre of music; why should orchestral music be different?

For these reasons, we contend that EDI work is relevant to every orchestra.

With strong leadership and a deliberate approach, orchestra boards can address opposition, win supporters, and move forward with EDI work as a consensus priority.

### **CANCELING BEETHOVEN?**

We have heard orchestra board members and others worry that their orchestra's EDI efforts will “cancel” the historical canon. This strikes us as an exaggeration. There is room in our concert halls for a richer tapestry of composers, styles, and points of view. No one is seriously proposing that orchestras stop playing Mozart, Brahms, and Beethoven. Orchestras that have reintroduced BIPOC composers who have been excluded from the canon have often done so in programs that include well-known European composers whose music appears to be in dialogue with the lesser-known composer's music. By making room for composers of color, women, and other underrepresented composers, orchestras are introducing a richness and excitement in programming that, hopefully, will be adopted by more orchestras.

For decades, orchestras made room for unfamiliar and/or difficult music by White male composers, especially during the decades in which culture was in the thrall of modernism and the avant-garde. Instead (or in addition), we can make room to welcome music by current and historical BIPOC composers and those of non-European heritage. We believe U.S. orchestras are due for a reckoning about how Euro-centric they (still) are, starting with the realization that there is a rich diversity of repertoire that many in our audience would enjoy if they encountered it in our concert halls. We have a unique opportunity to create concert seasons that are melting pots of voices—just like our American society.

## V. Recruiting a Diverse Board

Recruiting a diverse board is essential to orchestras. While BIPOC people are not automatic representatives of their race and ethnicity, orchestras must have at least a critical mass of board members from diverse backgrounds to be credible fiduciaries within the context of their organization, the community, funders, classical music critics, and, increasingly, their own audiences.

In a changing and ever more diverse American society, representation should be a consideration in many aspects of board decision-making. Boards will find it difficult to make the best decisions and plans without the different skills, points of views, and life experiences of colleagues representing different dimensions of diversity. This is not to say that we consider group representation to be above considerations of individual merit. The objective is always to recruit extraordinary individuals whose contributions can transcend broadly. Until our board rooms and our managerial offices, our orchestra performers, and our music directors and

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conductors include Black, Latinx, and other underrepresented people, we will risk becoming mired in the past, in isolation, segregation, and a limited repertoire that fails to attract new audiences or even to please many of the current members of our audience.

Diversity is not sufficient without inclusion—without the welcoming and the opportunity for leadership and belonging that can make board service truly meaningful to the board member and to the organization. One board member of color, for example, may feel unable to raise important issues when all other members of a board are White. Unless there is a critical mass of diverse voices at the table and the willingness on the part of board leadership and other members to listen and value the participation and views of board members from underrepresented identities, important opportunities for discussion of vital issues will be lost.

Recruitment strategies for BIPOC board members could include talking to the local Chamber of Commerce, places of worship, or other community groups; asking funders who have knowledge of the community for references; consulting with board members involved in key areas of need on the board (such as investment or governance) and asking them to identify people who might be interested in serving on the board; reaching out to local corporations to identify potential non-White representatives; and simply being receptive to opportunities that arise through contacts or in the course of your work. Once you make recruitment a priority and measure your progress periodically, you will advance in your mission. Be sure your Executive Director, your Governance Chair, and others involved in board recruitment share your recruitment goals and seize upon their work in the community to identify and cultivate prospects.

When recruiting board members:

- Develop your pipeline through intentional efforts to cultivate relationships with potential board members who represent different dimensions of diversity. Plan on investing the time and determination to be strategic about your pipeline. Try to find ways to go beyond your usual network and to seek members of the community with musical interest and leadership skills. The same-old recruiting methods may not bear fruit; try some new strategies.
- Focus on inclusion, not on how potential board members will serve the orchestra's EDI goals. Potential board members of color will want to know why you have sought them out and which of their skills and connections you feel will be most valuable to the organization. They will also want to tell you about their interest in your organization. Don't tell them that you are seeking them out because you need board diversity, and they happen to be a member of one of the groups you need to have represented on your board. Don't consider them within that narrow and self-serving matrix, which is reductive of their full talents and humanity. Consider instead what they will add, how they will be likely to contribute to the mission, and what may motivate them about board service. Get to know them.

- Seek out potential board members who have an interest and/or involvement in the music and the organization. To be successful within the orchestra and with its stakeholders, a board member must appreciate and have an interest in orchestral music.
- Consider diversity and inclusion not merely in terms of a discrete diversity governance concern, but also in terms of how it relates to (1) strategy, (2) governance, (3) development and attraction of new talent, and (4) management and compensation of key personnel and multiple other areas in the board’s oversight. Using these needs as a guide, recruit BIPOC board members who have experience or expertise in any one of these areas but consider them more broadly in terms of all the board committees and your succession plans and leadership pipelines.
- Do not consider potential board members merely in terms of the financial contribution that they can provide. If your board maintains a strict “give or get” policy, consider changing the policy to one that also takes into consideration, on an individual basis, the skills, connection to communities, experience and insight, external standing, and reputation that the prospective board member may offer. Money alone should not bar a potential board member from serving if they can provide value to the organization. Likewise, money alone does not qualify a person for board service.
- Model inclusive leadership in your relationship with the potential board member. Recruit in pairs, or more, with individual follow-up as appropriate; get to know the individual and encourage them to get to know the orchestra. This might be through invitations to concerts, backstage introductions to musicians, and opportunities to meet other board members.
- Challenge yourself not to perpetuate inequity by promoting only those with money and societal agency to leadership positions, such as chairing committees and being on “inner circle” groupings like executive committees and search committees.

**See the possibilities rather than the barriers.**

You will be gratified in the ways your board changes and evolves with new members at the table. The hard work of inclusion for the entire organization continues with more voices at the table.

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## Conclusion

Our call to orchestra board leaders: Don’t wait to get started. Prepare to address every facet of this challenge. And get ready for the long haul—build a governance approach that will last. We predict that this work will be with us for a very long time and cannot be successfully completed quickly and only once. Instead, we are called to think about the whole system of music and its institutions, over a long period. This is not to suggest a lack of urgency; on the contrary!

Seek the win-win thinking that will convince your board and community that your orchestra will be better in every way as a result of this work. Diverse and inclusive organizations are more effective, more appealing, and more impactful. Some of the performers, composers, board members, and others who will help us reach those outcomes might be invisible to us now. By shining a light on those who have much to contribute to our field, we maximize our relevance and value.

Personally, this journey requires leadership and sometimes courage. See the possibilities rather than the barriers. Fend off your doubts and fears. Seek to win others over to your vision, so that it may become a shared vision. Don’t doubt the capacity of your orchestra to embrace a compelling vision. Onward!

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