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\$2.1 Million Leadership Gift from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Supports Next Phase of The Catalyst Fund

New Grant Will Support an Incubator Program to Advance Equity and Inclusion in Orchestras

New York, NY (September 22, 2021) – The League of American Orchestras announced today that it received \$2.1 million from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to continue work through the League’s Catalyst Fund, a grantmaking program designed to develop and strengthen equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) practices in American orchestras. The new grant follows the receipt in 2019 of \$2.1 million from the Mellon Foundation to fund a three-year pilot program that provided grants to 49 orchestras.

The new Catalyst Incubator program, modeled after incubators in the technology sector, will provide 20 orchestras with:

- Three years of grant support totaling \$75,000, enabling them to work with an EDI consultant to create a plan and conduct activities that will assist the orchestra in achieving its vision of a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive organizational culture
- A peer learning community that includes both online and in-person discussion forums, and convenes formally two times per year. This will help orchestras

brainstorm, strategize, and share progress and challenges with others who are working to improve the culture at their organizations using an EDI lens

- Sequenced curricular modules to support orchestras in building their capacity to create and sustain an organizational cultural that facilitates the change they seek
- Mentorship and guidance from convening faculty and guests, League staff, and other EDI experts

League member orchestras meeting the eligibility requirements will have until October 22, 2021 to apply for The Catalyst Incubator program. Applications will be reviewed by an independent panel of experts, and grant awards will be announced in December of 2021.

[Further details and complete application information can be accessed on the League's website.](#)

“We are deeply grateful to the Mellon Foundation for its continuing support of The Catalyst Fund,” said Simon Woods, President and CEO of the League of American Orchestras. “Both the pilot program and the new incubator program will have effects far beyond the grantees, as we capture the experience and learning from the program and harness it for ongoing transformation across our field. Advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion in the field is a central priority for the League and is threaded through all our activities. This Mellon-funded work is a cornerstone of that commitment.”

Background on The Catalyst Fund

The Catalyst Fund, which is also generously supported by the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation, was created in response to feedback from League member orchestras and thought partners. During conversations, surveys, and round tables conducted between 2016 and 2018, orchestras increasingly recognized the field's history of discrimination and lack of inclusion, and expressed a strong desire to better serve people of all races, abilities, and genders from a range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. However, they realized they needed external support to achieve their goals in authentic and sustainable ways. The resulting pilot program provided annual grants to orchestras ranging from \$12,000 to \$25,000 for hiring professional EDI consultants to provide education and training and organizational audits and plans, and to conduct facilitation activities designed to help orchestras build more equitable, diverse, and inclusive organizational cultures.

Through 78 grant awards to 49 orchestras, the League learned that key indicators of healthy organizational change in orchestras are often demonstrated by the following actions and attitudes:

- Alignment from all stakeholder groups in the orchestra on the importance of using an EDI lens at the organization
- A high degree of organizational awareness and honest reflection of its status quo with a corresponding commitment to take action that addresses the issues that impede inclusion
- Creating plans with sustainable structures, accountability, and appropriate metrics, both qualitative and quantitative
- An investment of resources in the orchestra's operational budget dedicated to EDI (e.g., staffing, money, time, community partners)
- Approaching the work with humility and openness, authenticity, patience, and understanding of and appreciation for the non-linear nature of the process

The Catalyst Fund is also 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 major 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. One result was the launch in April 2018 of the National Alliance for Audition Support (NAAS). A partnership of the League, The Sphinx Organization, and the New World Symphony, NAAS is 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 League EDI activity is available from the League's online [EDI Resource Center](#).

About The League

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.