

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Artistic Planning

**by Theodore Wiprud, with Karen Yair,
Kerrien Suarez, and Patrick Castillo**

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Introduction

To survive and to thrive, orchestral music must continue to evolve as a vibrant and dynamic art form that is engaged with our times and meaningful to increasingly diverse audiences and communities.

Especially since the murder of George Floyd in Summer 2020 brought issues of racial equity to the forefront of national consciousness, many orchestras have highlighted the work of historically marginalized composers, including those identifying as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color), women, and non-binary. As a result, the 2021-2022 season saw more than a four-fold increase in the programming of works by historically marginalized composers over 2017 levels, across orchestras of all sizes and regions. Despite this progress, however, white, male European composers of the past continue to dominate the repertoire, still accounting for two thirds of the works programmed in the 2021-2022 season.¹

For inclusive artistic planning to be effective, it needs to be part of an orchestra's long-term plan for EDI (equity, diversity, and inclusion) work, aligned with changes in internal culture, resourcing, governance, retention practices, and partnership building. Orchestras taking the kinds of actions outlined in the League's Promising Practices² report are building strong foundations for this work. As board, staff, and musicians all align around EDI, programming innovations can be set up for success, backed up by marketing and ticketing strategies and by a welcoming and inclusive patron experience.

This Catalyst Guide examines programming philosophies, challenges, factors for success, and resources that have emerged so far in orchestras' journeys towards programming equity. It is based on dozens of interviews with orchestras of all budget sizes, including grantees from the League's Catalyst Fund Pilot and Incubator programs.

Every orchestra faces unique factors in its community, its history, and its people, and will therefore experience a unique EDI journey. But learning from ongoing work across the field will help sustain progress for lasting change.

Promising Practices: Actions Orchestras Can Take to Make Progress Toward Equity

Read about 12 actions any orchestra can take to make progress towards equity by strengthening its own organizational practices: <https://americanorchestras.org/promising-practices-actions-orchestras-can-take-to-make-progress-toward-equity/>

Foreword from Contributing Author Kerrien Suarez



Photo of Kerrien Suarez by C-Suite Pics®

Consider this Catalyst Guide a challenge to fulfill a moral imperative to transform the classical music sector into one whose canon, culture, artistry, and leadership are expansive and inclusive of those historically excluded due to structural racism.ⁱ This Guide focuses on artistic planning, but the practices it outlines should be implemented at the convergence of cross-functional management, operations, and culture that makes classical music organizations and performing ensembles unique.

Practices are ideally implemented as part of an explicit action plan to center race and intersectional equityⁱⁱ and cultivate anti-racismⁱⁱⁱ in an organization's culture. My company, Equity in the Center,^{iv} describes this process as the developmental shift from "Awake to Woke to Work."^v This shift yields a transformation that mitigates identity-based disparities only when transactional, check-the-box tactics that focus primarily on representation give way to robust, clearly articulated strategies that drive inclusion through aligned, time-bound goals for culture, policy, and practice across an institution (from its board of directors and senior leadership/mid-level managers to musicians and guest artists, to venue staff and volunteers).

The majority of equity, diversity, and inclusion work in artistic planning has focused on the optics of increased representation through commissioning new works and featuring guest artists from historically underrepresented communities. This is an "outside-in" strategy that can be executed with little to no change to an organization's internal values, leadership, and operations.

This Catalyst Guide challenges the leaders of orchestras to adopt artistic planning practices that drive transformation from the "inside-out," moving beyond the representation we see and hear on stage. Such transformation yields an organizational culture that centers relationships and shares institutional power with the composers and performing artists, leaders, and communities of color that have been historically excluded. At the sector level, it compounds to dismantle racism and white supremacy.^{vi}

The elimination of race-based disparities is what equity practitioners call "forever work." The mitigation of systemic exclusion accomplished over centuries will not be achieved in a season or decade. And yet, significant change has occurred nationwide since 2020. Be encouraged and be bold as your institution seeks to deepen and be held accountable for sustaining that change in the months and years ahead.

Kerrien Suarez
President & CEO
Equity in the Center

Foreword from Contributing Author Patrick Castillo



Photo of Patrick Castillo by Hotel Elephant.

Representation of composers of diverse racial, ethnic, and gender identities has seen a notable increase among orchestral programs in recent years. Responding both to a zeitgeist insistent on a more inclusive culture and to certain catalytic events (most devastatingly, the murder of George Floyd), our cultural sector has made commendable efforts to be intentionally reflective of the whole of American society.

This Catalyst Guide offers a real-time assessment of these efforts and aims to articulate strategies for advancing recent years' progress. It presents us with much to be celebrated; it also reveals the extent of work yet to be done. The work of diversifying our programming remains, for the moment, entrenched in a white- and male-centered perspective—as, for instance, when quantifying “BIPOC, women, and non-binary” composers as one monolithic group, failing to recognize even these broad categories as distinct from one another.

Every cultural institution bears a mandate to serve its community's psychological and emotional needs. As society wrestles anew with racial injustice, simply “checking the diversity box” does not satisfy this mandate. A deeper interrogation of our mission is required. As we reflect on our industry's renewed efforts to represent historically marginalized composers, we likewise risk fundamentally misinterpreting the truth beneath the data. In the wake of George Floyd, and as we forge ahead, our mandate remains unchanged: to serve the needs of our community. Data showing more diverse programming should reflect an awakening to the notion that we are better positioned to fulfill that mandate when our programming reflects diverse experiences and perspectives. Diversity in our programming should not be the endgame; it should be an indication of how successfully we are accomplishing our goals.

“Start where you are,” the Catalyst Guide encourages us, “and keep the momentum going. Starting small for easy wins can be wise.” By all means, let's do score the easy wins. But, the Guide continues, “those who have traditionally programmed Black History Month or MLK Day concerts can avoid tokenism by extending diverse programming into other parts of the calendar [and] deepening and expanding their relationships with BIPOC composers.” May the ideas and strategies shared here be only the starting point towards a future that is not just cosmetically equitable, but one where every citizen truly feels they belong.

Patrick Castillo
Vice President, Artistic Planning
New York Philharmonic

Chapter 1: Why Bring an Equity Lens to Artistic Planning?

You are what you play.

What orchestras put on stage defines their identity. The creativity of the past will continue to inspire the audiences of the future. But a vital art form needs an evolving repertory shaped by artists who represent contemporary communities. Broadening the music and the artists we present is among the most telling and direct ways to engage with today's diverse American culture.

“Diverse voices mean beautiful work, a vibrant future, and more connection to today's America.”

Melissa Ngan, President and CEO, American Composers Orchestra

We have a moral imperative to surface voices unfairly silenced by racism and discrimination.

It is past time to center outstanding creators and performers from all racial, ethnic, and gender identities on our stages. In interviews with music directors and administrators at orchestras across the United States, a consensus emerges that it's incumbent on cultural leaders to lead: to define direction and strategy and provide the means and resources for change.

“What better way for orchestras to break down barriers, and to become trend-leading?”

Mei-Ann Chen, Music Director, Chicago Sinfonietta

“If we as cultural leaders don't know artists of color, it's our fault, not theirs.”

Jon Lewis, Executive Director, Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra (Minneapolis)

The repertory will be enriched by discovering new voices and recovering important legacies.

Musicians and audiences risk missing out on powerful currents in American and global culture by maintaining a restrictive canon. Untold stories from both the past and the present can only enhance orchestral music as an art form and help to serve a broader community than orchestras have historically reached.

“Though we can't erase the prejudices of the past, we can work together to build a more equitable future for classical music—one in which all voices are heard, where everyone sees themselves on our stages, and where artists like Florence [Price] do not fade into obscurity.”

Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Music Director, The Philadelphia Orchestra

A broader audience awaits.

There is also a business case for change,⁴ with recent research showing latent potential, both within digital audiences for orchestral music and in specific cities. For example, 2018 research by Boston's Handel and Haydn Society⁷ (H+H) revealed a far larger number of people of color with interest in classical music than are currently represented in the H+H audience.

Programming exemplary artists with a connection to local people, places, and stories can both attract interested first timers to the orchestra and build sustained engagement. H+H's research highlighted the importance of "more people like us on the program and on stage" in attracting first-time BIPOC audience members to its hall. And on a national level, we know that the public as a whole is increasingly looking to cultural organizations to collaborate with local artists and address local issues, with people of color in particular valuing "local venues, focusing on arts and culture reflective of my cultural identity".^{5, 6}

"Younger audiences want the new, the different."

Jennifer Arnold, Director of Artistic Planning and Orchestra Operations, Richmond Symphony

"Relevance grows market share."

David Snead, President and CEO, Handel and Haydn Society

Many foundations and government funders want to see change.

As communities are calling on arts organizations to rethink their civic roles, so too are many foundations and government agencies, both local and national. Some orchestras are seeing funds re-allocated to BIPOC-led organizations and to smaller, community-based groups that embrace EDI as part of their core missions. The question of who is performing what for whom, and who is shaping programmatic decisions, is becoming ever more crucial for contributed support.⁴

Using Plans and Metrics to Advance EDI

Learn more about H+H's work and other examples of orchestras' EDI work in practice in *Catalyst Snapshots: EDI Case Studies from American Orchestras*: <https://americanorchestras.org/catalyst-snapshots-edi-case-studies-from-american-orchestras/>

Making the Case for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Orchestras: A Guide from the League of American Orchestras

A detailed look at the mission, business, and creative cases for EDI work: <https://americanorchestras.org/making-the-case-for-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-in-orchestras/>

Chapter 2: Strategies to Achieve More Inclusive Programming

Set targets and be accountable.

One model for more inclusive programming is to set measurable targets for historically excluded composers and guest artists, and chart progress toward a more representative repertory. A target may for instance be at least one work by a BIPOC composer on every concert. This approach provides accountability and can show fast results. However, it signals tokenism if not backed up by organization-wide work to effectively engage audiences and by a commitment to center increasingly substantial works by historically excluded composers within mainstage programming.

In the summer of 2020, the **Minnesota Orchestra** found itself at the epicenter of the racial reckoning accelerated by the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. The orchestra felt a powerful imperative to demonstrate its commitment to all the people of its community. By the time the pandemic allowed the orchestra to begin to play publicly again in the fall of 2020, the musicians on its Artistic Advisory Committee had set a clear and ambitious goal: to include a Black composer on every program. Recognizing that it would take more than diverse programming, the musicians and staff nevertheless wanted to make an immediate response. Since then, the orchestra has programmed larger works by AMELIA (African, Middle Eastern, Latin, Indigenous, and Asian) and female composers.

“It’s part of our role as a community citizen, to foster more beneficial relationships with AMELIA communities and organizations.”

Kari Marshall, Director of Artistic Planning, Minnesota Orchestra

The **West Virginia Symphony Orchestra** (WVSO) is another ensemble that committed to a guest artist or composer of color on every concert program. But WVSO President Joe Tackett says they did not rush into the decision, wary of virtue-signaling in the summer of 2020. He began by expanding the conversation, recruiting Black board members knowledgeable about music who contributed programming ideas. Then, Music Director Lawrence Loh reached out to a young Black composer he’d worked with in Dallas: Quinn Mason, whose music has now had three appearances with the WVSO. Together, they have put established works together with new works by Black composers on virtually every WVSO program.

“I hear only positive response to the work we’ve done.”

Joe Tackett, President, West Virginia Symphony Orchestra

Work with the most progressive artists and composers without setting specific goals for race or gender identity.

Another approach holds that engaging with the most interesting emerging voices will naturally lead to an increasingly diverse slate of composers and artists, especially if artistic partners have opportunities to curate. This approach shares power and aims to avoid tokenism. However, the selection of artist and composer partners can inadvertently reinforce systemic inequities, unless artistic planners actively work to expand and diversify their networks, always asking themselves who is still excluded.

The **New York Philharmonic** invited countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo to curate “The Beauty Within,” a series of programs in the winter of 2022 with music by composers of diverse racial and gender identities. This invitation did not so much reflect a decision to diversify, says Patrick Castillo, Vice President, Artistic Planning, but was instead a recognition of Costanzo as a catalyst for innovation.

“Our philosophy is that an organization like the New York Philharmonic has an obligation to act as an agent of meaningful social change.”

Patrick Castillo, Vice President, Artistic Planning, New York Philharmonic

The **San Francisco Symphony** entrusts progress in part to a diverse group of eight Collaborative Partners, ranging from bassist/vocalist/composer Esperanza Spalding to artificial-intelligence entrepreneur Carol Reiley. The Partners curate in spaces such as the experimental SoundBox, subscription concerts, and newly imagined spaces. Expanding the conversation has the power to change decision-making in meaningful and exciting ways. Without setting targets, SFS exponentially increased its representation of female and BIPOC composers within a five-year period.

Collaborate to tell local stories.

Building deep, lasting relationships with local community organizations creates a strong backbone for more inclusive programming. When local people shape the telling of their own stories through orchestral music, the impact can be profound. And as noted above, the potential for new programming to engage latent audiences can be particularly powerful when collaborative storytelling involves local artists, community groups, and venues working together with the orchestra.

Building lasting relationships with community-based organizations is an ongoing investment of time, coupled with deep awareness of privilege and cultural difference. Organizational equity work can support orchestra staff in ensuring that these relationships remain respectful of a community’s practices, and do not inadvertently exploit or cause harm (for example through appropriation or tokenizing). With this solid foundation, these relationships can fuel the creative process, while broadening trust and engagement with the orchestra’s work.

The **South Dakota Symphony Orchestra** has built a new intercultural repertory by collaborating with Lakota and Dakota musicians and elders for a dozen years and counting. Indigenous musicians perform alongside the orchestra, and new works are commissioned, from Native and non-Native composers, for them to perform together.

“Focusing on the traditional music of a given culture is the best way to form a musical connection between our community and another. This is also the best way to ensure that the music itself is meaningful, rooted in the history of the people with whom you are engaging.”

Delta David Gier, Music Director, South Dakota Symphony Orchestra

Pursuing EDI Through Community Engagement

Learn about the Detroit Symphony’s cutting-edge work in community partnerships, and other examples of orchestras’ EDI work in practice in *Catalyst Snapshots: EDI Case Studies from American Orchestras*: <https://americanorchestras.org/catalyst-snapshots-edi-case-studies-from-american-orchestras/>

The **Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra** takes the rich musical legacies of New Orleans as birthright. The orchestra collaborates with local musicians, including Tank & The Bangas and gender-fluid bounce artist Big Freedia, and plans to move such projects into the subscription season.

Your Values, Your Impact, Your Stories

Learn more about the value of storytelling for orchestras by watching a video of this session from the League’s 2021 National Conference: <https://americanorchestras.org/conference-2021-your-values-your-impact-your-stories/>

“We want to be a culture-bearer for the music of the region. Who better than us?”

Anwar Nasir, Executive Director, Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra

When the **Philadelphia Orchestra** presented its first-ever Pride Concert in June 2022, Verizon Hall was packed with such an enthusiastic, cheering crowd, including many who had never been in the hall before, that Doris Parent recalls thinking, “Look what we’ve started—we have to do this again!” The orchestra seized the opportunity of an unused musicians’ service to try something new. With the enthusiastic involvement of Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin, they worked with the city’s LGBT Office to get the word out and

they programmed local talent, including the Philadelphia Gay Men’s Chorus and the drag performer Martha Graham Cracker.

“Events like this build an awareness of the orchestra and change the perception of the orchestra.”

Doris Parent, Chief IDEAS [Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access Strategies] Officer, The Philadelphia Orchestra

The **Boise Philharmonic** is building a multimedia project around Paul Chihara's piece *Minidoka* (Reveries of...), which looks back to his childhood years in a Japanese American internment camp near Boise. The project has become an opportunity to build partnerships with the Idaho State Museum and Archives, Friends of Minidoka, and Minidoka National Historic Site. Amy Granger, VP of Audience Experience, says it's on-brand for an orchestra striving to be "Boise's Philharmonic."

"I don't have to be angry [about my family's internment at Minidoka]. I just have to tell people what happened, and they get angry."

Paul Chihara, Composer

Treat an equity mandate as an opportunity.

Research into historically excluded composers of the past and the present can re-energize musicians and staff alike.

California Symphony Music Director Donato Cabrera describes feeling liberated by the orchestra's 2017 commitment to diverse programming. He quickly exceeded the orchestra's agreed minimum percentage of women and composers of color.

"The EDI movement has helped me home in on what I've always wanted to do."

Donato Cabrera, Music Director, California Symphony

At the **New York Philharmonic**, artistic advisory committee meetings are now regularly scheduled, rather than deadline driven. And more voices are in the room.

"The committee [members] have embraced the sense of adventure. They are sensitive to the cultural imperative, to expanding the legacy."

Patrick Castillo, Vice President, Artistic Planning, New York Philharmonic

"There have always been influences from finance, marketing, and orchestra [members] in programming discussions. Through our DEI [diversity, equity, and inclusion] work we have been able to add considerations of cultural and societal impact to these conversations."

Ugochi Onyeukwu, Director, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, New York Philharmonic

Leverage the brand.

Some American orchestras think of adventurous programming as part of their brand. For them, revealing previously excluded composers is a natural fit.

ROCO, a chamber orchestra in Houston, has embraced diversity on stage for years and has been at the forefront among American orchestras in programming BIPOC composers and artists. All of ROCO's conductors in 2021-22 were women, not as a campaign for diversity, but simply because they were excellent artists cultivated by conductor Mei-Ann Chen.

"ROCO is a brand match for people who cultivate curiosity."

Alecia Lawyer, Artistic Director and Founder, ROCO

"The Taki Alsop Fellowship⁸ has been launching women conductors' careers for 20 years. These things are creating ripple effects. Literally my network is from that. Marin [Alsop] broke the glass ceiling. Now how can I make it easier for others, including championing women composers? And the Chicago Sinfonietta's Freeman Fellowships,⁹ launched in 2008 for composers, musicians, conductors, and administrators. These are creating ripple effects throughout the industry."

Mei-Ann Chen, ROCO Artistic Partner and Music Director, Chicago Sinfonietta

Chicago Sinfonietta finds that because they are known for inclusive programming, exciting projects come their way—like violinist Rachel Barton Pine bringing Florence Price's Violin Concerto No. 2, or cellist Inbal Segev bringing Anna Clyne's DANCE.

"Our audiences have come to expect the unexpected, to be challenged."

Gary Zabinski, Director of Artistic Operations, Chicago Sinfonietta

Start where you are, and keep the momentum going.

Starting small for easy wins can be wise, as a step on the path toward a more truly equitable future. Those who have traditionally programmed Black History Month or MLK Day concerts can avoid tokenism by extending diverse programming into other parts of the calendar; deepening and expanding their relationships with BIPOC composers and guest artists and community partners; and commissioning new works.

"More interesting is for us to make the season opener a statement of 'who is invited,' rather than putting certain music into a prescribed month."

Blake-Anthony Johnson, CEO, Chicago Sinfonietta

Chapter 3: Overcoming Challenges

Fighting the narrative that unfamiliar repertory is of lower quality can be a daily battle.

The underlying assumption that Black and Brown composers are less talented than white composers is fundamentally untrue and racist. Our industry's status quo obscures the work of many composers of color and allows us to wrongly assume that we are already aware of all the great works of the past and the talented composers of the present.

"The fallacy about compromising excellence needs to be left on the side. We can't continue to inspire people if diversity isn't woven through everything we do."

Meghan Martineau, Vice President, Artistic Planning, Los Angeles Philharmonic

Making the Case for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Orchestras: A Guide from the League of American Orchestras

An essential resource when advocating for programming diversification and overcoming resistance to change: <https://americanorchestras.org/making-the-case-for-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-in-orchestras/>

Dismantling the perception that diverse programming is not needed in a predominantly white community can also be a struggle.

Even in the most homogenous community, the case for programming diversification holds true, embodying the ideal of a society where no one feels like the "other."

"It's not true we do not have people of color in Charleston, WV. We're building better relations with West Virginia State, an HBCU (historically Black college or university). And the only growing populations here are immigrant communities from India and Syria."

Joe Tackett, President, West Virginia Symphony Orchestra

Fear of lost ticket sales should be examined carefully.

The risk to ticket sales of programming unfamiliar works can be exaggerated. Although audiences may initially push back against innovative programming, the example of the Handel and Haydn Society⁷ and data from Culture Track^{5,6} suggest a longer-term benefit in reaching broader audiences. Storytelling, context-setting, and smart marketing can help build engagement. Many orchestras have developed successful strategies for balancing the familiar and unfamiliar, the accessible and the challenging, across the season.

"Start with concrete ideas, not abstract ones. To only say 'new music is important' can get resistance. But lead with exciting pieces; then people get excited."

Aram Demirjian, Music Director, Knoxville Symphony Orchestra

“Audiences gravitate toward an experience, not just specific works. We need to make the experience feel cool and change the mindset of what it’s like to be an orchestra audience.”

Jennifer Arnold, Director of Artistic Planning and Orchestra Operations, Richmond Symphony

Tokenism—real or perceived—can create backlash.

The apparent ease of swapping out one composer or guest artist for another belies the effort required to make effective change by activating expertise from across the organization. Short concert openers by historically excluded composers, in the absence of larger “second-half” works, are only cosmetic.

“We don’t want a tokenistic approach, not just ticking a box. We want something more substantial.”

Phillippa Cole, Senior Director, Artistic Planning, San Francisco Symphony

Rental costs can discourage smaller orchestras.

Rentals provide income to composers for the use of their work. But some programmers less experienced with music under copyright can find it difficult to request and understand rental quotes, which now may include streaming and online video archiving. Although every publisher handles rentals in its own way, they all want to work with orchestras and will do what they can to make projects possible.

Preparing less familiar repertoire for performance can require additional resources.

Preparing less familiar repertoire for performance can require more resources. Many conductors and administrators talk about the challenges of finding and working with scores that might be hand-written and whose ownership is unclear, owing to the historical marginalization of the composers. Music publishers are working to overcome these same issues in order to bring important voices to light, and to make their works lists searchable for racial, ethnic, and gender identities. Publishers, university libraries, and the Library of Congress can all be helpful, along with growing databases like the Institute for Composer Diversity’s Composer Diversity Database and Orchestra Works Database,⁹ the African Diaspora Music Project,¹⁰ and Latin Orchestral Music.¹¹

Music Publishers Association

This trade group provides information on how to navigate the rental process, and guidance on arrangements and editions of works still in copyright: <https://www.mpa.org/>

Repertoire by Underrepresented Composers

The League’s Catalyst EDI Resources Center includes a section with direct links to multiple databases: <https://americanorchestras.org/databases-of-repertoire-by-underrepresented-composers/>

“Remember to use all your resources, and one thing will lead to another.”

Norman Ryan, Vice President, Composers and Repertoire, Schott Music Corp.

Chapter 4: Factors for Success

Leadership and internal alignment make the difference.

A committed and diverse staff led by a committed and diverse board will more easily identify and present diverse artists, who will in turn expand an orchestra's network. And when artistic planning is part of a broader strategy for equity, diversity, and inclusion, branding and communications give unfamiliar works the best chance to succeed.

"The whole team must find a way to support the vision. We can't go out there without buy-in. But when we hold hands at the edge of the cliff, then we fly."

Mei-Ann Chen, Music Director, Chicago Sinfonietta

It's all about relationships.

White orchestra leaders' networks have been overwhelmingly white. Many of today's leaders and conductors are involved in developing networks that are intentionally inclusive, and that benefit from a new richness of multiple perspectives and experiences. Investing over time in specific composers and artists helps build their careers, and their relationships with musicians and audiences.

The **San Francisco Symphony** begins relationships with some young artists through the Spotlight Series of recitals, and structures those collaborations to unfold in stages over several years. Over half the artists are from historically marginalized communities. For instance, violinist Randall Goosby is in the midst of a multi-year series of appearances all booked at once.

"Planning is about balance and relationships and continuing collaborations."

Phillippa Cole, Senior Director, Artistic Planning, San Francisco Symphony

The **Los Angeles Philharmonic** first commissioned Mexican composer Gabriela Ortiz back in the 1990s, and then again after Gustavo Dudamel arrived as music director and focused on music from Mexico City. Ortiz has not only become a recurring presence with the orchestra; she has also tapped her network in Mexico and helped the LA Phil curate a whole slate of commissions in 2022.

"Each composer helps build our network."

Meghan Martineau, Vice President, Artistic Planning, Los Angeles Philharmonic

"If you are in authentic relationships with diverse voices with a human-first perspective, diverse art becomes intrinsic."

Alecia Lawyer, Founder and Artistic Director, ROCO

Context adds impact.

Thoughtfully planned community events, audiovisual enhancements, pre concert talks, and creative program books can help make new voices important to listeners and get beyond composers' mere identity.

The **New York Philharmonic**'s performances of Julius Eastman's Symphony No. 11 were not just championing an overlooked American original. They were also complemented by an ongoing series called *The Unanswered Questions*, making space for conversation about the context and meaning of unfamiliar works. *Unjust Malaise: Julius Eastman and a Broken Mental Health System*, part of *The Unanswered Questions* series, took place at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

"It's programming as a portal to meaningful discussion."

Patrick Castillo, Vice President, Artistic Planning, New York Philharmonic

The **California Symphony**'s Donato Cabrera has removed his standard maestro's bio from the program book so that he can write about his rationale for the evening's program. He also speaks before each work, building a narrative across each concert.

"Sharing more information has made it less challenging to program a concert that might contain less frequently performed works or world premieres."

Donato Cabrera, Music Director, California Symphony

Concert and whole-season themes provide a narrative.

Concert and whole-season themes can provide an impetus for creative programming and a narrative to keep audiences engaged.

ROCO organized its 2021-22 season under the title Musical Threads, "focusing on common threads of environmental awareness, human rights and the scarcity of time." This high-level concept spun off concert titles like "Bursting at the Seams" and "A Stitch in Time" and embraced eight commissions from a diverse range of composers.

"Themes give people a way to move through the season. It's fun to break out sub-themes for each concert."

Alecia Lawyer, Artistic Director and Founder, ROCO

Long-term projects cement commitment.

Long-term projects can cement a commitment to inclusive programming over several years, as shown by the above example of the South Dakota Symphony. Extending more expansive concert programming into recording and touring ventures helps to build the visibility and critical engagement crucial to establishing new works and composers in orchestral repertoire.

The **Virginia B. Toulmin Orchestral Commission Program**¹³ (an initiative of the League of American Orchestras, in partnership with American Composers Orchestra) has brought together 30 orchestras, large and small, to commission and perform music by women and non-binary composers. New Music USA's Amplifying Voices involves over 45 orchestras in 11 consortia commissioning BIPOC and women composers. These are just two examples of coalitions inviting orchestras to invest collectively in the long-term success of today's composers and their works.

The **Los Angeles Philharmonic's** Pan-American Music Initiative is a five-year project, begun in the 2021-2022 season, showcasing music across borders, as the Venezuela-born music director Gustavo Dudamel is uniquely suited to do.

The **New York Philharmonic's** Project 19 celebrates the centenary of the 19th Amendment, enshrining women's right to vote, by commissioning 19 new works by 19 women, premiered beginning in 2020 and stretching to 2024 and beyond.

The **Philadelphia Orchestra** invested years of work in restoring the scores of Florence Price's Symphonies Nos. 1 and 3. Convinced of the works' value, the orchestra performed them for live audiences over several seasons; recorded both works for Deutsche Grammophon (a recording that won the orchestra its first Grammy Award); played the works in Carnegie Hall; and in the summer of 2022 performed them on a tour of European festivals.

Creative spaces lead to innovation.

Spaces devoted to adventurous music can be laboratories for new approaches and building new audiences.

The **San Francisco Symphony's** SoundBox is an experimental space with a club feel, where different curators create unique experiences. Drawing younger and more diverse audiences than the Symphony's mainstage, SoundBox enables the Collaborative Partners (see above, Chapter 2) and curators like Tyshawn Sorey and Jamie Man to demonstrate fresh, inclusive ideas.

"SoundBox is a space to work with new people, and to see where their creativity can lead us, whether they be our Collaborative Partners or other visionary artists in the field."

Phillippa Cole, Senior Director, Artistic Planning, San Francisco Symphony

Conclusion: The Path Ahead

Will the drive to diversify the repertoire prove lasting?

The dozens of interviews behind this report show that while many orchestras have only just begun to diversify their artistic programming, their efforts are already being rewarded. They are finding new artistic vitality in a broader repertoire, and in surfacing neglected voices both old and new. They are beginning to connect in new and authentic ways with the communities they serve. And they are playing their part in the continued evolution of an art form that becomes more powerful and relevant to the future when it is shaped by many voices.

There is more work to be done, with mistakes to be made and lessons to be learned along the way. The League of American Orchestras' webinars, Conference sessions, constituency meetings, and online resources can help. Stay in touch at www.americanorchestras.org. The future is there for the imagining.

"Every year should see some progress. People want to be challenged."

Phillippa Cole, Senior Director, Artistic Planning, San Francisco Symphony

ARTISTIC ADMINISTRATORS

Continue the conversation with your peers. Reach out to your constituency liaison at <https://americanorchestras.org/connect/constituency-groups/> and connect with other orchestra artistic administrators on League360 (requires League member login): <https://bit.ly/artisticadminsLeague360>

Footnotes

Foreword

- i. Structural Racism, Racial Equity Tools: <https://racialequitytools.org/resources/fundamentals/core-concepts/structural-racism>
- ii. Intersectionality, Racial Equity Tools: <https://racialequitytools.org/resources/fundamentals/core-concepts/intersectionality>
- iii. Racial Equity Tools Glossary, Racial Equity Tools: <https://racialequitytools.org/glossary>
- iv. Equity in the Center website: <https://equityinthecenter.org>
- v. Awake to Woke to Work, Equity in the Center: <https://equityinthecenter.org/aww/>
- vi. Racism Defined, Dismantling Racism Works (dRworks): <https://www.dismantlingracism.org/racism-defined.html>

Main Text

1. 2022 Orchestra Repertoire Report, Institute for Composer Diversity: <https://americanorchestras.org/2022-orchestra-repertoire-report/>
2. Promising Practices: Actions Orchestras Can Take to Make Progress Toward Equity, Catalyst Guide, League of American Orchestras: <https://americanorchestras.org/promising-practices-actions-orchestras-can-take-to-make-progress-toward-equity/>
3. Education and Community Engagement resources page, League of American Orchestras: <https://americanorchestras.org/learn/education-and-community-engagement/>
4. Making the Case for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Orchestras: A Guide from the League of American Orchestras: <https://americanorchestras.org/making-the-case-for-equity-diversity-and-inclusion-in-orchestras/>
5. Culture and Community in a Time of Transformation, Culture Track: <https://s28475.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CCTT-Key-Findings-from-Wave-2.pdf>
6. Black Voices for the Evolution and Culture & Creativity, Culture Track: <https://s28475.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/QualBlackVoicesFINAL.pdf>
7. Conference 2022: Diversifying Audiences with Research and Relevance: <https://americanorchestras.org/conference-2022-diversifying-audiences-with-research-and-relevance/>

8. Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship: <https://takialsop.org>
9. Institute for Composer Diversity Database: <https://www.composerdiversity.com/composer-diversity-database>
10. African Diaspora Music Project: <https://africandiasporamusicproject.org>
11. Latin Orchestral Music: <http://www.latinorchestralmusic.com>
12. Databases of Repertoire by Underrepresented Composers, League of American Orchestras: <https://americanorchestras.org/databases-of-repertoire-by-underrepresented-composers/>
13. Virginia B. Toulmin Orchestral Commissions Program, League of American Orchestras: <https://americanorchestras.org/learn/artistic-programs/women-composers-readings-and-commissions-program/>

Catalyst Resources from the League

In early 2022, the League of American Orchestras published **Promising Practices**, a **Catalyst Guide** outlining concrete actions that orchestras can take to support their equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) journey. **Catalyst Snapshots**, follow-up case studies to *Promising Practices*, provide a deeper look into the work of orchestras that were identified as making tangible progress towards their EDI goals.

The Catalyst Fund Incubator is a grant program of the League of American Orchestras that empowers member orchestras to create a culture of inclusivity, and ultimately to nurture and sustain the diversity they seek. Orchestras supported by The Catalyst Fund are laboratories for showing what works in building understanding and creating effective EDI practices.

About the Lead Author

Theodore Wiprud is a composer and a consultant in the arts and education, and was the longtime Vice President, Education, at the New York Philharmonic. He has been active in multiple EDI initiatives, including the launch of The Catalyst Fund in 2019.

Acknowledgements

The Catalyst Fund Incubator, Catalyst Guides, and Catalyst Snapshots are made possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation with additional support from the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation.

Additional support for the Guide is provided by the National Endowment for the Arts and by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

Thank you to the Boise Philharmonic, Chicago Sinfonietta, Knoxville Symphony Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra, Metropolitan Symphony, California Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Richmond Symphony, ROCO, San Francisco Symphony, South Dakota Symphony Orchestra, and West Virginia Symphony Orchestra, whose learnings in equity, diversity, and inclusion work inform this Guide.

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Published on December 8, 2022. A Catalyst Guide by the League of American Orchestras.
520 8th Avenue, Suite 2005, New York, NY 10018

americanorchestras.org