

“Americanizing the American Orchestra” at 30: A History and a Provocation

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SIMON WOODS: We are going to discuss this morning *Americanizing the American Orchestra*, this famous and infamous report. And I've got a great group of people here who are going to help us unpack a little bit of history. So let's start. So think back to 1993. Think about where you were and what you were doing that year. I was in London, as it happened, working in the recording industry. This was still a full five years before I moved across into the orchestra world and moved to this country.

We have yet to live through the end of apartheid, the turn of the millennium, 9/11, Google, social media, smartphones, the Iraq War, the first African American president, the Great Recession, the election of Donald Trump, Me Too, a global pandemic, and the murder of George Floyd. So to say that the world has changed a little bit since 1993 is somewhat of an understatement. And yet, one of the things that is the most fascinating, which we're going to talk about today, about this report, is that virtually everything in it is the topics that we're talking about today.

And in some places we've made amazing progress as a field. In other places, almost nothing has changed and we're having the same discussion. The report was way ahead of its time, too ahead of its time. You know, I was talking yesterday about the League's leadership role as well as its support role. And you know, this is an example of the League being out there with something that at the time they – Cathy, come to that in a minute – believed was a visionary piece of forward thinking, but in fact it was so far ahead of the rest of the field that it ran into huge headwinds.

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And it never got the traction that it should've done at the time, and that's what we're going to talk about. So here's what we're going to do, we're going to start off, I'm going to let Cathy take ten or 15 minutes to tell us the story so we understand actually what happened, how this report came into being, what happened, and what the reaction was. Then we're going to follow that with a little mini case study from the Pittsburgh Symphony. In fact, I have to actually credit Melia Tourangeau with the idea for this session, because it was Melia who said to me, “I've been using *Americanizing the*

American Orchestra with my board as a way of helping contextualize what we've achieved and where we are, as kind of a scorecard."

So we're going to use Melia's board slides as a little bit of a kind of report card on the field, and we're going to let her share with us the conversation she had with her board. And then we have three people to bring three completely different perspectives on the report and where we are today. We're going to talk about the past and we're going to talk about what happened, but we're also going to talk about the future, and we're also going to talk about what the implications of this report are for today, and what we can do differently. So I have three fantastic speakers, Kendra Whitlock Ingram, who was a League management fellow in the late '90s, started her career in orchestras and then moved into the broader arts presenting role. I wrote here, "She brings the perspective of an orchestra refugee."
[LAUGHTER]

KENDRA WHITLOCK INGRAM: I like to say "ex-pat."

SIMON WOODS: Ex-pat, ex-pat. [LAUGHTER] There you go, ex-pat. And Kendra is the President, I guess – President/CEO of Pittsburgh Cultural Trust. I'll let her tell you about that. But Kendra, introduce yourself.

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KENDRA WHITLOCK INGRAM: Well, first welcome to Pittsburgh. Hope you've been having a great week here. We hosted the Opera America Conference earlier in May, and the cultural district has just been lit since these conferences had been coming here, and we're really thrilled to have you here. We've been hearing a lot of positive feedback also about the city, which is great. Melia and I are always championing the special experience that we have here in the cultural district in Pittsburgh that often is a welcome surprise, I think, to folks who haven't been here for a while.

So as Simon said, I am the President and CEO of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust. Essentially, we run the 14-block cultural district in downtown, which includes about ten performance venues in the district, not including Heinz Hall. But the symphony and Heinz Hall are a close partner. We are presenter of a variety of multi-genre programming, touring Broadway being our biggest arm, as well as nationally and internationally touring dance, jazz, children's theatre, and a variety of other things. We also have five gallery spaces in the cultural district that we oversee. And the thing that kind of makes us probably the most unique from other performing center complexes is that we're also the second-largest owner of property in downtown.

So in addition to the 14-block cultural district that has the performance venues, we also own about 15 properties that are not performance venues – office buildings and a variety of other things. So we're kind of a unique animal in that way, but we are home to a number of the arts organizations in the city, and great partners with all of our colleagues in the district and beyond. So that's us. Welcome again to Pittsburgh.

[OVERTALK]

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SIMON WOODS: Great, thanks, Kendra. [APPLAUSE] So next to Kendra we have Blake-Anthony Johnson, who's Executive Director of the Chicago Symphony, and a cellist who started his career at the New World Symphony. Blake-Anthony is an incredibly accomplished musician who's played in many top orchestras and festivals before moving into management. An innovative thinker doing genuinely important work at the Chicago Symphony, a great friend of the League. We love Blake-Anthony. He always has some original ideas to say. So thank you for joining us, Blake-Anthony. [UNINTEL] say hello.

BLAKE-ANTHONY JOHNSON: Just good morning. I know it's very early, [LAUGHTER] so just nice to see everyone's beautiful faces.

SIMON WOODS: And finally, if any of you subscribe to ArtsJournal.com every morning, you get in your email an email from Doug McLennan, who is at the far end here. Doug is a Julliard trained pianist who went into journalism, founded ArtsJournal in 1999, is that right? 1999. And I'm actually going to do a little bit of publicity for Doug, because if you haven't read it I'm going to just suggest you read this article. This is an article Doug wrote at the end of last year, *Rage Against the Machine*, "If the American symphony orchestra is to survive it must be rewired and re-engineered." This is a brilliant article.

I don't agree with everything Doug says, I will say. [LAUGHTER] But you know, over a few cocktails after this article came out, we hashed out our differences. But it is a brilliant analysis from a very participate perspective of what's going on in the orchestra world, and I highly recommend it to you. So as they say, let's start at the very beginning. Cathy French, executive director of the League back in 1993, tell the story. No, you're going to need a microphone for this.

CATHERINE FRENCH: All right, let's turn this on. I said to Simon, it's been years since I've done any of this stuff. [LAUGHTER] So the journey that led to *Americanizing the American Orchestra* actually began in the mid-1980s when the League board and staff began to work on a long-range plan.

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We were fortunate then to have the pro bono services of McKinsey and Company working with us. We knew we'd have to take a serious look at the comprehensive financial and operating information about orchestras in order to do the planning we needed to do to design these services and programs for orchestras for the future. So thanks to the Pittsburgh Symphony, the information we had available was far more accessible than it had been in the past. And this is because Sy Rosen, the father of Jesse, who was Executive Director of the Pittsburgh Symphony at the time, years back, had shared the statistical reports with Chris Lynch, who was a board member of the Pittsburgh Symphony, and a senior executive at Mellon Bank. So Chris Lynch put us in touch with this incredible team at Penn State University, and the information that the League had been collecting and recording by hand for years were fed into Mellon Bank's mainframe, [LAUGHTER] truly, which took up rooms.

VOICE: Probably [UNINTEL PHRASE].

CATHERINE FRENCH: Yeah, probably the whole room. All right. Then they went to Penn State and the research team out there worked on it. Then they were sent back to the League. I don't know whether any of you remember this thing, but our very first computer, the mighty IBM OS/6. [LAUGHTER] but now we had data that actually could be accessed, and analyzed, and could tell a story. The other significant thing that happened then is that we created the Department of Artistic Affairs. At the time, the League was kind of affectionately known as a management cartel by the musicians. [LAUGHTER]

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SIMON WOODS: Affectionately? [LAUGHTER]

CATHERINE FRENCH: And there were plenty of managers where were very happy with that. They felt that the League, in fact, should be a management trade association. We did pull together managers, board members, and musicians, and a task force had them look at it all. And they came to the conclusion that orchestras were about music, and if the League is about orchestra it absolutely has to be about music, and there had to be a place at the table for musicians. And so we invited Don
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Thulean, who was the longtime music director of the Spokane Symphony, to come and set up that department, and begin a department of artistic services at the League.

And then when he became the project director for our Initiative for Change, the trust had already begun to be built. So Don was just a terrific leader for that. So the first phase of Initiative for Change was to really do a thorough assessment of the financial condition of orchestras, because the signs were not good, and everybody knew everything was going in the wrong direction. The League commissioned the Wolf Organization, with the support of the Pew Foundation, and they analyzed data from 254 orchestras of all sizes that orchestras had filed every year for 25 years.

League had an amazing data collection [UNINTEL] to be available. And the conclusion was –

[OFF-TOPIC CONVERSATION]

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CATHERINE FRENCH: The orchestra industry is in financial crisis. Now, as you see, the numbers are going in the wrong direction. Tom Wolf, who led all of this, who headed the Wolf Organization, he's not just a terrific management consultant and data analyst, he's a serious musician. He cares deeply about the orchestra field. He crunched the numbers and he told the truth, but he knew enough and cared enough to be able to look beyond the numbers and to really draw some sobering conclusions, to ask important questions about the way orchestras operate and the way they relate to their communities. It's the next slide.

[OFF-MIC CONVERSATION]

CATHERINE FRENCH: So he challenged the paradigms.

[OFF-MIC CONVERSATION]

CATHERINE FRENCH: "Why a single venue? How long can American orchestras remain white upper-class institutions? When will orchestras take a more active role in the long-term development and training of musicians of color? Why aren't orchestras taking a greater role in forging partnerships locally? Why haven't orchestras spent more time and effort in making the concert-going experience more enticing to those who are not hardcore music lovers? When will the orchestras develop a collective decision-making structure that makes everyone a stakeholder in the orchestra's future?"

SIMON WOODS: Sound familiar? [LAUGHTER]

CATHERINE FRENCH: And then the warning. [UNINTEL PHRASE] “Without significant change, orchestras could easily become both culturally and socially irrelevant.” Now, Tom’s intention was to provoke, and that provocation is what took us to the next phase of the Initiative for Change. Tom’s question helped us identify the – the key issues that we need to discuss. And thanks to funders like Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation, we were able to develop a plan to examine that with a series of issues forums. So the topics, which came really from Tom’s initial report, that were looked at in the issues forms – it’s next. That one. Yeah – “The Orchestra is a Music Educator, Achieving Cultural Diversity, Varying the Concertgoing Experience, and the Changing Nature of Volunteerism, Developing and Evaluating Leadership, and the Relationship of Musicians and the Orchestra Institution.”

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We created a steering committee of 13 people to oversee the project. It was chaired by the League’s chairman, Carole Birkhead. And we invited 154 people to participate in one of six forums. Each issue was addressed by 25 to 30 people with expertise and interest in the subject. They met for two and a half days in residence at a conference center. Now, remember this was in 1993. This was before you could be connected or distracted 24/7, right? If you went to a conference center and wanted to make a phone call, you had to go to a phone booth. [LAUGHTER]

The participants were board members, managers, orchestra musicians, composers, conductors, staff members, educators, direct service volunteers, interns, students, journalists – I did this, I didn’t analyze them – artist agents, and a number of people from other fields, other nonprofit organizations – United Way, the Red Cross, Independent Sector, the Links Organization. The title came spontaneously from Alvin Singleton during one of the sessions. “What we’re talking about here is Americanizing the American orchestra.” And everybody said, “Hm, that’s the title.” My colleagues on the League staff and I really had the opportunity to participate in all of them, and they were extraordinary. Bill Keens was a brilliant facilitator, Laura Mandalis [?] had the formidable task of capturing all of the discussions and drafting the reports, which she did masterfully, and Tom was there all the time. Tom was with us all the time to provoke and to keep us honest.

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The diversity forum was a great learning experience for everyone who was part of it. The amazing Antoinette Handy – I don’t know how many people remember Antoinette, who was the Director of 520 8th Avenue, Suite 2005, New York, NY 10018 1602 L Street, NW, Suite 611, Washington, DC 20036 americanorchestras.org

Music of the National Endowment for the Arts, was a major contributor to that conversation. And remember, we were there for two and a half days without distraction. We had to talk and we had to listen. And we began to trust each other. And I think the honesty that developed over the course of that time really is manifest in that chapter. I urge all of you to read it. So we produced a report. You can show the cover of it there.

SIMON WOODS: Yeah, I'm getting a lot of flak here for for using my battered cover here, [LAUGHTER] with Scotch tape on the front.

CATHERINE FRENCH: Here's a clean cover. Right. And each chapter captured the discussion, often without a big attempt to edit it. And each chapter offered examples of how change might occur. Now, if you're an English major, the first thing you notice is the use of the conditional. We talked about "may, might, could, would." There were not a lot of "musts." I mean, you might find the occasional "should." But the book, it was not an instruction book. It's a spiralbound workbook. Each chapter ends with a series of questions to explore, not prescriptions. Just exhortation to look, to try, to explore, to experiment.

Connection to community was critical, excellent was always primary. We simply rejected the notion that diversity and community were in any way the enemies of excellence. So then we talked about the qualities of a new American orchestra. It's [UNINTEL] one of them. "Providing music of excellence and beauty to a rapidly changing democratic and pluralistic society. Repertoire and talent reflective of America and the orchestra's region, musicians incorporated as partners in decision-making and programming, serves cultural, educational, and social needs in its community, alert to the needs to cultivate a love of music in the younger generation, and organizational structure capable of responding to change."

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The report was well received at the New York conference 30 years ago in 1993. But remember, this was 1993. Newspapers mattered. And for the music business, *The New York Times* mattered most. A few weeks later, this article by Edward Rothstein appeared in the Sunday Arts & Leisure section of the *Times*. Yes. Now, I had to find out what a lemming was at the time. [LAUGHTER] Simon pulled out a quote from this, which we're going to put up. I said to Simon, "I'm not going to read this quote." You all can read it, and then we'll move on. Okay? So I want to take that down. Thank you. [LAUGHTER] Now, while this piece got the most attention – and I have to tell you, there were people, when I asked them what their issue was with the report, they hadn't read the report. They had read the Rothstein piece, right? But there were also a lot of positive responses to it. John von Rhein in *The Chicago Tribune* said that, "The eminently practical suggestions outlined here are required reading for

orchestra staff, trustees, volunteers, and musicians, and everyone who cares about the future of symphony orchestras.”

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And there was strong support from the field, from orchestras of all sizes, large and small, except for a handful – a handful – of managers of the largest orchestras. The influence of *The New York Times* was very powerful, and the reaction of some of the more powerful managers of major orchestras caused us to cancel plans to go forward with the initiative. Because the next step would’ve been an important audience research project to understand why people weren’t coming to concerts. And the fear was that the results would reflect negatively on the field, and we’d give the information to *The New York Times*.

So those of us who were energized by this process and by the ideas that were being generated, the trouble is the task force was only 200 people, the people who were involved in this. We needed and should’ve built in more time to put the report into the field and to share the report with the wider membership, and we did keep the conversation going in the communities. It’s also true, at that time the League conference had all sorts of sessions like, “How to Sell All the Tickets Your Orchestra Needs,” and “How to Raise All the Money Your Orchestra Needs.” There were a lot of how-to sessions being taught by people who were in the field to people who were in the field.

We were talking to ourselves all the time. With the Initiative for Change and *Americanizing*, the League was raising questions and challenging the field to face some serious issues, to take some risks, to explore some possibilities. We didn’t have all the answers, and not everybody was ready for that shift. So whereas the field generally looked to other orchestras, and ideas, and problems, the task force was suggesting that orchestras look into their own communities to find the answers as well, especially about how to reach a wider and more diverse audience.

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We distributed 4,000 copies of this to the field, and then we had it reprinted and distributed more. So there a lot of copies of this report got out there into the field. And we encouraged orchestras to continue the conversations that we’d begun with the issues forums, and we continued those conversations within the League as well. We just didn’t talk about the report anymore. So back when the League moved from Washington to New York, David Styers rescued a box of these things. [LAUGHTER] They were headed for the trash bin. In fairness, the League probably had more paper than they could possibly consider moving to New York.

I do have a good collection there. And then, while for a while *Americanizing* was available on the League's website – I don't know, somewhere in the last ten years it disappeared, just gone. And I'm happy to say it's back here. And you know, we're sitting here and we're talking about this. [APPLAUSE] I'm really grateful for the opportunity to tell this story. There's one person that I want to point out, and acknowledge, and thank for this. She's not here with us today. She's in Louisville, Kentucky – Carole Birkhead.

Carole Birkhead was the chairman of the League, and she was an extraordinary leader through this entire process. She was so smart, and she was so articulate. She was a superb musician. Truly one of the smartest people I've known. She took all the slings and arrows that we took, the staff took. She was disrespected in ways you cannot imagine by some of our membership. And she was absolutely a rock for all of us, and she's terrific. So we all get paid to take this, right? Not the volunteers. And she was just an amazing leader for all of us. So I credit her for having made all of this possible. And anyway. But thank you, Simon. Thanks for an opportunity to talk.

[OVERTALK]

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SIMON WOODS: Thank you, Cathy. Thank you. [APPLAUSE] Okay. Yes, [UNINTEL]. What a lovely reaction. Thank you, Cathy, for that story. Okay, I have two quick questions for you, Cathy, before we move on. First of all, do you think the title for the report was the right title, in hindsight? Speak on the mic.

[OVERTALK]

CATHERINE FRENCH: You know, you could argue that either way. I mean, there are those who think if you Americanize something, you devalue it, right? [LAUGHTER] And most of those people are classical musicians from the European tradition. So I think it was the right title, I really do. I think it was what we were talking about. "How do we take this amazing institution that does have its roots in Europe, and bring it over here, and make it our own?" Yeah, I'm comfortable with that title.

SIMON WOODS: And my second question is, in hindsight, do you regret giving into that pressure at the time? [LAUGHTER]

CATHERINE FRENCH: I don't know whether you have the same experience. There's a certain practicality here. Those orchestras were paying probably 10%, maybe more – I'm just talking about the naysayers – of the League's budget. And they had a lot of influence over the contributors from their communities. I mean, some of it was an economic decision, you know? We felt, I think at the time, we were really being threatened.

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SIMON WOODS: So it's hard to perhaps think now about just quite how threatening an environment that was. There was real risk there, reputational.

[OVERTALK]

CATHERINE FRENCH: Absolutely. Some of you may remember Fred Zenone. He one said to me, "The problem is you were seen as criticizing your field, and that's always dangerous for a service organization. You're supposed to be a cheerleader." So as you [UNINTEL] –

SIMON WOODS: Well, I mean, as I said yesterday, this is sort of at the core of the League's identity. I said it yesterday in the plenary, we walk this road of support and leadership. And this is a wonderful example of where that kind of came off the rails.

CATHERINE FRENCH: And people, they want you to be a leader, but they want you to lead in the direction they want to go. [LAUGHTER]

SIMON WOODS: Or at least those particular people did. Right. Let's move on now. I'd like to move to Melia and have Melia share a few of her thoughts this morning.

MELIA TOURANGEAU: So in 1993 when this came out, I was in conservatory, and I was trying to figure out what I was going to do with my career, because I was not going to be a performer. And I learned about this field of orchestra management and I found this book in the conservatory library. And I was so inspired by it, and thinking – it was shocking for me to learn of this story, which I didn't learn until I moved to Pittsburgh eight years ago. But this book inspired me to get into this career. Because I thought, "Wow, if this is what orchestras are going to be doing and the direction they're heading, to break down these ivory tower institutions, I am totally in."

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And my first orchestra that I worked at after college was the Akron Symphony. And Connie [UNINTEL] Valentine was a part of this study, she was a League fellow. And he was my first mentor. And she's like, "Stick with me for two years. I'll teach you everything you need to know about the business." When I was with her, the Akron Symphony did a Telarc recording. She commissioned three full-length symphonic works from three African American musicians. We did a big gospel concert that paid for these recordings.

And we saw this transition happen in our audience over the three years I was there. This gospel concert, that was a very Black community concert, and the premiere of the first piece to a very white audience at E.J. Thomas Hall. And over the course of that year, it became a blended choir and a blended audience. And when I left, their board chair was the first female African American board chair of the symphony. So it was happening in this little orchestra in Ohio, and it totally inspired my work moving forward.

So when I got to Pittsburgh and I was talking about *Americanizing* with Jesse Rosen, and he said, "Well, you know it got pulled off the shelves and, you know, Cathy left the field. And it was the big orchestras didn't agree with this publication." And I was shocked. I was absolutely shocked. So fast-forward, we just did a new strategic plan about a year ago. And my COO, who's new to the field, he was a former board member and he moved to management. And we put this new plan together, and it occurred to me, "This is exactly what was in *Americanizing*."

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And I told him about this publication, he looked it up. He was totally fascinated by it. So we did this presentation to our board. I will say, Gideon Toeplitz was instrumental in this document, in writing it. And we went back to the board minutes from, you know, that period of time. And he was in front of the board, and David Christopher was a board chair and he was on a board of the League. Anyway, so the board minutes were like, "This is the way orchestras are going to go, and this is what we need to do," and what have you, in 1993. And then you fast-forward, you know, several years later and it all disappears.

Like, there's no mention of *Americanizing* and this strategy. So we brought it back. And there are seven areas of change that are addressed in the document around diversifying our programming and broadening our programming, the diversification of our stages, the musician and administration relationship, and how that needs to grow and change. Changing and modernizing the concertgoing experience, of course music education and our role as institution in that, the changing nature of
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volunteerism and developing leadership capacity in general. And we just did a very subjective scorecard of how the Pittsburgh Symphony was doing in these areas.

SIMON WOODS: Do you want to go to the next slide?

MELIA TOURANGEAU: Yeah, we can go to the next slide. I mean, this is very subjective. And I will say, it made some people made in my organization. [LAUGHTER] But from the programming standpoint, we gave ourselves a B. You know, we have accelerated improvements in the last several years in particular. But on the diversity side of things we gave ourselves an F. We've lost decades of opportunities to build diversity on our stages. And in fact, in Pittsburgh we've lost ground.

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In 1993, we had four musicians who were identified as Black or African American, and today we have one. Now, this is where I got pushback from my organization, because we have broadened, you know, the representation of the Asian community and even Latinx on our stages, and we have about half of our orchestra that's female. But you know, we lost some ground too. A- I would say, as far as building the musician and administration relationship. I remember this big division in the field, the us versus them mentality. And it's another reason I got into this business, because I didn't understand where there was such acrimony between musicians and management. We're all on the same page, and I feel like we've made some serious progress in that regard.

Modernizing the concertgoing experience. If you were in 1992 and came to Heinz Hall, what you experience now is not much different. And that is a huge part of our strategic plan, and there have been lots of attempts along the way. We're bringing back old ideas and reconstituting them again. But I think what's different now is that all the education work, the DEAI work, you know, everything was in a silo. It was in one department, you know? It was Suzanne Perrino, she was our very first head of music education and community and learning.

And her title has changed about 15 times over the 30 years she's been with the Pittsburgh Symphony. But it really just lived in this one, tiny little department, and was expected to make all this change happen. It was not embraced throughout the rest of the organization. And like Simon was saying, or Cathy was saying, as long as she stayed in her lane and it didn't impact the 20 MGC concerts in the classical season, it was fine. So anyway, I think we have a long ways to go, and we're really embracing that differently now.

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We have made a lot of progress on music education, like I said. I mean, throughout the country music education departments were formed in orchestras. And it was actually my first job. When I left the Akron Symphony, Connie said, “You need to go into the education side of orchestras, because that’s the wave of the future.” And it’s what got me into this business, ultimately. So anyway, changing volunteerism, you know, there are some real strengths and gaps along there. And you know, our limited capacity to drive change I think is really a big challenge that we face. So anyway, this is just something we put together for our board to, you know, just assess how have we done in the past 30 years. And we have a lot more progress that needs to be made.

SIMON WOODS: and actually, what I think is interesting about this is, if you did a scorecard for the field, I’m not sure it would be much different, actually. If you do that scorecard right now in real time for your individual orchestras, it’s not bad, right? You might have individual differences, but it quite clearly points to the areas where we’ve made some progress, and the areas where we haven’t.

MELIA TOURANGEAU: Although, I will say, I will defend our smaller orchestras, because there’s so much more flexibility.

SIMON WOODS: This is true.

MELIA TOURANGEAU: And I think that there’s been a lot more ground made with the smaller orchestras in the United States, and being able to get out in their communities more and build those relationships, because they do have that flexibility. And it’s not until recently that the big orchestras have, I think, embraced these concepts more authentically. And all of a sudden it’s like, “Okay, now we can all go in that direction, because the big orchestras are embracing it.” [LAUGHTER]

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SIMON WOODS: Great. Thank you, Melia. Okay, so that was the history. Thank you, Melia. [APPLAUSE] We called this session, “A History and a Provocation.” And so now we’re going into the provocation. [LAUGHTER] So I’ve asked these guys to not hold back. So Kendra, I’m going to set this up. As someone who has a self-confessed complex relationship with the orchestra field, how do you react to what you’ve heard today? Does it remind you of some of the reasons you moved away? And as you look at orchestras now through the eyes of somebody in an adjacent field, what advice do you have for us?

KENDRA WHITLOCK INGRAM: Simon and I were serving on a board, National Art Strategies, together. And I think we were at one of our board dinners, and Simon asked me to be on this panel. And I said, “Simon, you don’t really want me to be on this panel. [LAUGHTER] You don’t really want me to be on this panel.” He’s like, “No, I really do.” And you use the word, “provocation.” You know, “I want to have some provocations.” And I think the way Simon described it is a complex relationship with this field, is really accurate. Because I love this field. I said to Melia, I think I’ve been to the symphony more than I’ve been to almost anything else outside of my Cultural Trust programming since I’ve lived in Pittsburgh for the last five months. And I’ve often said coming to this city, “Ah, it’s so great to be in a city with a really great orchestra.” And at the same time, I’m infuriated by the lack of true change that has happened in the industry.

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I think the thing that really kind of just shocked me a little bit in this session today was when that quote that you put up, Cathy, and hearing this audience’s reaction to it, that would not have happened 30 years ago. And if nothing else in the field, I feel that alone, the fact that we’re shocked and embarrassed by that, is a real opportunity for us as an industry to say, “Okay, we recognize that there’s a need for change.” But the challenge with the industry is that we are nibbling around the edges of change. So as Melia said, what the concertgoing experience looks like today versus 1993 is not that different.

And frankly, what the business model of the industry looks like from 1993 is also not that different. And the thing that’s kind of interesting now, being out of the field – I’ve actually been out of the field as long as I was in it. So I was in the field 13 years, I left in 2010, and I’ve now been in the performing arts center side of things for 13 years – is that a lot of the work that we do on the performing arts center side, we are highly earned revenue driven. So most of us are 70% to 80% earned revenue versus contributed, which is the flip of the orchestra business, right?

So we have to be constantly innovating on programming. We do rely so heavily on kind of what the audience demands from a programming standpoint. And we also have learned to diversify our revenue, which I actually think the industry can do as well. I think there’s a lot of opportunity for diversification of revenue, to not rely so heavily on the contributed. But the problem is, the business model and the structure, until that changes significantly, is really not going to allow for any of that.

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I mean, that is the reality. And it’s a hard reality, and I feel you, because I’ve been in the business and I’ve felt it so painfully hard. I mean, it really in some ways took years off my life, which I know it has for
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a lot of you too. I mean, when you talk about, “What are the recommendations for the future?” is really looking very critically at the business model. Which I think we all know means looking very critically at the 800-pound gorilla in the room that we don’t want to talk about, which is the contract with the players. I love our AFofM colleagues. I love our IATSE colleagues. I believe in unions. I’m in a big union town. Yes, Pittsburgh. But until that changes, we are not going to be able to move forward. The industry will not be able to move forward. A couple of other things that I think can help us and help the industry is for you to all recognize that this is not just an orchestra business problem.

I’m on the board of governors for the Broadway League, which is the trade association for the Broadway industry. We got the same issues. We’re just driven by money. [LAUGHTER] So the Broadway industry has changed. If you look at what’s on the stages in Broadway post-pandemic, the number of plays and musicals by Black, Indigenous, people of color is significantly more. In some cases, those productions have struggled, and in some cases they have been the mark of innovation in our industry. I mean, one word, *Hamilton*. If that doesn’t epitomize how you can flip the switch on what would be perceived as a Western European to America tradition, that has then told from the lens of the people who reflect the diversity of our community, I don’t know what it is.

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So I really think that it’s not just an orchestra problem. We’re challenged with this in the producing theatre world, the ballet world has very similar issues to this. Clearly, opera and even our presenting, you know, cultural traditions of contemporary dance, we all have these issues. But the ones who I think are going to survive are really going to focus on significant change to the business model. Recently, I was talking to some folks about how do you do that, then. Well, how do you do that? And I actually think it goes back deeper than just the orchestra business, but actually the conservatory model that we have also constructed. I’m going to get real real now, because it’s kind of a Ponzi scheme. [LAUGHTER] [APPLAUSE] I am a music major. I graduated with a degree in music. I know, see, right? This is going on [UNINTEL PHRASE]. [LAUGHTER] I also have worked for two conservatories. But the reality is, we are training musicians for 1865.

We are not training musicians for 2040. [APPLAUSE] It doesn’t mean that we can’t train in the Western European traditions. It doesn’t mean that. We should. But I graduated with a degree in music. I don’t know how to improvise, didn’t know how to do my taxes, had no idea about, really, marketing or promotions, or any of that kind of stuff. I learned that from the field, from the League fellowship. But I mean, this is part of what we need to be training. Because this then creates the lens from which our musicians who are going out into the business are looking at their craft, and as a business. Because it is a business.

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What we do is a business. So we have to have some sort of balance in how we're training at the conservatory level, to be training for the 21st century musician, for the musician of 2040, and 2060, and not for the past. It doesn't mean throw the baby out with the bathwater, but it does mean integrate a more holistic training of the player. So that's a real big challenge. Because again, higher education is also struggling with this too. And there's no easy solution to this. What have I left off? Oh. So I think the other thing that drives us particularly in the performing arts center world, and certainly in the organizations for which I have worked, including the orchestra business, is that we have to be in service to community. That has to drive literally everything we do. Yes, yes, artistic excellence. We talk about it so much. And what does that mean? Like, what does that mean to somebody who, you know, is making \$75,000 for a family of four, and for their arts experience is coming down to the free arts festival with their kids, because that's what they can afford to do?

What does artistic excellence mean to them, right? So I think this idea of if we are in service to the community is driving what our mission is as an organization, then that's really going to change a lot of what we present, and how we think about programming, and frankly, how we think about our back office and business as well. Because I think we all know in this room, by 2040 this room is going to be the minority in the United States. So the people that we serve in the community will look a lot different than what our audiences have looked like in the past.

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And finally, I would say from the past, you know, thinking about *Americanizing*, I have to say Cathy too, you know, how brave it was for you and the team that really worked on this. Because again, just thinking about how the business was going into it in 1997 for me, this was truly revolutionary and so, again, brave I think is the best word I can use, for you all to think in these ways. But it's also about not just the musicians and the folks who are in the audience. We actually have to have the leadership of these organizations reflect our community as well. And again, we struggle with this in the performing arts center business and in the Broadway industry as well. It's really hard to say we're in service to community when the people in decision-making roles don't look like the people that are in our communities. We're starting to see this now with our elected officials, we're seeing this in corporate. But we in the arts industry, not just the orchestra business, have not really recognized that, "Wow, you know, having a diverse workforce is actually going to inform some of our decision-making around where we're serving." So I guess that's kind of my two cents.

[OVERTALK]

SIMON WOODS: Great. Fantastic. [LAUGHTER] Thank you, Kendra. Great. [APPLAUSE] Great stuff. Okay, so let's keep going. Blake-Anthony, interesting to hear from Kendra. You know, the elephant in the room is a musician contract, right? But yet, the musicians are also the heart of everything we do. In there is a conundrum. So I'd love to hear this from the perspective from somebody who is a musician, and who is now trying to be a creative innovator in the field. How do you react to all this? How does it talk to you?

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BLAKE-ANTHONY JOHNSON: Speaking at these things are always weird for me, because half of you have raised me and then the other half have no idea who I am. [LAUGHTER] So when this report came out, I was three years old. [LAUGHTER] And so I'll just kind of orient some of the people here who don't know me. So you know, I was self-taught until I went to college. I was very fortunate. Most of my career was really kind of shepherded by Alan Harrell, and Yo-Yo Ma, and MTT, and some really great benefactors that really made my performance career possible. Ooh, where to begin here? You know, the first time I saw this report actually was a couple of years ago. Kim [UNINTEL] asked a few of the executive directors to have a EDI committee for the League. And I was like, "Kim, I do not want to be on a EDI committee. I hate EDI committees." But I was like, "But you know you're my favorite person on the planet, so if you're asking me to do this, sure."

But I wanted to find out the notes from this. So one of the first things I got was this report, and I did not read it all. But I thought, "Now I really don't want to do it. [LAUGHTER] Because like, everything that I would say already exists. And so I really don't want to, like, be on this hamster wheel." But what was really interesting about that committee is what we were able to do was have a lot of frank conversations, primarily group one orchestras, of what was actually happening and what we maybe could not say publicly. Because, as you guys know, like, *Slipped Disc* and all the other fun things can really take one line just just blow up, like, real good work.

SIMON WOODS: [UNINTEL] take a look at *Slipped Disc* this week if [UNINTEL PHRASE]. [LAUGHTER]

BLAKE-ANTHONY JOHNSON: Please, please don't.

SIMON WOODS: If you didn't already.

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BLAKE-ANTHONY JOHNSON: But that was my first kind of interaction with the report. And I mean, I always break things up into, like, structures, systems, and like, systematic processes. It's just how my brain works. I'm very operation oriented. And I think we obviously have done some work with that. I mean, I'm always saying, like, there are practical low-hanging fruits, like orchestras should have HR departments. And obviously we still need to work on audition practices. But to what you were saying, when I moved to Chicago I was voluntold by a mentor and friend, Henry Fogel, to take over his old job at Roosevelt University. I teach the graduate seminars.

Chicago's very much a union town. I will say just on the record, because I'm chairman for the Department of Cultural Affairs, and we love the unions. Unions are amazing. [LAUGHTER] But one of the things that we talk about in the modules is really, like, the history, though, of our particular union. So when you look at mutual aid societies, and you look how they became the National League on Musicians, and you look at this really interesting pivot time where they got to choose between the AFL, the American Federations of Labor, and [UNINTEL] the Knights of Labor, and the differences in those organizations.

And the AFM decided to be incorporated under one that was very different than the other. And I think it's really important for people to educate themselves on why they made that choice. And more importantly, the reactions that happened afterwards, the reason why we had to have a Jewish League, the reason why we had to have a Negro Association, it was a reaction to this choice of how the AFM got incorporated. And I think it's really important for people to understand we have never addressed it, and they've never truly had a reform from how they were created. So we spend a lot of time, at least for our students, just so they get a better understanding of what's the beast that they're working within.

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And so that definitely came up when you were talking. And then just, I think, practically, you know, there hasn't unfortunately been a lot of change, obviously, with the exception of Wayne. But I'm also optimistic, because I'm here. So there was no Blake-Anthony, for sure, when I was in school. It didn't exist. I was really lucky. Jesse Rosen, bless his heart, I used to come to his office all the time when I was still a student and be like, "I don't like this, I don't like that." I was very engaged with the League much earlier, before I became an administrator. But I'm like, okay, now obviously there are some changes in terms of leadership positions. I think that helps tremendously, but we definitely have a long way to go.

I think you spoke on this, another thing that I just think is fair to say – and I mentioned this at the Chamber Music of America Conference – is that right now, because this has existed for basically my

entire life, I think for people who are really wanting to do this work in an authentic way, you have to just be frank on the idea of, like, we are at this weird crossroads where orchestras to be liberated must be helped by marginalized communities. But marginalized communities do not need orchestras to be liberated into the future. And so that is the dynamic shift, it's a power shift. And until we can just lean into it and just accept it, I think you will not get the returns that you wish. Because it is a dynamic shift, and I think a lot of the tension that comes up when we do this work gets to that underlying kind of pivot and power. That's all.

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SIMON WOODS: Thank you. [APPLAUSE] Blake-Anthony, so you know, one of the things that really kind of concerns a few of us right now is particularly when we talk about the diversity aspect of this, and we see up there, you know, lost decades of opportunities to build, you know, we're moving this agenda forward. Orchestras are talking about it. But there is a sinister backlash underneath the surface, not very far. Do you experience that? And how do we counteract that so that we're not having this conversation again in 20 years' time?

BLAKE-ANTHONY JOHNSON: So many thoughts just came to my head. I mean, I was really naïve, quite frankly. I thought with my appointment it would be easier for Black executives after me, in terms of just the initial aspect. I would say it's definitely not. I think I'll be really interested in the next generation. I mean, you know, we have luckily amazing orchestra leaders, and a lot of them that I think are doing a lot of amazing work happen to be the female orchestra managers. So I'm really curious in terms of, like, generation two, generation three. The female leadership is a little head of kind of people of color. So I am curious kind of how that turns out.

Obviously I'm a musician, so I've played in a few of these symphonies, and some of my old leaders are here. It's very tricky, because orchestras do not exist in a vacuum, right? And so I just had a really interesting conversation with a young Black violist. And she was like, "You know, I want to stay in this field, but I'm also like, can I live in this state? Like, can I get married?" These are very real concerns. And so I know Simon and I have talked about this. You know, I'm a competition baby, so I've spent a lot of time on tour. And when I go to other orchestras and other markets, and I look at the Black musicians, they're all American.

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And so when people say, like, "We need more Black musicians or more, you know, whatever demographic," I always remind people, like, we do exist but we choose to work in other markets because the orchestra is not in a vacuum. And so if you go to the U.K., or you go to Japan, or you go to 520 8th Avenue, Suite 2005, New York, NY 10018 1602 L Street, NW, Suite 611, Washington, DC 20036 americanorchestras.org

Croatia, if you actually look at those musicians, they're all American people of color who simply quality of life and kind of this idea – another issue, and Simon knows about this, my thoughts on fellowships – you know, this issue of when a young Black player does want an audition, and the first thing that someone comes up and says, “Are you are new fellow?”

So it's like, “Wow, so you didn't even consider that I could be your colleague.” I mean, there's a lot of things in terms of just as a musician. When people say, “You know, there's no Black violinists,” I'm like, “Beyonce has an all-Black female orchestra. We have tons of them.” But there's a reason why they don't participate or why they choose to do these alternative markets, or alternative paths. And I think that belonging piece is really important. I feel like I can say this without getting into too much trouble, people I think underestimate how conservative some of our associations are.

And so I think just generally speaking, it's very much in human nature to support, sustain, and kind of prioritize things that validate your experience, [UNINTEL] validate things that you care about. And so when you say something like, “Americanizing the Orchestra,” I'm always obsessed with, like, defining words. Because even when I hear things like, you know, “African American,” I'm like, “Why is it African American? Like, what's American then?” So this idea of, like, really defining what it would mean to really belong in the orchestra, I think we have a long way to go. Like I said, especially in the States, what's different now which was not maybe possible a couple of decades ago – my old leader, Norman Johns, our assistant principal Cincinnati Symphony used to pick on me a lot about this.

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You know, they had a very small arsenal of resources in terms of how you can navigate being a musician in the field. And that's not the case now. Now if I want to go to Berlin, and have a career in Berlin, I can. Like, there's enough Black ex-pats that I can do that. If I want to do that in Japan, I can do that. I mean, so we have options to not stay in the States. And unfortunately, the vast majority of us do not stay here, for my generation specifically. And so I always flag that to people, “We do exist, it's just that it's a much better life outside of this current market.”

SIMON WOODS: Well, that's a discussion in itself. And I mean, that's not a great advertisement for the place we're in right now, and it's why we're having this discussion today. We need to build organizations that are welcoming and inclusive, and can actually embrace the people who we have here. I need to move on –

[OVERTALK]

KENDRA WHITLOCK INGRAM: Can I just react? Sorry, [UNINTEL PHRASE] –

SIMON WOODS: Quickly. Do it quickly.

KENDRA WHITLOCK INGRAM: I was just going to say, I think, you know, that sense of belonging that you brought up is so poignant. Like, that is really what it's all about. And it's not just on the stage or with your colleagues. You know, it's also your interaction with your board members. I mean, I can't tell you the number of times throughout my time in the industry where I had some really super-duper racist engagements with board members or donors. And our musicians are experiencing these things. It's not even just about, "I'm not going to live in Texas for Florida." It's in every single market, this is the culture that exists. And again, not just in orchestras, but in our performing arts ecosystem.

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SIMON WOODS: Yeah, there is racism in American society and we can't pretend it doesn't exist in our institutions.

BLAKE-ANTHONY JOHNSON: Ten seconds here, because I see a New World person. You know, New World Symphony was a great experiment for me, because I was leaving an orchestra to basically be a student again. And they let me do this program called the Power of Color. And basically, I got to explain what it was like for my performance career in Europe, and then coming back to the States. Because I actually didn't know how bad it was until I came back. In the medical field they call it weathering, this idea of there's a lot of things that people of color have to just do on a daily basis to just navigate. That does have an actual, like, measurable toll. So I always tell people, you know, if I'm in a new city, I want to go for a jog, first I have to see, like, "Is it safe for me to jog?" But this idea, at least for me, because my performance career started in France, it's been very interesting to see that you actually feel more at home in other markets than your home country. Which is another big conflict that most people of color have once they do leave the States.

SIMON WOODS: Thank you for that. Okay, thank you. Great contributions. Thank you so much thanks, Blake-Anthony, for being so honest with us about that. [APPLAUSE] Okay, right. Let's go to Doug. Doug, you're going to get ten minutes then I'm going to give you the buzzer, because I want to leave ten minutes at the end for questions. So Doug in his article that I recommended to you says this, "The institution of the orchestra, its operating system, is now old, outdated technology that has resisted updates. It's a laundry list of bugs. [LAUGHTER] Discuss."

1:04:04.0

DOUG MCLENNAN: Hi, I'm Doug. [LAUGHTER] I'm a fellow Ponzi scheme victim. [LAUGHTER] And since everybody's saying where they were in 1993, I was in China teaching at the Central Conservatory of Music. And back then, if you wanted to communicate with the outside world, there was no internet, there were no phones there. We were living in our compound at the conservatory. If you wanted to actually communicate with someone, there was this brilliant new device called a fax machine, [LAUGHTER] but you'd have to crowd everything on one page because they charged \$10 a page to send. And you'd wait the next day for a response.

So there are three things I want to kind of talk about. In some ways I wish we had just, like, quit here because there's so much to talk about, both in what Kendra said what – but first what I want to talk about is institutionalism. There's a way of looking at the internet of the last 25 years as essentially a war on institutions, right? It's all been about disrupting institutions. Institutions were created because they were the most efficient way of getting things done. They're also inherently really, really inefficient. And there is not practically an institution in the commercial world now that looks like it did 30 years ago.

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The institution of the orchestra was really created in this country, as the report mentions, in the mid-19th century as a way of dividing high art and low art. Joe Horowitz wrote this brilliant book called *Understanding Toscanini*, in which he sort of explained that this European star system that the institutions of classical music were built on in this country were a path that once you go down, it's very hard to get off of it. But in the '50s, '60s, and '70s in this country there was a really fierce debate about high art versus low art. And in the visual arts world, and in the literary world, those distinctions rapidly dispersed. I have a feeling that that's also true in most of the arts, except that our institutions are still essentially 19th century institutions, right?

Witness something as simple as the music correct position, right? The orchestras were built on this idea of a star person who was making everything happen, and making something artistically brilliant. In the last ten or 20 years, we've worked very hard in the orchestra world to become more embedded in the community to more interact with the community. And yet, we have this system in which we have, for a lot of orchestras, absent music corrects. They're only there a number of weeks during the year. And the operations, the artistic aspirations of orchestras, now go far beyond a concert hall.

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And if you're going to be led by somebody whose principal focus is the concert hall, how do you reconcile those? And so I think that this institutional kind of structure that we've been trapped in – you know, even the biggest corporations now, Microsoft, Amazon, are all open-source companies in a way, right? They're dynamic institutions in which they've learned to adapt to become much more porous with the outside world. That partnerships with them mean something entirely different than what they do in most arts organizations, right? In the rest of the network of network worlds, partnerships are things that people come together for mutual interest and ongoing kinds of relationships with.

You figure out where your interests align, and then you work to better the other person or the other entity in the partnership. Think about most arts partnerships, and it's, "I have this really cool project and you would be a great partner. Don't pay attention to the thing that you're doing brilliantly. Come and work on this idea," right? And then at the end of it, it goes away and it disappears. It's very hard to get traction in the old kind of institutional set-up for how you do partnerships. Second thing I want to talk about is business models. Because you know, the 501c3 was created in 1954. It was created as a recognition that there were some very worthwhile things that we wanted to accomplish in society that were not commercially supportable, right?

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And the 501c3 was created to accumulate enough working capital to be able to enable these institutions to operate and do the things that we need. Well, the days where that actually happened is long, long, long gone. And if you look at a lot of other non-profits, they have now become hybrids of one sort or another. In fact, the non-profit world outside of the arts and the commercial world now is a very kind of fluid marketplace. And the number of different business models, there's practically not a one that relies on any one, or two, or three, or five income streams.

It's in a multi kind of three-dimensional universe. And yet, in the arts we're still stuck on this kind of basic business model. Just as one example, what is the hottest business model right now across the digital world? Subscriptions. [LAUGHTER] Right? What I've been hearing in conversations all around this place the last few days, "Subscriptions are dead." [LAUGHTER] And I actually think that the basic art subscription model is dead, right? Basically what you're doing in asking somebody to have a subscription is you're offloading the risk all onto the consumer, right?

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And why would any consumer, with all the choices they have today, want to accept that? But subscriptions in the digital world mean something entirely different. And we ought to be exploring
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that, and multiplying the kinds of ways in which we do business that are outside of the traditional thing. I also want to say that if you look across the commercial field – movies, pop music, any kind of creative enterprise – they’ve had to invent themselves, reinvent themselves, and reinvent themselves time after time, after time. The movie business used to own movie theatres and it used to own actors.

And they’ve had to continually reinvent their business model to be able to support it. Where since 1954 have we reinvented the basic non-profit business model that the arts runs on, right? Most of the young kind of artists that I see today, they want nothing to do with the non-profit model. There’s a reason for that. And we haven’t done nearly enough to both interact with the creative fields outside of the orchestra world and with people who are doing things just differently, right?

So that’s something that we have failed really badly at. And then third, which I think is actually most existential threat of all, which is something that I’ve come to start talking about as algorithmic aesthetics, right? Thirty years ago when I was in China, most of the world’s information was locked away behind doors, and you couldn’t get to it unless you were actually in the field, and you were actually allowed access to it, right?

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Now everybody has access to almost everything. I don’t mean everything, but you know what I mean. And culture has fragmented to such an extent that it has collapsed this sort of sense of chronology of how art works. And so we now grab from here and grab from there in teeny, tiny bits, right? And the algorithms that we’re increasingly pushed towards, and all participate in them because the world is too complex, there’s way too much information, there’s way too much vying for our attention, we off-source it to these algorithms which choose our Spotify playlists, which chose our YouTube videos. 70% of all the videos watched on YouTube are chosen by algorithms, not somebody searching for them, right?

And social media, the same way. There’s a reason that we’re so polarized, is because social on media, the engineers have figured out that, for instance, you’re 12% more likely to click on something if I can make you angry, 12%, right? Now, you think about what we do, and you think about what art does, and most often we want that more considered response. It’s an evolving thing, it’s a relationship thing. It’s like, all of those things that make us better, right? Do you think that works in the algorithms as presently set up? Nope. So the problem is that we have to live in that reality, right? And with the coming of artificial intelligence, it’s going to be on steroids.

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We're going to go from a curation economy in which people are trying to choose the kind of culture that they interact with, to a creation economy in which the artificial you, the artificial artist, the artificial world is competing for our attention. And it will be increasingly difficult to tell the difference between the two. I think there's actually enormous opportunity in that, right? If you look at the slow food movement as a reaction to fast food, it teaches us that culture that is deeply sourced and that is part of its organic surroundings is always preferable, right? So anyway.

SIMON WOODS: Okay, that's going to be for a future panel, Doug. Thank you [APPLAUSE] Right, okay. So we have ten minutes. I'm going to warn panelists that I'm going to wrap at the end by asking you each to give one sentence word of advice on the one thing you think orchestras should focus on for the future. More important than anything, it's literally only one sentence each coming out of this discussion. So start prepping for that. Right, who's got a question that they would like to ask? Yes, at the back. Thank you very much. David is the man with the mic. He's going to run fast.

JAMEIS WILLIAMS: How are you doing? I'm Jameis [?] Williams and I've been part of the League for a long time, from the New York Philharmonic Music Assistance Fund, being [UNINTEL PHRASE] to Antoinette Handy being part of this whole situation, to the Akron Symphony when Bill Banfield and a few other composers were a part of that, even conducting their orchestra. Question about a couple of things. First of all, the model which mentioned, about artists being not able to improvise. My school, Berklee College of Music, we have a lot of people who are in various orchestras – Cincinnati, the Boston Symphony – they're in the model from my orchestra.

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In fact, everybody in my orchestra can improvise, and I guarantee you they can play any type of music that needs to be played for full orchestra. But I do see some changes. But from this list that I'm looking at, I still see a lot of work to be done. I've been going around the country, looking at various models of programs, and I still see there needs to be a pushback. Even the makeup of the boards or makeup of orchestras needs to be looked at in a different way. Even the [UNINTEL] model needs to be looked at. And it's correct, a lot of musicians when they go to a certain area, don't feel like they are part of that community.

SIMON WOODS: Sorry, can I just interrupt you? Do you have a question for us?

JAMEIS WILLIAMS: Yes. The question is, how can it change? What can we really do about that? Is there a model to change that at the moment? I see little changes, but what can we do to bring a larger aspect of change?

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SIMON WOODS: To change, which particular aspect are you talking about?

JAMEIS WILLIAMS: You can pick any one.

SIMON WOODS: Well, okay, so then I'm going to reframe that by saying it's the broader question of how do we move faster, how do we change something that we've not been able to change for 30 years? Blake-Anthony, you have something to say on that?

BLAKE-ANTHONY JOHNSON: This is definitely going to get me in trouble. He mentioned the purpose of 501c3s and, you know, how they started in 1954. I remember very vividly flying to L.A. because I asked Chad Smith, I needed his counsel on start things. And basically, what I was grappling with is, at least in the city of Chicago – and we got tons of ARPA funds – it was very clear that some art organizations would not make it.

1:20:15.2

And so one question was like, “What is the city’s role in helping some of these organizations survive to get through the pandemic?” At the time I wasn’t the chair, I was just on the council, but I was on this committee. And then the second part was, “Is it okay for natural kind of catastrophic events to create maybe progress for these institutions that refuse to budge?” Chad’s surrounded by trees, and they have the big redwoods. And when these redwoods die, they create a cathedral of new redwoods around it. Because I had a lot of guilt about basically having to choose which organizations would make it through the pandemic.

And so I think in terms of what will change, this is unpopular and people don’t like this, but you know, from my lens, I look at how much capital is locked up in organizations that really should have expiration dates. And I think at some point we’re going to have to reevaluate, like, is it acceptable for some of these 501c3s to just live in perpetuity when they really aren’t going to this original purpose? It’s quite radical, so again, that’s just my personal opinion. [LAUGHTER]

[OVERTALK]

SIMON WOODS: Thank you. It’s a great and serious point. Thank you very much. Another question. Yes, right there.

[OFF-MIC CONVERSATION]

SPEAKER: Good morning, and thank you for the session. To take back to our boards of directors, would you be willing to to share your PowerPoint presentation to all of us? Because I can see this being really important for me to share with my board, as well as Cathy's own presentation.

SIMON WOODS: Yeah, for sure. I see no reason why not. I mean, I'll get their permission afterwards, but talk to me afterwards and we'll figure that out.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

1:21:57.4

SIMON WOODS: Another question from somebody? Yeah, over there. David Snead.

DAVID SNEAD: Thank you. Kendra, could you talk more about the union issues you mentioned earlier? What do you think needs to change specifically with the union management relationships?

KENDRA WHITLOCK INGRAM: I don't know if it's so much relationships, it's more about the structure, what the confines of the CBA for the orchestra means for the business model. So I'm going to actually pick on PSO, because I think you guys are pretty innovative, from what I've heard about how you're able to cut up the orchestra to be able to use in different ways. From what I understand, you can bring it down to as few as nine players. That's, like, radical. I mean, back in the day, nobody could do that. I think that's really unique. I actually think it needs to go farther on how we can use services for orchestra players to be able to actually have more community engagement, and frankly, more revenue generating.

That's also not a popular idea. And I recognize the incredible and immense challenge of doing that. But using 40 plus players for a 43-week contract with ten weeks of vacation, which I'm not even judging that. But a 43-week contract where you can only use the orchestra as the full ensemble, when we talk about business models, there's just no demand for that. There's no demand for 20 weeks of subscription. Again, no judgment. [LAUGHTER] There's no demand for that. I mean, we know that. You all know this. We all know this. You're coming up with ideas to be able to use the full orchestra in ways that are just not going to pay for itself.

1:23:54.6

So until we can actually work with the players, or you work with the players in a construct that is going to allow for, you know, the traditional Western European full orchestra of 100 players, in addition to being able to use the players for revenue generating activities, and education and community engagement work in a meaningful way, I think that's part of the business model shift. And I'm not saying it's easy, and I know it's really, really difficult. So I don't know what the solution to that is, but that's what really needs to happen.

SIMON WOODS: Thank you for that. Okay, I'm going to go to my lightning round conclusion now.

VOICE [OFF-MIC]: [UNINTEL] one more question?

SIMON WOODS: No, sorry. [LAUGHTER] We have to finish. But yes, go on Jessica.

JESSICA: I was just going to – my name is Jessica – very quickly jump on what Kendra was saying, in that I wonder if we could further the conversation as both a musician and a higher music education person, having them in the room, and think about encouraging everybody to create a modern job description for the musician, right? [APPLAUSE] And that actually it could be tied to your funding. If you got 30% grant funding in education, you know, this many weeks is going to be this work. And please come if you want to do that work. And the higher music education institutions need to get on board with that too, so that we can prepare the students to do it. I think it's there, and I just want to throw that out as a challenge to everybody as maybe a next step. [UNINTEL].

SIMON WOODS: By the way, we are starting at the League a new generation of discussions with the higher education institutions. It's not public yet, just at the very beginning. We're going to have that discussion.

[OFF-MIC VOICE]

SIMON WOODS: Okay, lightning round. Each person, one sentence. For the next 30 years that we're having this conversation, what is the one thing that orchestras most need to focus on? Doug McLennan.

[AUDIO INTERFERENCE]

SIMON WOODS: [LAUGHTER] What was that about bugs in the machine?

DOUG MCLENNAN: My voice got very low.

[OFF-TOPIC CONVERSATION]

1:26:17.7

SIMON WOODS: Wow, that is [UNINTEL]. We'll do it anyway. Do it, Doug.

DOUG MCLENNAN: Interact with the wider world more.

SIMON WOODS: Interact with the wider world more.

BLAKE-ANTHONY JOHNSON: Okay, you can hear? I'll just yell. So Sharon Hatchett is on the League board [UNINTEL PHRASE]. My favorite quote is, "If you dislike change, I promise you will hate extinction." [LAUGHTER] [APPLAUSE]

SIMON WOODS: Very good. Kendra.

KENDRA WHITLOCK INGRAM: I'm breaking the rules again and saying it's actually two things, business model and conservatory model.

SIMON WOODS: Okay, very good.

MELIA TOURANGEAU: Investing in capacity to build endless capital, and really building a culture within our institutions that will allow or risk-taking.

SIMON WOODS: Great. Risk-taking. Cathy?

CATHERINE FRENCH: Creating a business model and an organization that is built on flexibility.

SIMON WOODS: Flexibility.

CATHERINE FRENCH: Flexible in order to become a total community musical resource.

SIMON WOODS: Very, very well-articulated. I'm not sure what even is working here. Is this working? No. Okay. Well, look, I'll just say at the end, yesterday in our constituency group we had a group one managers' meeting, and we were talking about some of the change. And one of the CEOs of group one said, "You know, we really need to be the last generation that is having this discussion." And I'll use that as the close here, which is we really need not to be looking back in 30 years' time at this report and saying, "Why haven't we still made these changes?"

1:28:04.5

We need to be the last generation which is having this discussion. We need to change, and we need to grow. [APPLAUSE] Thank you very much.

END OF TRANSCRIPT