

January 11, 2023

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League of American Orchestras Establishes Anne Parsons Leadership Program for Women and Non- Binary Orchestra Professionals

Women Leaders Currently Working in Orchestras and the Performing Arts will Guide the Program and Serve as Mentors

New York, NY (January 11, 2023) – The League of American Orchestras has launched the [Anne Parsons Leadership Program](#), League President and CEO Simon Woods announced today. Honoring Anne Parsons, the transformative orchestra field leader and mentor who passed away in 2022, the three-year pilot mentoring program aims to effect structural change by supporting women and non-binary orchestra professionals in their career progressions, and ultimately improving gender equity within the C-suite.

“Anne Parsons was an inspirational leader and role model for so many in our field,” said Simon Woods. “In creating this program, we felt a tremendous responsibility to honor Anne’s legacy by making a lasting impact on orchestras. A master people connector, Anne would have been thrilled to guide and nurture the next generation of women and non-binary leaders. I’m grateful to the mentors and faculty for passing on their years of knowledge and lifting up a new wave of talented professionals.”

The new orchestra leadership program was originally conceived by the League in coordination with a group of four large-budget orchestra leaders who will serve as mentors:

[Jennifer Barlament](#), Executive Director, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

[Marie-Hélène Bernard](#), President and CEO, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra

[Kim Noltemy](#), Ross Perot President & CEO, Dallas Symphony Orchestra

[Melia Tourangeau](#), President & CEO, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

Additional mentors and faculty members will be announced at a later date.

About the Anne Parsons Leadership Program

Six professionals with diverse experiences will be selected to participate in the first year of the program, which will run from June 2023 to June 2024. Eligible candidates will self-identify as a woman or non-binary individual and have a minimum of five years full-time employment by orchestras of any budget size; current employment is not required. Selection criteria for the free program will include demonstrated experience; managerial vision; and commitment to leading and serving American orchestras.

In addition to the opportunity to cultivate their own professional networks, each participant will meet individually with their mentors monthly, attend quarterly cohort meetings, and receive training on topics such as women's leadership and gender inclusivity. They will receive funding to attend the League's National Conference in 2023, and receive a gratis, one-year membership to the League of American Orchestras.

[Learn more and apply to the program.](#)

About Anne Parsons

[Anne Parsons](#) (1957-2022) was a transformational mentor and leader, lost too soon after fighting a courageous battle with cancer. Parsons served as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra for seventeen years.

Following her appointment at the DSO in 2004, she instilled a culture of resilience and financial stability and grew the audience and donor base, all while successfully navigating local and national economic downturns and a global pandemic. Under her leadership, the DSO posted nine consecutive operating surpluses from 2013 to 2021. Parsons was also responsible for bringing two new music directors to Detroit—Leonard Slatkin in 2007 and Jader Bignamini in 2020—and returning the orchestra to national and international prominence through touring and webcasts.

Parsons' vision of transforming the DSO into the “most accessible orchestra on the planet” led to an increased focus on serving audiences through innovative new programs. At the same time, her emphasis on reaching Detroiters and DSO fans across the region offered unique ways to connect with the organization, including chamber music programs, senior engagement concerts, music therapy partnerships, in-school appearances, and full orchestra.

Prior to joining the DSO, Parsons served in management positions for a variety of major arts organizations, including New York City Ballet, the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Smith College in Massachusetts. Post-graduation, Parsons was among the first class of League of American Orchestra Fellows (then called American Symphony Orchestra League Fellows).

Anne Parsons was named an Emeritus Director of the League of American Orchestras as well as President Emeritus of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

The **League of American Orchestras** leads, supports, and champions America's orchestras and the vitality of the music they perform. Its diverse membership of more than 1,800 organizations and individuals across North America runs the gamut from world-renowned orchestras to community groups, from summer festivals to student and youth ensembles, from conservatories to libraries, from businesses serving orchestras to individuals who love symphonic music. The national

organization dedicated solely to the orchestral experience, the League is a nexus of knowledge and innovation, advocacy, and leadership advancement. Its conferences and events, award-winning *Symphony* magazine, website, and other publications inform people around the world about orchestral activity and developments.

Founded in 1942 and chartered by Congress in 1962, the League links a national network of thousands of instrumentalists, conductors, managers and administrators, board members, volunteers, and business partners. Visit

americanorchestras.org.