

# We Are What We Play: Orchestral Repertoire in 2022 and Beyond (Innovation Session)

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[OFF MIC CONVERSATION]

LOUISE TOPPIN: Good morning. [SINGING] [UNINTEL] So, I'm going to stand because you're way back there. We apologize for the delay, of course, in technology. And we've had some cancellations due to illness, but I'm so happy to be here to moderate this panel. My name is Louise Toppin. I'm a voice professor at the University of Michigan. And so I am thrilled and thank the League for your inviting me to be your moderator.

Our industry has expended much and expended much energy to consider diversity from primarily a programmatic viewpoint within the past few years. As orchestras consider further expansion, an important question at this juncture is, how are we doing? And what are the implications, both philosophically and financially? This session, "We Are What We Play," is intended to provide information about where we are for your consideration. Our format will be, we'll have a presentation by Rob Deemer about the report that you've all seen.

We'll have individual panel responses, like if it's two -- and Patrick [UNINTEL] will still be on the Zoom, so we'll have three. Then we'll open it up to questions, because I always think the most important thing is to hear what you— how things are going for you and how we can talk through solutions.

Best practices will be our next section, and then we're going to wrap up and close. We ask that you walk with us to Zipper as we're— James [UNINTEL] and I are cocurators of the concert that's going to happen of African American music, that you'll see this afternoon -- this morning. It's already morning.  
[LAUGHTER]

So I'm going to turn it over to Rob, and what you're going to hear is a report that was sponsored by the League and a [UNINTEL] grant. Rob is a composer and professor at SUNY-Fredonia. And his advocacy led to the creation of the Institute for Composer's Diversity. So without any further ado, I want to turn it over to Rob. Thank you.

ROB DEEMER: Thank you for coming. This is a quick introduction -- for those of you who haven't yet seen -- this is the QR Code. And I'll make sure later on, if you don't have it yet, the League sent the document out last Thursday. This is what it looks like, and I would like to thank very quickly both the Sphinx organization that has been powering this project, both this last year— this year, and halfway through next year, as part of their venture fund grant, as well as the League. Karen here [?] with the League contacted me about three months ago and asked if I was still working on the analysis project that I had kind of started a few years ago.

And we had actually just started to put together the document. We'd done the research for years now, but then it was a matter of kind of a happy accident that we happened to be just finishing up this project at the same time that the League was interested in seeing about distributing it out to their membership.

So thank you to the League, thank you to Sphinx, and thank you to my colleagues with the Institute for Composer Diversity, as well as the good folks over at the State University of New York at Fredonia, which is where I teach.

Before I begin, really quick, I just wanted to give you a few brief snippets in terms of giving context of the information that's in the report. First, obviously having most orchestras not do any performances in the 2021 season made it a little difficult to be able to have a straightforward --

[OFF-MIC COMMENTS]

DEEMER: So Patrick -- If you can be muted, then we're going to try not to have echoes in the room. So we'll cross our fingers and see if we can make it through this.

Basically, I started looking at orchestral seasons seriously in looking at the 2019-2020 season, and so I have that data. And in addition to the work that we did putting together the data for this year, we also worked with the folks that had helped put together some of the "By the Numbers" project that the Baltimore Symphony had done.

And so we had a fair chunk of season data for 2015 and 2017. So when you see these graphs in terms of how things have changed over time, that's why it basically skips every other year. A, we didn't have any-- there wasn't data to look at in 2020. I didn't actually start this until 2019, so 2018 is just kind of a gap year for right now. More to come on that.

Next, we focused entirely on mainstage classics or a masterworks series. Obviously orchestras have a lot of different kinds of repertory that you do, but in this particular case, we wanted to bring it out into one group, and then we can kind of look at it from there. Obviously it would be wonderful in the future to be able to do a similar type of thing with children's concerts or other types of things, but at least for right now, this was a pretty big bite to chew, anyway. So, to give you a little bit of context with that.

One of the things that we were able to find -- I'm only going to be talking here, I hope, for about 15 minutes or so, so I'll try to go very quickly because we want to make sure to give time for both the reactions and for questions. But a couple of the details that came out with this is the fact that pretty much across the board, irrespective of budget size, and irrespective of geographic region, everybody is doing this. There is change, where more orchestras are performing works by women composers and by composers of color, but it's not centralized in one region of the country, or it's not just mid-sized orchestras or large-sized orchestras. It's pretty much across the board. And that data you can find in detail in the report.

Finally, in terms of before we begin, I just wanted to make sure to let you know that we had to cut it off somewhere, at some point, literally just to be able to have time and the wherewithal to be able to wrap our heads around all of this data. And so we cut it off at 133 orchestras, which basically took us through almost all of the Group 5 orchestras -- Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, Group 4, and Group 5. And then maybe a couple in Group 6, literally to make sure that we could get as many orchestras around the country as possible. I think there were only a couple of states that we weren't able to find data for.

So basically we had to work with the data that we were finding online in the season announcements, to give you context. All right, I'll try to go quickly with this because we want to make sure to let you all have questions, but I'm giving you just a Reader's Digest, condensed version of some of the findings that we have here, the first of which is basically comparing white male composers and composers of color, plus women composers. And let's see -- all the technology today.

This kind of flat line here, I can tell you having -- because we did have the 2016-17 data, this was more or less flat. Basically 4.5 to 5% for at least those three years. And that's as far back as we had data. I'm hoping that we can actually in the future -- hopefully in the next year or two -- be able to start working with orchestras to get their programming data going all the way back to 2012 or even 2010, to be able to really show that it wasn't just a fluke. It's not just, "Oh, we just happened to do a certain thing in this year or that year."

But the fact that this flat line here, from what I can tell, is -- that's pretty much where it had been. And it's not just women composers, and it's not just composers of color, it's both combined. Not a lot. And then up here in 2019-20, over those next two years, it basically doubled to about 12%. And then in the next two years, it almost doubled again. And these are numbers that are kind of averaged from all of the orchestras. So obviously not every single orchestra is going to shoot up that much. Some went way higher. But this is just kind of the average.

I bring up living composers because I feel very strongly that they kind of go hand-in-hand. The more living composers you program, the more women composers and composers of color you're going to program, and vice-versa. And I think it's not hand-in-hand, one-to-one completely, but you can see the numbers here from 11%, and then going up to over 20% in the same timeframe. I think we're seeing more and more works by living composers. As a living composer, I thank you. [LAUGHTER]

But it's also really important to be able to see that those two things are locked in place. And that's why we focused in on that.

When we separate it out a little bit, it's interesting to be able to see that both groups increased quite a bit. And also you can see here, composers of color shoot up a huge amount between just two years ago and this year. We'll get into why and maybe how that can be dealt with or addressed in best practices. But I think it's definitely --

I think we can all figure out what has been going on in our country the last five years or so and to be able to see how that has affected programming -- and especially how that affects programming moving forward. To be able to break it down even more, and I'll tell you right now, the last time I did this, which was literally just me on my laptop, kind of going through -- I didn't really have any help. And so it was kind of basic -- I was just looking at women composers and composers of color. This way we were able, by coming up with a better way of looking at the data, we can look at not only women composers and composers of color, but women composers of color, male composers of color. And then even breaking that down even further in terms of living versus deceased.

So the report goes into great detail on that, and you can see where things -- how orchestras are making their programming decisions, and then maybe how that could be addressed -- or how that can affect your decisions moving forward.

You can see here that while the numbers do shoot up quite a bit -- obviously I have this up here. Increase of over 1,400%, which looks fancy, but I'm also like, "Yeah, but you all started at like .4%." So in the grand scheme of things, it's still wonderful that it jumped up that much, but we start at a very low rate. So that's something I just wanted to make sure to point out. This is one of the things to keep

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in mind, that even though composers of color -- let me go back a couple -- composers of color went quite a bit higher. Most of those were male composers. And nothing against male composers of color, especially some of the male composers of color I'm seeing at the back of the hall, but it's something to be said. It's never the idea of like, "Do less of this group so that you can do more of that group." No, just do more of all of them. Bring them up to speed.

[APPLAUSE]

Yeah, it's not a zero-sum game here. But this shows you, at the very least, that women of color and white women are now basically being -- at least for this year -- are being programmed at the same rate. Now the trick is to be able to bring that number up so that it matches men of color.

Treemaps: If you've never seen a treemap, perhaps this is something that I discovered. I've been learning a lot about data visualization in the last couple of years putting this project together, and it helps to be able to kind of get a sense of what the entire picture looks like. Line graphs are interesting, but you can only usually take so much of them.

This is what the season looked like in 2015-2016. So this is deceased white men. This is living white male composers, living white women, living men of color. That little .4% -- that's living women of color. And deceased men of color. You will notice, by the way, that there are no deceased women composers at all.

So this is this year. And that's a pretty big jump. And it's interesting to be able to kind of wrap our heads around -- you know, you can see a number, but it's interesting to be able to see it visually, and

to be able to see how all of these groups are now being performed. So just to show it to you again, that's what it was. This is what it is now. So we'll keep going here. A couple more things really quickly.

We've had a lot of folks kind of looking at Beethoven for many reasons, both positively -- obviously we've just passed his 250th birthday, so a lot of folks were performing his music. But also he tends to be a lightning rod. And so I wanted to make sure, to kind of show the big three -- Mozart, Beethoven, and Tchaik are the folks that more orchestras are performing more than anyone else. And to be able to show how their performances have changed, this is just --

The lighter gray is 2019-20. The darker gray is 2021-22. So this is just within the last two years. This is what is really striking, how that change has happened. And this has gone down, but it kind of proves the point that you can diversify your repertoire without getting rid of your traditional repertoire. It's just that so much of the repertoire in the past has been that traditional canon, that it kind of sucked all of the oxygen out of the program. So I think we're finding that there are ways to be able to make that change.

A couple of quick comparisons. I promise I'm almost done here. Just to kind of show you, this probably works better to look laterally. So this is what it looks like for just the 2021-22 season, the season we're just finishing. This is what it looks like if you compare as a whole, as a piece, white male composers, plus women composers and composers of color. And you can see how it's almost identical when you look at living composers and deceased composers.

And then over here, you can see how it compares looking at gender, versus racial and ethnic background. I'm going to show these to you. Don't worry if you can't read it because A, we're going quickly, and B, you already have the documents.



You can read this on the plane home and at your leisure. But I wanted to make sure that you knew that there were parts in the report that showed who are the composers in these various groups that had the most programmed performances. And I think this will -- and we do this not only with program performances, but also titles, because there are some composers who actually have a lot of performances of one title, and there are some composers who have a lot of performances on a number of titles.

The other one to be able to point out -- and I think this is probably one of the most useful things for anyone who's programming -- is these repertoire lists. We've taken literally every work that we've found in the 2021-22 season and put them here alphabetically by the composer, so you can go through and use that as a resource when you're doing your programming.

And with that, I think that was 15 minutes.

[APPLAUSE]

TOPPIN: Thank you, Rob, so much for that introduction. We'll now move into the next part, which is our panel's reactions. I just quickly want to introduce you to our panelists who are here. And I didn't actually say about myself that I have 32 years working in African American music as a teacher, as a scholar, as a performer, as a creator of a database that's been introduced to you all, the African Diaspora Music Project, which takes information like this and turns it into a usable document that is a way for orchestras to find repertoire and to find recordings, to find repertoires, to find the titles. So we're working together on making that happen. So we're trying to make resources available to you.

My other colleagues are Blake-Anthony Johnson who is here. He is the Chicago Sinfonietta President and CEO, Board of Membership in Criminal Reform, Intergenerational Poverty and Healthcare. So he has done a lot of different things. And I'll provide his full bio [UNINTEL] booklet, and I'll let him speak further.

Our other panelist is Patrick, who is on the stream with us. Patrick Castillo leads a multifaceted career as a composer, performer, writer, and educator. He is currently appointed Vice President of Artistic Planning of the New York Philharmonic. So please join us. We are missing two panelists who actually became ill, so we're down a little bit, but I know there's a lot of expertise in the room, so we're looking forward to hearing from the experts in the room, particularly a couple of names who were just slipped to me. So I may call you by name. I'm an educator. We know how to do that. [LAUGHTER]

So Blake, would you take it over?

BLAKE-ANTHONY JOHNSON: I'm really curious what Patrick has to say.

TOPPIN: Patrick, you're welcome to go first in response to the --

PATRICK CASTILLO: Oh, have I been nominated to speak?

TOPPIN: You're nominated to speak first.

MALE VOICE: Yep. You got tagged.

CASTILLO: Good morning, everybody. It's great to see you all. Thank you for that introduction.

Louise, thank you for the presentation, and Rob. I can't see you. I think you can see me. I suspect I have a lot of friends and colleagues in the room, so greetings from New York. I'm sorry that I can't be with you in person, but I'm glad for the opportunity to be with you virtually.

I suppose just a thumbnail sketch of the personal context for how I come into this conversation. As Louise mentioned, I am a composer myself. I have been involved for many years with various new music organizations that have, as so many such organizations do, sort of extended our tentacles into various social and cultural initiatives.

And so my own experience coming out of that camp has guided a personal view that any cultural institution has a social responsibility to function as an agent of meaningful societal change -- whatever your currency is. Our currency as orchestras is orchestral music. If we were in the restaurant business, our currency would be food. And if we were in the healthcare business, our currency would be healthcare. But whatever our currency is, it can't just be about the currency. It has to be about what change is that currency affecting?

So that's the sort of guiding principle that I've taken with me into my current position. About a year-and-a-half ago now, I was appointed Vice President of Artistic Planning at the New York Philharmonic. And in this position, I see the work of representation of historically marginalized composers not simply -- this will sound trite because I know that we're probably in consensus here. But not simply an exercise in checking boxes. But in my view, actually the objective of orchestral programming hasn't actually changed in the time reflected in Rob's presentation. I think that the  
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objective of orchestral programming has always been and continues to be to create meaningful experiences that honor and respond to the musical, the psychological, the emotional needs of our community. To draw on a very explicit example that predates this work, following 9/11, I still remember -- and I wasn't involved with the orchestra at that time -- but I still remember being very moved by the New York Philharmonic's performance of the Brahms' Requiem, which was exactly the musical salve that New York City needed at that time.

To me, that mandate remains the same, and the takeaway from the recent season's orchestral data that Rob has shared that I want to see, that I want to have faith in -- but with a tint of cynicism, I suppose. I want the takeaway to be not merely that composers of greater diversity are being given a platform, which of course is vitally important. But more than that, the task of orchestral programming hopefully is being approached from a more enlightened perspective in that we are better positioned as orchestras, as an industry, as institutions -- we're better positioned to serve our community in the same way that the Brahms' Requiem did following 9/11. We're better positioned to offer that service to our constituents if we incorporate the diversity of perspectives that make up that community.

I want that to be the takeaway from what ostensibly seems like promising data, but with the caveat that we can't take that assumption on blind faith from the data because how much of this data could simply be reflecting the checking boxes? Orchestras that put a 5-minute overture by a living composer before a program that's otherwise dominated by Mozart, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky. You know, that's a thing. That's a thing that my orchestra has come under scrutiny for, and very fairly so.

So I'm hopeful that we're on a path towards a more holistically enlightened viewpoint as to how we approach this work, that goes beyond the cosmetic exercise which, frankly, is very easy of saying,

"Take that composer away. Put this composer in because that's going to make our graphs look better."

I could point to specific examples from our own programming, but I don't want to dominate the floor too much. Maybe as we get into Q&A, we can get into some more of the -- from the macro to the micro.

TOPPIN: Thank you for that perspective, Patrick.

[INAUDIBLE]

JOHNSON: Good morning. Patrick said something that was interesting in terms of serving our community by incorporating voices. And so I love that, but I'm a data guy. But I am more interested in kind of the lived experiences --

TOPPIN: You can turn the mic closer to you.

JOHNSON: I usually speak so loudly. So. I tried to save you a little bit. Good morning.

Patrick's point is kind of serving the community by incorporating voices. So I love data. The questions that come to mind when I see this is how is this actually felt by the community musicians? So if I only have Black composers joining in the month of February, that means I only have an invitation to your concert all the month of February. We have a festival in February, and the rest of the season is for everybody else. Or if I only do women composers in the month of March, that's not really -- you know,

it might look good in data, but it's not really engaged to the point of why we're working on these metrics. The same thing for musicians.

So simple things of, if the first time a musician sees a work by a female composer on stage but not the audition, it actually sets up a different relationship with that music. And so again, I love data, but there are these kinds of experiences of what does that actually play out?

I mean, we all know how complicated it is to plan a season. And I love making our graduate students at Roosevelt -- I actually make them plan a season. I throw all these kinds of curveballs at them, and they all quit. [LAUGHTER] But it gets really hard, because even for my own organization, obviously we primarily focus on female composers and BIPOC composers, but it can get difficult. And in the end, they'll say, "Oh my gosh, I feel like people might be upset because we're not doing this or doing that." And I'm like, "Yes, this is the struggle, but we're really kind of living through this experience of, what this is actually played out as a concert-goer or a musician?" That's the first thing that comes to mind.

TOPPIN: Thank you for adding that for perspective. I know there are four women in the room, and I'm hoping we'll add another one. Vanessa Rose, are you here somewhere? Yes. Vanessa Reed? Melissa [UNINTEL]. Yep. I met her this morning. And Kristin Mancini? Mancino? [?] I didn't read that very well. Is she here, too? Okay, great. Would you like to respond from your perspectives? From your organization, if you don't mind telling us what you do.

VANESSA ROSE: [VOICE VERY FAINT] Can you hear me okay? I'm Vanessa Rose. I'm the Executive Director of the American Composers Forum. [FURTHER OFF MIC RESPONSE NOT TRANSCRIBED]

TOPPIN: Thank you, Vanessa. We're going to do best practices at the end, so we'll hold that for a little bit longer. The other Vanessa?

VANESSA REED: Hi, I'm not sure which way – to— should I just go like that? [UNINTEL] I'm the President and CEO of New Music, USA, which is a national resource for the whole new music community. We give grants, we lead artist development programs, and we act as an advocate for the [UNINTEL].

We have a long history of working with orchestras, supporting with [UNINTEL] program [UNINTEL] for music [UNINTEL], which I think many of you may have been part of.

So I think the first thing I want to say, and this is maybe a provocation. For me, the [UNINTEL] relevance of the orchestral sector depends on orchestras working more frequently with living composers. And that is regardless of which background those composers are from.

One of the most inspiring things I've heard so far at the conference was yesterday, [UNINTEL] when [UNINTEL] mentioned that now they fill programs with 40% living composers in the last couple of years. So for me, that's like, huge round of applause. So that's the starting point. And I also think again, regardless of what kinds of what kind of composer is being commissioned, it's not just about ticking boxes. It's not just the what. It's the how. It's, what kind of relationship are we developing with those composers? And can we get to a point where orchestras are developing mutually beneficial relationships with living composers, [UNINTEL]. Again, that's what Music Alive is really excited to do, and it's also what we're looking at in our Amplifying Voices Program. Brian [UNINTEL] has joined with [UNINTEL] that, and [UNINTEL] us as well. And that program is about [UNINTEL]. And that, again, is to co-commission new pieces, so that we're not going for the [UNINTEL] and the premiere. We're going  
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for trying to shift the repertoire, and the canon, if you like, with each generation. So it's about giving those composers more than one shot to hear their work heard and giving more than one audience the chance to get more familiar with music by composers of today.

And I think finally, again, through the Amplifying Voices program, we're seeing really interesting examples of orchestras working with composers as curators, not just as a person who comes in and writes the piece and then leaves. They really become part of the organization's DNA and help to reach – different communities [UNINTEL] then into the concert hall.

And yesterday in our composer constituency meeting, Juan Pablo [?] talked about an example where he had invited in the Mexican American community to the orchestra where he was working. He's just in [UNINTEL] Las Vegas, and Fresno's coming up. So again, that really transforms the audience, and I think it was something like 80% of those people have never been into that [UNINTEL] before and had never been to see that orchestra. So those are just a few thoughts from me. There are many more, but those are just a few thoughts I had.

TOPPIN: Thank you, Vanessa.

MELISSA NGAN: Hi, I'm Melissa, and I'm President and CEO of the American Composers Orchestra. For 40 years, it has been our mission to discover and develop the [UNINTEL] of music creators who will expand the definition of American orchestral music. I'm really thrilled to be partnering with the League on the Virginia Beach [UNINTEL] professional commissions program, which all of you, if you've gotten that notice, please feel free to sign on to any of the consortia that are available. All of those composers who have been through Earshot, which is a program that connects composers to



orchestras for readings. And right now I'm glad to say we're working with 79% people of color in that program, and about 45% women and nonbinary composers. So it's a great gateway into the field.

A question that I have, just based on the data -- how are non-binary composers represented in the data?

DEEMER: Thanks for asking. We basically -- basically very, very, very, very few -- like two, I think. Maybe one. Or maybe two performances of one, of one composer at this point. And this is, again, this is just what we have right now. We're working with -- There are ways to be able to find those things out, but again, the idea of once you get into gender identification and sexual orientation, those are things that we want to make sure that that data is solid, right?

So at this point, the numbers were so small as to be like, "Let's hold off on putting them into a graph at this point." But obviously we encourage everyone to be able to expand those numbers.

NGAN: Yes, that's great. And another question I have on the data, which might speak to how we capture data for ourselves: How are people identified? Are they self-identifying, or are we going ahead based on their bios? How are we identifying people of color and other?

DEEMER: Right. So there is -- there's an information page about three or four pages in that actually kind of goes through how we were able to do that. Most of the composers were actually -- through our own databases, we have, I don't remember the number. It's a lot. But it's composers who have actually self-identified, so they've put all of their information in. And so many of the composers that we found are like that. And then basically we have the whole process of kind of making sure that

everybody is identified in the right way, both gender and racial and ethnic background. And if we can't, then we don't mark them -- we mark them -- we code them in a different way so that they don't come into those.

NGAN: Yes, that's [UNINTEL]. And then I know we've written a lot about what diversity means. It's great to think about also pushing past that data into equity and inclusion, so recognizing when we're programming composers, how many of these are commissions, versus repeat performances? How is that producing long-term economic growth for those artists? So these are all next step things, perhaps.

And then also, as Vanessa was saying, how are we thinking about how they're included in decision-making and given agency in their roles, when they're coming into an orchestral space? And I think I had one last question, which is sort of an invitation, but I'm curious to see if we can explore it as a group. You know, we have the OSR data that many of us participate in every year.

One of the things I'd be really curious about, if we're continuing to track repertoire over time is, how might that match to OSR data in a long period? What do these changes actually mean for our organizational [UNINTEL], where your audiences are responding, where your donors are responding, and who is participating in our programs? Because I'd be curious to know what happens when we do? You know? Yeah. But, what happens when we do?

[APPLAUSE]

TOPPIN: I'm not sure who raised the most questions around it. Kristen [?] did you want to [UNINTEL]?

KRISTEN: I think my colleagues have pretty much covered it. Hi, Hector [?]. My colleagues are so terrific in their advocacy for composers. I guess I have a couple of things to say. First of all, I'm representing the League with the Truman Foundation commissions. And I think we've all gotten emails about that, [UNINTEL] in this large, commissioned project which is near [UNINTEL] part of Sarasota, Detroit, Philadelphia, San Diego, and Kansas City. And we're looking for 24 more orchestras. So we're on that, and feel free to approach me.

I guess my question is – I mean, first of all, I'm so happy this is part of our narrative. I mean, really part of our discussion. And as programmers, one of the things you want to avoid is checking that box. And how do we find repertoire that's really [UNINTEL]? That's going to be a big test. Because we know the [UNINTEL], and we know the Mozart, and we know many other composers' repertoire. This is a whole new theater of underrepresented composers. And I agree with everything my colleagues have said here, but I am asking that together, when you hear a great piece, awesome. Tell them this is a great piece. And it's helping us really identify a larger library. Because you don't want to just present something to your community because it has been sent to you. You really want to get behind a composer's repertoire.

And to what Vanessa Reed was saying, when you have a composer in, introduce them to the librarian. Take them to the Executive Director's office and introduce her or him to her or him. You know. Have a board member— take them out to lunch and try to get to know them as a person. Because eventually I think we just want to be known as -- I'm not a composer, but be known as a composer, not something identified otherwise. And that— that would be a very [UNINTEL]. Anyway.

[APPLAUSE]

TOPPIN: Thank you very much, [UNINTEL]. Appreciate it. From her last point, which is sharing the information. That is the whole point of the database that I just mentioned to you, is that when we have spaces for those who have thousands new pieces to contribute to it, and then you're sharing knowledge with everybody else. We have the Minnesota Orchestra, is one of the orchestras that provides us with recordings. They've already tried— so we have high-level, good quality recordings because we know that in order to make choices, we need to hear the music. We also -- because— I mentioned that I've been doing this for 32 years. One of the things that has been important is creating relationships. Because I've been working specifically— my dissertation area in 1990 was on African American— I have to say that. It's painful. But was African American music. But in order to do that -- scores weren't printed. They didn't exist, so I had to start by forming relationships with actual composers. Those relationships have continued for 32 years, so imagine where I am with families and estates. And people. And I think, Blake, you said you had used -- you've actually used our resource already.

JOHNSON: All the time. You know, I'm an MTT [?] student through and through, so my job has kind of spoiled —of working with composers in real time throughout my entire education. And so I tried to use these resources to reach out to them. So I know there are some degrees in here, but I just pushed -- someone mentioned earlier, of like, bringing in the music director and whoever the ED is, to really also have a relationship.

So for instance, Katherine Bossic [?], our artist in residence, she knows she can reach me. She calls me all the time, but we want that type of relationship. The same thing with [UNINTEL]. We had her

before as our artist in residence. Same thing with our composer fellows who -- I'll be shopping around, so you guys know who -- Michelle Isaac is, but yeah. [UNINTEL].

TOPPIN: Yeah, so just keep that in the back of your mind, too, that there are some of us in the research, and let alone with Rob, who are trying to make resources available to you, so you have more research and more work to do and can really engage with this.

Well, I want to open the door to questions. I know that we have a lot of questions. One of mine was, I hope that we can begin to suss out the information in terms of people of color because I'd like to see some of that separated specifically. And Rob and I have talked about this. But African Americans, because so much that happened in the 2020-21 time, where our responses have been specifically African American communities. So I'd love to see some more data from other ethnicities also sussed out. And I think it will be useful for you as you're considering your community. But questions? Yes, please.

FEMALE VOICE: What are the resources you're talking about where we could find repertoire was— similar to, like, the David Daniels [?] book, [UNINTEL] music, but of living composers and sub-categories of— you know, self-creating groups on ethnicity, younger, identity, these sorts of things, where we can try to connect with our community [UNINTEL]?

TOPPIN: So, ours deals— the African Diaspora Musicians Project deals with African, African American, and those of the diaspora. We've expanded it. So we're dealing with men, women, of those— those composers. And our resource has orchestral size, it has— those that have used it that are orchestral. Because I started it as voice data base, and I've partnered with James Lashley [?], who's my associate editor for orchestral. And so he has worked very carefully to make sure that we  
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are addressing the issues and questions that those that are orchestral players would need, or orchestras would need. So, I mean. And then Rob has your list.

DEEMER: Yeah. We've— on the site [composerdiversity.com](http://composerdiversity.com), we have a works data base. It's— it currently has— we've got— if you go to the site, it says, "Works Data Base" and then "Choral Data Base." We're working to be able to split the works data base, which includes orchestral music as well as wind, band, and art song, into separate pages, so that you can go into that. Currently, there are a lot of works that we do have instrumentation in there. We're— myself and interns and research fellows — are working to be able to put that information in. I'm also working on creating a version 2.0, so then you can actually search by, "I need a work with two oboes, not three oboes. I don't have a harp, I have a harp." Those are the types of things we're working towards. And trying to figure out how to make that work is a fair amount of what I've been dealing with these days.

TOPPIN: It's challenging. And that is what we have. We do have the orchestrations already listed. We have length listed. We have the type of piece, the recording, we have perusal scores, we have links to publishers. We've— that's what we've tried to put together. We have bios of the composers, photos. We're trying to do that. We have 4000 voice pieces in there, and 1200, right now, orchestral pieces. Already in there.

FEMALE VOICE: I would love to offer— I am Alecia Lawyer, not a lawyer. But I run ROCO in Houston, and I'm a founder of that, [UNINTEL]. We have a data base of about 70 of our [UNINTEL] that we've done, over 17 years. And we have a page on it that's about commissions and rescoring. So, [ROCO.org](http://ROCO.org). And it's got [UNINTEL], it's got audio recordings from [UNINTEL] 17 years who recorded, and [UNINTEL] listening. So please explore it. Find [UNINTEL] spectacular [UNINTEL]. We've gotten lots of commissions [UNINTEL]. I would love for you to [UNINTEL]. It's a wide variety of BIPOC and

women composers, and [UNINTEL] composers as well as [UNINTEL] composers. So please explore it. It's up there, and [UNINTEL].

TOPPIN: And ROCO has done a great job. She's done— I know Rich Coburn is here and saw you walked in, really great. This is BIPOC Voices.

RICH COBURN: Hi. Thank you. Hi. My name is Rich Coburn, and while we're doing this I wanted to tell you about all the resources I'm running, which, I have a [UNINTEL] called BIPOC Voices. The website is [morebipocvoices.com](http://morebipocvoices.com). And it deals with local music, which I know is a small percentage of your programming, but still a substantial amount of programming. So, similarly to these other [UNINTEL] wonderful resources my colleagues are working on with instrumentation, we have— you know, [UNINTEL]. We have everything from small chamber orchestras which include voice, all the way up to full blown operas and oratorios and so on.

And— it's a newer work, so we're actually just in the process right now of building out our fully— our fully-built data base. So if you have questions— I've heard many people have been taking notes— to give ideas of ways that this is useful to them, or ways they want to be able to search, like you mentioned, Rob. If you have a harp, if you don't have a harp, whatever— please be in touch with 'em. Because we're actually in the process of developing this right now, so your input really is an opportunity to make the actually development. Thanks.

TOPPIN: I hope that at the end of this session we'll be able to collect all these resources and have them so that you can [UNINTEL] on one place, and you don't have to find all of us. I'm sort of keeping track as well, to make sure. Some questions.

BARBARA: Yes, hi. I'm Barbara Sales [?]. I'm American but I live in Montreal, and my company is [UNINTEL]. And I just [UNINTEL]. I do work with composers. I also wear another hat, I'm the President of the Board of [UNINTEL PHRASES]. So, just as— for love. My question for orchestras is, how an orchestra can create not just an occasional, "We're doing this piece now, why don't— you know, why don't we people at this community center, who will learn about it." But how can orchestras create an ongoing connection to community institutions, to help to create an ongoing interest, curiosity, knowledge, about all the music orchestras play, including Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and Mozart, and whoever. I mean, all the living composers, all the living composers, all the BIPOC composers. I think we really need, in this model, I think one of the urgent things, as we talk about changing the world and changing our communities, is to find those permanent connections to these [UNINTEL] communities which do not feel comfortable in the setting. And to show them the wealth of— of experience orchestras can offer. So that's to me the real question— or a key question, that needs to be discussed. And I'm really thrilled to see so many education and outreach [UNINTEL] here.

TOPPIN: Thank you for the question, because I think that that is a good segue into best practices, that we need to do before we run out of time. And I know that Blake Anthony actually mentioned one of the best practices from the beginning, which is, what's your intention? How are you thinking about incorporating this music? So, having a mentality that it's not about, "I need to check a box." Checking a box is for a moment. But if you're talking about making something that's sustainable, it has to be a "How are you thinking about this? How does this connect to your community? Are you only doing it in January, February, or March," which are not — there are nine more months, I think, in the calendar? [LAUGHTER] And so, you know, if that's how you have to start, that's one thing. But start there with the thought that, "I'm moving beyond that, and I'm thinking that this is good music. I'm programming it just because it's good music. I know you haven't heard it yet, but trust me, after 32 years, I have to tell you, this is good music. There's a lot of it out there. That the narrative of African American music



as other, underrepresented— it's been there, from the 16, 1700s. It's been there all along. And so it needs to be heard. Let me turn it over to my colleagues.

DEEMER: I promise this is not a plug, because I'm not getting paid for this. But the Brevard Project is happening this summer, which, we talked a lot about this. Which I'll be at. One of the things that— Jack [UNINTEL] and I are kind of cut from the same cloth, so it's not a surprise here— but a lot of the institutions that do this well incorporate the humanities. So it's really hard to just program the music and expect people to get it, to fall in love with it. For people to actually understand why it is. You know, one of the biggest issues that we have is, you know, when you do check boxes, and— you know, X composer, or all-Brahms, they're like, "Well, the Brahms sounds better." It's like, "Okay, but if you actually understood who this composer was, what they were writing, and the context."

You know, one of my favorite pictures [?] is Shasa Go, where she's like, literally just composing, but it is chaos. His kids, like, don't have clothes on. The food is, like, burning. And, like, you get a better sense of a composer. Same thing for [UNINTEL] it has to be more than just a name on a program. And so incorporating the Humanities, which— I think that really [UNINTEL] quite well. I think we should try. That is, I think, really important, because they do need to have a relationship with these composers outside of it.

And then, you know, again, going back to the EDs. It costs money, right? So that's kind of the big elephant in the room. And it costs a lot of money to socialize this work, in which they're like, "Okay, like, when are they coming back?" And so when you do have a composer, you have to kind of commit to this idea of programming, saying, "Okay. I'm gonna focus"—and again, this is just my opinion— but "I'm gonna focus on these nine composers for the next five years. And how can I really make the staple of this institution, and then share that, use that as a launching pad to then bring it to other

people?” You know. It doesn't do that much good for me to try to get everyone. It does a lot more good to really, you know, if— especially if it's a living composer— to not just champion their pieces, but also invest in them so they can build up that catalog, and grow, and have all the resources that all other composers have, and then kind of share.

TOPPIN: Thank you for that. And before— I'm gonna have a last two. But in order to get all these resources that are in the room, if you will write, take down one email, which is mine— Itoppin, T-O-P-P-I-N, @umich.edu. If you have a resource that you were trying to share today, if you will send that to me, I will send it to the League and make sure that it gets out to all participants that want to see these lists. I think that's more efficient than trying to find.

FEMALE VOICE: Can you repeat that?

TOPPIN: Sure. L, the letter L, Toppin. [EXPLAINS] Itoppin@umich.edu. Edu, dot-edu. I forgot which one of my e-mails I was using. Sorry about that. So if you forget it, just look at the University of Michigan School of Music web site. There's a big picture of me. I'm the only one you want to hear from. I am. [LAUGHTER] Patrick or Rob, would you like to respond to that?

PATRICK: Yeah. I'll say a couple things. And with apologies, I'm catching about 60 percent of what's said off-mic in the room, but I think I'm following well enough. On the topic of best practices, you know, one thing that I'll say— I know that my partner in crime, Gary Padmore, is in the room, New York Philharmonic's Director of Education. And, you know, one thing that orchestras, I think, have been remiss in, is making sure that artistic and education and community engagement are in lock step. Often times, those departments work in silos. And the more that we can see our work, you know, symbiotically— you know, the initiatives that are launched by an institution's education and

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community engagement department, that's like, the most powerful. Those are the front lines in engaging with our immediate community. And so if there's synergy there, I think that that falls— you know, that's sort of number one under best practices in pursuing this work.

Another comment— and I know we're just about at time, I think. But, you know, I think an important thing to— for us in this room to be mindful of, is, you know, some of the questions and comments in the last few minutes, I think, skirt at a false dichotomy that we as an industry are often running up against. And it's a toxic one. And it is the question of, "Doesn't this work invite artistic compromise?" Right? The argument that, "Well, we program Brahms because Brahms is great. And sure, diversity is important. But as long as it doesn't compromise artistic quality." And I think that we need to be committed, collectively, to debunking that. Because it's— it's nonsense.

And one of the opportunities that I capitalize on in my position is, you know, I can point to proof of concept within my own orchestra. Diversity is not just the composers that we program, but the people that we put on stage. And there was a time when the New York Philharmonic was open only to white, German-speaking men. And the orchestra now is over 50 percent women, and ethnic diversity is also much improved. And it's still a really good orchestra. And so when somebody [LAUGHTER] — you know, brings up— when somebody brings up that false dichotomy, I can point immediately to the orchestra on stage and say, "Artistic quality has not been compromised by welcoming— by welcoming diversity." [APPLAUSE]

TOPPIN: Thank you, Patrick. Rob has the last word. But also, if you have questions. If you have emails that you want the group to think about, send them to me as well and I'll make sure all of that is passed along.

DEEMER: So, there's— there's an entire section within the report, I'll let you dig into it, in terms of best practices. I think the one thing that I would like to be able to— to finish this up with is, it's great to be able to see these numbers, and obviously the numbers are just one component of it. But I think it is important for us to see that the numbers have been changing. The programming has been shifting, not just in one corner or another, but kind of across the board.

The trick of it is, how do we make that sustainable, so it doesn't come right back down next year, the year after that? It can't be reactionary. You know. We mention the idea of, like— there are reasons why the programming has changed over the last four or five years. At some point, it would be nice for that to not be the case. The programming is just the programming because it's awesome music and that's what we should be doing. And so if we can work over the next few years to figure out how to be able to make that happen— and obviously each orchestra has their own community and their own ways to be able to do that. But at least we're moving in the right direction. And how to be able to do this intentionally and connecting with the composers, connecting with the communities. And we'll see where it goes from there.

TOPPIN: Thank you so much for that, Rob. Intentionality, commissions, partnerships. All of those are words that we need to think about. Please join us. Zipper Hall. Thank you so much for being a part of this.

[OFF MIC CONVERSATION]

### END OF TRANSCRIPT ###