

Commissioning and the Redefinition of Audience

June 16, 2023

JONATHAN HOLLAND: Welcome to the session on commissioning and redefinition of the audience. A little bit about how the flow of this morning will go. We'll do some introductions of all of the folks on the panel here, talk a little bit about what our panel is about, we'll introduce some of the projects that we're going to talk about, and then there's really opportunity for discussion. So some questions that I've put together as moderator, but this is really an opportunity for all of you to engage with the panelists, and ask questions as well. And then at the very end, we'll ask our composers on the panel to say some final remarks for the morning.

So first, to tell you who is here. Our panel this morning is made up of some pretty remarkable folks. Kathryn Bostic is an Emmy-nominated and award winning composer — I'm not going to go through everybody's bio exactly it is in the program, but just to point out some highlights here. In 2016, Kathryn became the first African American score composer to join the Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts, and Sciences. Very much at home on writing for the stage, writing for the concert hall, and writing for the screen. She's worked with the Pittsburgh Symphony, has been an artist in residence with the Chicago Symphony, and we'll hear about a pretty exciting project that grew out of her work with August Wilson, who's a very familiar name here in Pittsburgh.

Ray Angry is a pianist, composer, producer, and arranger, and I hope we get to talk about all of those different parts of your personality a little bit this morning. Perhaps most known currently as keyboard player for the house band of the Tonight Show, the Roots. However, Ray has worked with an incredible array of artists from Jeff Beck and Winton Marsalis to Esperanza Spaulding, Terri Lyne Carrington, Mick Jagger, Diane Reeves, Queen Latifah, etcetera, etcetera. The list goes on. So hopefully we hear some about that and how that all has played into the projects we're going to hear about today.

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Directly next to me is Suzanne Perrino, who is senior vice president of learning and community engagement for the Pittsburgh Symphony. And under Suzanne's leadership, the Pittsburgh Symphony has launched several firsts, including the first fully inclusive sensory friendly program, music and wellness programming, early childhood initiatives, and symposium, and an audience of the future program for high school students. So lots of exciting programs. And I have to mention that Suzanne is an alum of Carnegie Mellon University.

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And at the end of the table, Jonathan McPhee, currently music director of the Lexington Symphony Orchestra, and as a former Boston resident, I have to say definitely a salient figure on the Boston landscape as music director of the Boston Ballet for 28 years. Also a composer in his own right having done arrangements of Rite of Spring and Firebird. The only authorized reduced orchestrations of those works. Has worked with numerous ballet companies, symphony orchestras, and was the impetus behind this work with the Lexington Symphony.

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So this morning you will hear about projects with both Lexington Symphony and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. We'll talk about the genesis of those projects, and how they directly relate to the topic this morning. And a little bit about what we're here to talk about. I guess I should introduce myself. I'm Jonathan Holland. I am head of the school of music at Carnegie Mellon University. I'm also a composer. I'm also a board member of the American Composers Orchestra. So I'm happy to be here talking about commissioning, talking with composers, throwing out some questions that I would love to hear other composers answer, and to champion the idea of new works as a way of generating new audiences.

So Caen Thomason-Redus, who is sort of the person behind putting this together, when we had conversations about this panel, spoke so convincingly and enthusiastically about how commissioning is a superpower that orchestras have in terms of making those connections with the community. I have to say as a composer I love that idea that commissioning is a superpower. But it really is if we think about how central the role of the composer is, and how we talk about the narrative of orchestras and what they communicate and convey.

But this morning we want to talk about the fact that you can use commissioning as a catalyst for developing audience engagement and redefining what it means to be an audience member. So if we think about traditional models of audience development and community engagement, it's often about the orchestra going into the community and saying, hey, look at what we do, hear what we are doing. And while that is one way of developing audiences, I think the point this morning by talking about these particular projects is that another approach can be that the ensemble acknowledges the community, acknowledges the fact that there are histories, that there are traditions, that there are stories to be told, that there is a folklore in many of these other communities.

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And so engaging with the community, understanding who they are, and then creating artistic works
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that within the parameters of what the orchestra can do actually directly relate with the communities so that it's a relationship as opposed to more of a marketing push, if you will. Not that those things aren't important, but that all of it is important, and making people feel welcome, not just coming to hear what the orchestra is known to do, but also letting the community know that the orchestra is interested in engaging with the community in terms of who they are and what they might want to hear, within the parameters, again, of what the orchestra is capable of doing.

So both of these are really exciting projects, and perhaps we should jump into a little bit of discussion around them. So I want to start with Kathryn and Suzanne, having you talk a little bit about what the project was with the orchestra, maybe what the impetus was, who came to whom, how did it evolve to what it ended up being in the end.

SUZANNE PERRINO: I think the best way to talk about this project is actually to show you four minutes of the 11 minute commissioned work that we did. Kathryn wrote the music, wrote the musical score to it. There are two other artists that we worked with to create the tone poem, and then to set the film. The film is actually — the majority of the film was set in the Hill District. Now for people who don't know Pittsburgh, the Hill District is a rich community, huge jazz background. Also August Wilson was born there and wrote several of his plays based on growing up in the Hill District.

So we'd like to play the first four minutes. It is an 11 minute piece, so you won't get the full feeling of it, but we will be posting it on our website in September. So you will be able to come back and see the full version of it. It was premiered October 22nd, 2022. So just this last fall. And it was on the Lift Every Voice concert, which was a full two hour concert with a lot of other programming on it. This is the full Pittsburgh Symphony playing, and conducted by Kellen Gray.

[0:08:37.9]

[MUSIC]

SPEAKER: All I do all day is run. There does not seem to be time for one more thing.

[MUSIC]

[0:10:17.6]

SPEAKER: I only have time to dream. I have dreamed so many tiny dreams. Dreams of being

unbothered, unafraid. Dreams of lying down in sunflowers under the sky. Don't I deserve that beauty?
Don't I deserve some wildness?

[MUSIC]

SPEAKER: A week ago, I found something strange. Maybe a week ago something strange found me.
It was a figure from a time in the past. She was titled the queen of Sheba.

[MUSIC]

SPEAKER: Somewhere on a certain day somebody made that woman with everything in the world
black.

[MUSIC]

[0:12:15.7]

SPEAKER: When I open my eyes, I see her. And she follows me.

[MUSIC; APPLAUSE]

SUZANNE: So I have to say this project was just a really wonderful labor of love in coming together,
and it came together during COVID. We announced it February 2020 at our last Lift Every Voice
concert in 2020, and then, boom, March, shutdown. So we changed all of our timelines, all of our
processes for coming together in Pittsburgh, and did the entire project on Zoom. So bringing
together the filmmaker, the poet, composer, and contributing editor all together over Zoom. A little
crazy, not what we expected. We flexed a little bit.

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The impetus for this, we did a community concert in the Hill District called Sounds On Center, Center
Avenue is really a main street that goes through the Hill District, and a lot of jazz clubs, a lot of history
in that Center Avenue. And we had Jessica Lanay reading one of her sonnets from her graduate
study at University of Pittsburgh around oral histories of Black elder women in the Hill. And what she

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did is she did 35 oral histories, and then she wrote sonnets for each one. And after hearing her read two or three of them, all I could think of was that would make a great libretto.

And so we talked more, and eventually I of course called Kathryn, because we had commissioned her twice before for two previous Lift Every Voice concerts, including the August Wilson symphony, and she had written Toni Morrison, *The Pieces I Am*, score for Netflix. And so we asked her to orchestrate that as well. But this was really based on the Hill District, based on that oral history, and you saw the female protagonist thinking beyond her everyday busy life.

It was a common theme that came out of this oral history project, that finally these women in their older years had an opportunity to think about themselves and what they wanted, and they didn't have to base it on their job, on their husband, on their kids. They had the freedom to imagine, and they saw, and she saw that Black queen of Sheba, and thought, what can I do, how can I live my life to the fullest now that I have the opportunity.

So in bringing this all together, the hardest part I would say was not composing the music, but bringing down the tone poem to a usable length that we could then allow the music to flourish in certain parts, and really underscore as well. So with that introduction, let me turn it over to Kathryn to talk a little bit more about her work.

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KATHRYN BOSTIC: Hello. You know, this was such a great opportunity for me because I've always looked at music in general, regardless of genre, as a sonic storytelling. So to have this orchestral canvas was just such a gift, and quite remarkable. And to tie into what you're saying about what's possible, what can I be, part of my overview in general is to talk — is to demonstrate accessibility. Accessibility to creating for orchestra, creating a canvas such as what you offered me with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, because I think that especially as an African American woman composer, it's not a typical trajectory.

So my thing is demystifying access, and this was a great way to do that not just for the obvious reasons, but to tie into the narrative of this particular story. You know, what can I reimagine about myself that is already a part of my intrinsic essence, how can I elevate that. So this was a great way to segue into that. And I think you talked about musically wanting to have the narrative really embolden different genres. So later on in the film there is a jazz — there is a tribute to — what's the — Wiley Avenue.

How could I ask that? I worked with August Wilson. [LAUGHING] It's in one of the movements of my — anyway, so Wiley Avenue, I have a more jazz centric flavor with the orchestra, and it was a lot of fun. So I'm deeply, deeply honored and appreciative that I had that opportunity. So thank you.

HOLLAND: Thank you for that. For way of introduction, I'll just pass it down to Ray and Jonathan to talk about your project and how that came to be.

JONATHAN MCPHEE: Thank you. This — it's great to see everybody here, and actually wide awake maybe. I want to talk just a little bit about this commissioning project, because it is a little different. And then I'm going to turn it over to Ray to actually give you a feel for what it meant for him. You heard Kathryn say the opportunity. A lot of this is about opportunity, and opportunities are sometimes created in ways that you don't expect.

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And in the last three years, two things. I tend to look at something bad and realize that there's something good that can come from it, and sometimes tragedy can actually be an opportunity for doing good. So you think about what we've been through, both in the symphony world and as a country in the last three years. The George Floyd murder sensitized a nation to the fact that we were not unified. The symphony league has reacted to that.

What I'm seeing at the league this year I've never seen before, which is a real mix of different kinds of music. And you know, we tend as people to put things in boxes. So this is an acceptable box for symphony, this is an acceptable box for jazz, this is an accept — and we keep them all separate. What we forget is there are people in all of those, and they usually hide one genre from the other genre.

And I'm constantly amazed as I've gotten to know my musicians over the years to find out, oh, you play jazz. Oh, you play hip-hop. I only see you in the second violin section, in the ballet orchestra. It's a shocker. Just one little story, talking about opportunity. So I've been in — this is 40 years, I hate to — ugh, yeah, 40 years. So in the 1980's, I was conducting for New York City Ballet, Martha Graham, Joffrey, and Dance Theater of Harlem.

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Mr. Balanchine and Arthur Mitchell of course were the catalysts for that. After a performance at City Center in New York, a woman came up to me who I didn't know, and Arthur was with her, and she

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handed me a bag, and in the bag there were a bunch of studio cassettes. And some photographs, manuscript. And she said, "I'm trying to keep my father's legacy alive, and I can't get a single performance for his work." And I said, "What's your name?" And she said, "Judy Still," William Grant Still's daughter. '80s and '90s, no one would play his music.

Okay, you see what's happening today. So the pandemic is the other part of this opportunity, because it basically broke everybody. All the orchestras shut down. Suddenly the programming machine ground to a halt, and there were opportunities created by the fact that, now what are we going to do? Let's think creatively about what's important to the orchestra, what's important to the community, what kinds of projects can we do, and what's going to come out of it.

So I had already had in the back of my mind, trying to find a way to bring these different things that had happened in music since the 1950's, really, and bring them back together. And I'm very lucky, I have a multicultural family. My younger brother is — well, I'm the classical nerd. I went to Juilliard, he went to Hampton University, and in his senior year he met a young man who you know as Questlove, and that was the beginning of the Roots being formed. Keith is still their production manager, and he's the music advisor for the Fallon Show.

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And I just want to give him a shoutout, because this would not have happened without him. So I sat down and said, look, people keep saying in the orchestra world, where are all the musicians of color in the orchestra? And we had big debates about whether it's the audition process or it's the pipeline process or what it is. They're out there. So if you don't have opportunity, talent's always going to find a way to bubble up. Where does it go? It went into popular music.

So our popular music culture has been enriched by all of these amazing talented people. A lot of them were classically trained. So I said, "Keith, here's what I'm looking for. I want a classically trained musician who has made incredible inroads into pop and jazz and hip-hop." And Keith said, "Ray Angry, keyboard player for the Roots." And so we then did a little research on it, and Keith started sending me little bits, and Ray actually right around the same time, since we got to know each other, he became a Steinway artist. Steinway's thinking ahead.

[LAUGHING] And the dialogue started. And I knew with the climate we had, I could find funding, and not — I don't want you to think that Lexington Symphony has an enormous budget, we don't. It's a regional orchestra with some of the best freelancers in Boston. So we play far above our budget level. And the musicians, I can't say enough good things about them, they were all in, they knew the

concept. I said, “Look, I don’t know what’s going to happen. He has a symphony muscle that he has not used. It’s going to be a challenge for everybody. It’s going to be a ride.”

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And it brought the community together. I could have sold that concert out twice. I mean, we were turning people away. Because all of the people who knew Ray Angry and the Roots, who’d never been to an orchestra, went, “What do you mean? Orchestra? I got to be there.” So bringing audiences together, coming up with new ideas. I’ve said too much. You tell them about the piece.

RAY ANGRY: Thank you. Well, first of all, thank you to the league for having me. This is beyond a dream. This is really great. I always dreamed of writing for an orchestra but never realized that I could actually have the opportunity. And so I’m thankful for Keith McPhee and Jonathan McPhee, two brothers, you know? Who saw me and said, “Hey man, you have something, and I need you to step through this door.”

And it was scary, you know? But it was an amazing opportunity for me to study, and to look inward, and to create something that could have a potential impact. And for me, working — having — I’ve been in performing art schools my whole life, you know? I’ve seen kids practice 10 hours a day, me being one of them, auditioning for Juilliard and never getting in, and then, you know, they just give up on music.

So I’ve seen the educational system sort of, you know, kill dreams and discourage a lot of young people. But for me, I’m sort of like the kid who, you know, just never gives up, who falls down and just gets right back up, you know what I mean? And I realized that in my journey that the most important thing is to stay a student and to always learn and to always grow.

So this piece was something that I wanted to create to have a social impact, and it’s something that I wanted to — I love history. So I wanted the piece to take us on a journey from the beginning of time, from the beginning of humanity, you know, and just explore what that narrative is. And for me, power is the common thread throughout all of humanity. Either someone’s trying to take your power, or you realize you have power.

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And so — and at the end of the day, love is powerful, you know? The love of Jonathan and love of Keith McPhee allowed to look in my — look inward and love myself enough to wake up at six o’clock
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— wake up at five o'clock in the morning every day, writing, you know? I did this for many years, and this piece is called Black Athena Power. And it's an acknowledgment of the divine feminine, because you know, we have to acknowledge women, you know?

And I think in a world where everyone's trying to be first in line, you know? And for me, it's like my mother — everything that I do is for my mother. I would not be here if it weren't for her, and I would not be doing music if it weren't for her, you know? And so this piece is an acknowledgement of divine feminine, and it's also — it's in three movements. And you know — are we going to play it?

SPEAKER: Yeah.

RAY: Okay, because I feel like I'm talking too much. [LAUGHING] But anyway, I just wanted the piece to also bring communities together, you know? I love jazz, I love classical music, I love hip-hop, I love all of these different genres, and a lot of times as a creative, you have to sort of pick a lane. And in the school they say, you know, you've got to do this, or if you're doing classical music you can't study jazz, if you're doing jazz, you can't — and I thought that was a ridiculous notion, because I just see music as music. It's 12 notes, and it's what you do with those 12 notes is up to you.

[0:28:12.7]

And also, music is something that people should feel, you know? You should have something that is not just for your own ego, but something that can be used to heal someone, make someone's day better, bring communities together. So that was the purpose of this piece, and I'm so happy that I was able to have this incredible opportunity to write a symphony. And I look forward to doing more.

MCPHEE: Jonathan, can I set it up a little bit?

HOLLAND: Yeah, please.

MCPHEE: Okay, so just to set up what you're going to see, because we've got two minutes. And we picked, or I picked selections in it to try and show you the wide variety that's in the piece, and how it hangs together, and give you at least a feel of that narrative that Ray was just telling you about. And a little bit of the reaction at the end, because it was like a rock concert, which is not typical for Lexington, Massachusetts.

[MUSIC; APPLAUSE]

[0:31:42.4]

HOLLAND: I have tons of questions, but I want to encourage all of you who have questions, there are microphones set up, so please feel free to step up if you have things you want to ask. You've all touched on something that I'd love to talk about a little bit, because I think it's important, in terms of engaging with communities, and the power of words and titles. So this idea of being a composer. And this is both for the composers, but also for the ensembles too.

But maybe, Ray, starting with you in particular, I wonder if you could talk about how you navigate the idea of being a composer versus being a producer versus being a DJ versus being a creative artist in different ways. I mean, you — I wouldn't imagine you would walk in the recording studio as Ray the composer in the same way that maybe you don't walk into a rehearsal with an orchestra as Ray the producer. But maybe you do. So do those words mean anything? Do you approach them differently? Do you feel like those are different aspects of who you are? Do you have to be somebody different in different circumstances?

RAY: That's a really awesome question. So the problem that I have oftentimes is, you know, if I work with a producer, they'll see me as, oh, he's the musician, you know? If I'm with some hip-hop guys, they see me as, oh, he's the classical guy. So I have, you know — I'm a chameleon, you know? And so I read the room, and I'm — I love being creative. And so I think that there is no difference between me producing and me composing, because at the end of the day it's music, and it's creation. I'm creating, you know, regardless.

So I'm able to connect with a songwriter, I'm able to connect with a conductor, and I see it as one organism, you know what I mean? And I'm also not a DJ, so — [LAUGHING] but I just see music as music, you know? If I'm producing, it's the same as composing, because I'm still thinking about the narrative of what the song is, or what the piece is. It still tells a story. So I feel like music is all storytelling. So as a producer, you produce a story, as a composer you compose music for the story. So that's how I view music.

[0:34:20.4]

HOLLAND: That's great. Kathryn, I would ask you a similar question. If you're writing for a play versus writing for the screen versus writing for the concert hall, is it all the same person? Is it — are there different ways in which you approach those things? And I guess through all of this I'm thinking about

how it is you are seen by those who are looking at the work you are doing. Do you feel like there's a difference in all of those?

KATHRYN: Yeah, I think in terms of writing for theater and film, you're hired to deliver the vision of the director, the producer, or those — the creative team. So you're part of sort of this massive organism, to use your word, that is part of this narrative. So my position is to be of service to that intent. That being said, the essence of what I do, regardless of the trajectory, is that I'm a storyteller. And that has enabled me to feel comfortable and grow in confidence to approach any genre, whether it's scoring for a dance company, a play, a movie.

My whole thing about what I do as an artist is that it's just — it makes me happy. It's real simple, it makes me happy to be able to tell stories sonically. And what I try to deliver in communities, especially since arts have been hideously removed from the school system, it's disgusting, frankly. I'm sorry, a little — I'll put the coffee over here. So we have a responsibility in my viewpoint as artists, as creators, we have a responsibility to encourage and indulge our youth with these ability — with their capacity to be storytellers.

[0:36:28.9]

So I just — you know, yeah, I show up, I definitely — in the score composing world for film, because we don't — unfortunately, we don't have a union. So you will at times be tasked with writing revision upon revision upon revision, only to have them go back, "Oh, I think after 20 — I think I do like that first one you did, you know?" So — and you can't really say I'm not doing anymore, because there's a whole line of composers waiting to get that gig.

So it's really how do you — it's being a team player, but also respecting your own innovative position in that team. And so that's how I like to show up. And I know I digress a little bit with the schools and the access to kids, but we are talking about community and commission. And I just really think it's important whenever possible, those of us who get these commissions, and if there's time, to go into these communities and demystify the grandeur, if you will, of an orchestra — especially in the orchestral community.

It's a socialized device that is often quite straight jacketed insofar as it's who has access to it and who's even heard of — you know, who thinks they can have an orchestral background. Like you were saying, you were like, wow, I'm going to do a symphony. I said the same thing. And then I just reminded myself, oh no, I'm a storyteller. So I want to have kids revel in that same imagination of who they are. So however we can do that with that kind of intention, and that's why I was just thrilled to work with you, Suzanne, on this piece going into the Hill District.

[0:38:19.4]

HOLLAND: Thank you. So I guess I would ask then, Jonathan and Suzanne, to talk a little bit about — and this is kind of touching on the point you mentioned about the league and acknowledging different types of music, and — I sort of feel like we're at a point where we can't not acknowledge what's already been happening for so long. It's not like this is a new thing, it's just that trying to define what any particular type of music is, or what any particular type of artist does in a single way is becoming less and less possible.

But in relation to these two projects, did your organizations look for artists who were multifaceted, or was this sort of a happy accident based on what you wanted to do and who it is you found to do these projects?

SUZANNE: I think I'll answer more broadly in saying that — well, we went into this project intentionally, but based on some history of working together. But when we talk about education and community engagement programs, we're really talking about what will take a person on that journey, from walking in the door to having this more transformative, you hope, experience when they leave, where it's going to build curiosity, where it's going to want them to go home and say, you've got to hear this concert, you've got to come back here, I've got — I have to tell you about it, and they own it, and they want to share it with other people, right?

[0:39:59.2]

I'm going to look up Ray and go get a recording, or download something because he was so inspiring, right? That's what we want to get to. So we use in education and community music as more of a medium or a tool or a way of getting that person from point A to point B. If it's a jazz piece, and often we have many different types of genres throughout our education and community programs, different types of artists drawing hopefully more locally, because one of the initiatives that we really try to promote is uplifting those artists in the community that are amazing that never get recognized.

And we've got this huge platform, we've got this huge hall, we've got a marketing machine. So we have the ability to lift up others. And you know, Toni Morrison, that was her whole deal. Like once you make it, make sure you bring everybody else with you who's not made it yet, right? So this piece was very intentional, but it came from a relationship with Jessica Lanay, the writer, who grew up in Pittsburgh. Again, a local artist. And Njeme Njai [?], who is this incredible multimedia young artist, again, from Pittsburgh.

And then Kathryn. And Kathryn had worked with us on the August Wilson symphony, and we should talk about that in a little bit because that was amazing, and I have to give a shoutout to Lucas Richmond as well for helping us on that journey. Another fabulous composer and conductor that we've worked with over the years and continue to work with.

And also on the Toni Morrison, which was taking another film that existed, orchestrating that music, and bringing it to a whole group of people that had never heard it before, and could actually, you know, later access it on Netflix. So we hope that they actually did that. Long story short, we use all different kinds of music, artists, to get from point A to point B for people in that meaningful, engaging experience.

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MCPHEE: There are some fears that we have to deal with. This happened really because after talking to the board, and to people in the organization, and I've been there 15 years and they know my work in the Boston area. Basically they trusted me, and it was like, okay, you do this, and we hope it works. However, we have these concerns. And I have to say, when you do something that's a little out of your trough, there's the concern. Well, wait a minute, you're going to get the composer pianist from the Roots, and he's going to do a symphony, and we don't want to lose our core symphony audience because they're like, oh, the Roots, this? Uh-uh, scary.

RAY: Hip-hop.

MCPHEE: Yeah, hip-hop, how's that going to work? I think we'll skip that one. And I said, "Look, you've got to trust me on this. First of all, we're going to get a press person that I've worked with for many years in other places who's like the best in the field, because he will know how to tell the story of Ray and the piece." And they said, "Fine, go ahead and hire him." And we — as there was little — there was our little one sheet that came up on the screen before our film.

John Michael was able to tie into some of the media that we as a regional orchestra would never have had access before just because of the story that we were telling with this commission. So for example, there's a show, Jonathan knows it, in Boston, Margery Eagan and Jim Braude show, on WGBH. Now, never would a regional orchestra get on that program. And he — the curiosity factor. And we said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, you know, Ray's — I'll bring a piano, and he can play."

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And it's a live performance spot with glass windows on the street by the library in Boston. We had a crowd outside the window. And that show, after the producer contacted me and said, "You know, in 13 years that broke all records." And the — as you can see from the one sheet, those outlets that we got, 15 million hits. It's grown since the November premiere. It was 12 million back then. Unheard of for a small regional orchestra.

So that builds community trust, it builds trust within your marketing department, your development people, that you know, sometimes the crazy ideas are ones that actually can bring people together in ways that have never happened before. But you know, we are — the symphony world and this is 40 years of being ballet and regional, new thinking is scary. New ways of doing things is scary, you know? Development says, "I've always done that, I'm not going to change the model."

And times are changing. So we need to make calculated risks and programming is our superpower. Programming is the thing that brings all the other departments into focus. Marketing has to work with programming has to work with development has to work with your community has to work with your education programs. They all go together.

[0:46:01.6]

HOLLAND: So can you all talk a little bit more about how it is — the word get out, who it is you were able to bring into the concert. I mean, you talked a little bit about the marketing behind the Lexington Symphony program. But maybe talking a little bit more about were there other activities that were part of these projects, and also what was the result in terms of who came to the performances in both situations. And maybe even some of the residual from these projects as well.

MCPHEE: Can I just jump in? Sorry Suzanne.

SUZANNE: You're fine.

MCPHEE: We would love to have done things — I mean, we had Bashiri Johnson who is one of the great percussionists of all time, Michael Jackson's percussionist. In fact, that's where we met like decades earlier in LA. Coreisa Lee, who you saw playing the solo flute, who's now playing for —

RAY: Lizzo. [LAUGHING]

MCPHEE: Lizzo, yeah. That's what I thought. That's where the strain on an organization, we just couldn't handle it. I mean, we — the school system wanted to do something, and with a small administration. And I knew it was going to be a ride. I mean, I kept warning people in the organization, this is going to be taking a tiger by the tail, and you guys have got to be ready for it, and when it happened they all went, agh! So we were doing well just to get the whole thing on in performance, but I hope it's not the last time. And that's the important thing, you know? Is what do we do after that?

And now you've got something to point to and say, look what we did, look what the reaction was, now we need to figure out how to move forward on that. And you know, the door's open. I mean, GBH said, "If you've got an interesting project like this, call us again." School system, the people who came to the performance went, "Oh, Ray, Bashiri Johnson, we would have killed to have them come in to the school system." Well, sometimes a disappointment leads to the next opportunity. So — [LAUGHING]

[0:48:16.3]

RAY: Can I — I just have one quick story to tell. So first of all, I was so scared the day of the performance, and it was such a — but at the same time, it was just amazing. So I work with a lot of artists, and you know, a lot of times it's weird for me to work with who I grew up listening to, and listening to their music over and over. D'Angelo. And I end up working with these people. So Lauryn Hill, I said, "Lauryn," I sent her a message, "Man, the show sold out." She was like, "What? I'm on my way."

And she was on her way. She brought — she was bringing her father, she was in her car, you know, and talking to my publicist, and she was on her way to the premiere, but you know, traffic was really bad so she couldn't make it. But the reach of the community and the people that came together, it was so different, you know? And for me, when I — when the performance was over, and I was running to the stage, this little kid was coming out of the bathroom, he must have been like four or five years old. She was like, "I really enjoyed your symphony." [LAUGHING] I was like, what? Oh my god, you know? So anyway, yeah.

SUZANNE: I think we were in a similar boat, right? So we had to get this commission together, and it was over COVID, and it was the two years of trying to bring it all together on top of reinventing everything that we did, right? So it was we've got to get to that point, and to echo Jonathan, it is a heavy lift. It involves a whole organization. It involves everybody being in alignment around this program, right?

[0:50:08.4]

The intention of it, the vision of it, the quality of it, the value of it. And I think the '22 premiere was very hard. If I look backwards to 2018, when we first started with Kathryn around August Wilson, we partnered with WQED, that is the public TV and radio station in Pittsburgh, and that partnership was really fantastic. Because they were able to spread the word far and wide, and they had already, you know, premiered the August Wilson – what would you call it?

KATHRYN: Oh, the film, *The Ground On Which I Stand*.

SUZANNE: Right, through QED. So they had already worked through a lot of this, and knew the material. So partnering with a big organization, big media organization like that was really fantastic. And we also had Felicia Rashad in town who had worked with August Wilson who, you know, was just amazing, and went to CMU and talked to the students there. Kathryn went to the Creative and Performing Arts High School. I think Lucas went somewhere as well.

So we kind of had more of a launch on that 2018 that was far and wide, and we had a lot of amazing community, but also people that came from all different areas to that just to hear that premiere. And to connect with the August Wilson legacy, because it is so big in Pittsburgh. So we had a real array. But I would just echo Jonathan's comment that it is a heavy lift, totally worth it, but we have to advocate internally all the time that this is really important programming. Community programming is not like just, you know, overture, symphony, concerto. It's much more listening, being responsive, bringing together the themes that are appropriate at this point in time.

[0:52:17.2]

Not that was 125 years ago, right? What is important at this point in time? What is not only relevant, but necessary to bring to the forefront, and to celebrate or to investigate or to explore through music, right? Using music as a medium. And then adding in all of those other components, whether it's film or dance or whatever can bring you to that, again, that next transformative level throughout the entire experience. So yeah, I would just say if you can partner with a big media organization, that's the best.

HOLLAND: I would love to invite any of you to ask some questions. Yeah?

JOE LOEHNIS: Great, thank you. I'm Joe Loehnis, I'm the CEO of the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, and this is a phenomenal panel to sit in. We're kind of on a journey of, we brought in Dr. Banfield as a composer in residence in 2021, and brought in his good friend, Patrice Russian [?] to do some work [520 8th Avenue, Suite 2005, New York, NY 10018](https://www.americanorchestras.org) [1602 L Street, NW, Suite 611, Washington, DC 20036](https://www.americanorchestras.org)
[americanorchestras.org](https://www.americanorchestras.org)

with us, and we're starting a recording project this fall. So this is really relevant in how we're thinking about our work.

So two questions, maybe one's an idea, one's a question. So this concept of commissioning as a superpower for orchestras is really like buzzing in my brain right now. Like let's assume that that's true, right? That's a superpower. I keep thinking, like what if an orchestra — like their charge starting tomorrow, they only did commissions, and this is a brand new orchestra, brand new concept.

[0:53:53.2]

And we find a mega donor, so there's no financial risk, you know? McKenzie Scott, give her a business plan. And that's the reality for this organization. And see how — and it's a five year pilot, and let's see what happened from a community engagement, from a marketing, and that's the reality. So that's a thought that's brewing my head. Not to say, Ken, that I'm going to turn the Wisconsin Chamber — I mean, who knows? Ken's our board member.

So if you had a comment to think about that, like starting tomorrow, as composers, that's your reality, you're given the agency to build this bike from the ground up, what would happen? And then the other thing is a little more specific. Dr. Banfield is really a believer in multimedia. So you know, your piece with — Kathryn, the poetry and the visuals, some of the work we're bringing to Madison has those elements, and we're getting feedback from our audience. What did you like, what didn't you like, how did that enhance or detract from your experience.

And I think Dr. Banfield's belief is that's where we're headed, or that's where orchestras should head, that this is a multimedia sensorial experience. So that's more of a specific question for the composers. But then the broader, here's \$50 million, here's a five year journey, let's have a commission orchestra, what happens? Thank you.

[LAUGHTER]

KATHRYN: I'm like — uh-oh. Wow. I do appreciate the multimedia aspect of what you're talking about, or mixed media.

[OFF-MIC CONVERSATION]

KATHRYN: Oh, sorry. I said I do appreciate the multimedia mixed media aspect that you're talking about. Being a film composer, it's something that I'm comfortable with. I think back to the community outreach aspect, especially again getting youth, getting young people not only curious about, oh, that was a nice sound, but what was that instrument, what is that? I want to know more about that. Or I want to know about the way this was created.

[0:56:14.2]

Because I think that technology is fantastic, and it is part of this multimedia platform, but the actual playing of an instrument is becoming a little bit more — it's almost — is it extinct? [LAUGHING] I know, I'm being overly reactionary. But I think the multimedia aspect brings — it's a great way to bring in sort of a comfort zone and a curiosity with the community.

And in our instance, going into the Hill District, and referencing these incredible, iconic, historic places, and just making it something that was accessible that way was really helpful. And I think it can be something on the other hand at times that can distract. I think there can be an overload, and that we have to trust that the music is still capable of storytelling.

MCPHEE: Yeah, I just — I want to add to that, because first of all, multimedia can mean a lot of things. We have a history of music and movement. And if you look at Martha Graham's repertoire in dance, she commissioned more American composers than any institution. I think there are 128 American commissions that she did. That was the multimedia, you know? There were no cameras. So she knew how to get composers. You know, Aaron Copland and Samuel Barber were not big names when she commissioned them to do *Cave of the Heart* and *Appalachian Spring*.

[0:58:03.3]

Kathryn is an expert at multimedia with film. And as — I'm glad that you added that bit at the end, that it can distract, because you don't want to take too much away from the music. You want to make sure that the music supports what you're seeing, and that it's not distracting or deflecting where you are. And Ray is doing actually more and more film too. Do you want to comment on that?

RAY: Oh yeah, I love, absolutely love film scoring. I had the pleasure of scoring this film called *Descendent*, and I really — I love the idea of mixing medias together, you know? I feel like the audience sees music, they don't necessarily hear it, you know? And I feel like with streaming and whatnot, and all these things that are competing for people's attention, because the attention span is so short now, you know? And people are consuming so much content.

And also the technology is expanding. You have things going on with AI and whatnot. And I really feel like as creatives and composers, we have to take the technology and create with it. And make it a part of our storytelling. And so I really love visuals, and I love the idea of — I mean, seeing a — you know, a lot of times you have movies where people will go and see a live version of their — of Avatar with an orchestra, you know? And I would love to see more of that with original music, and you know, creating new stories, and creating — you know, I don't know, like composing a piece, but also composing a visual that goes along with it.

[1:00:04.7]

And to me it shouldn't distract because it's a part of the same organism, and people are experiencing the music. A lot of times when you're hearing music, you're sort of creating your own thoughts of what the music might mean to you as an audience member, you know? So I feel like there's an opportunity there to engage people who normally wouldn't come to the concert hall, you know? So —

HOLLAND: I believe we probably have a related question.

SPEAKER: Yes. Basically I'm trying to address the newness of instruments. When you're writing for an orchestra, an orchestra sort of has standard instruments. And there have always been odd instruments getting put into the orchestras like typewriters and theremins and other things. And that's fine. But you run a risk, if you're putting in the modern instruments that are midi instruments, the ranges are different, there are certain instruments that don't exist, and they're going to be sort of evanescent. They're going to be like a moth flying into a flame.

I feel that if you write a piece, it's not going to last, because it's going to be like an eight track tape. It's going to be gone. It's going to be like Beta if you write for something on — you know, on a software program because a software program's going to be gone. Are you guys trying to write for things that are going to last? And if so, what kind of instruments can you be sure are going to be good for the next 50 years?

[OFF-MIC CONVERSATION; LAUGHTER]

[1:01:48.6]

KATHRYN: I think that's an interesting question. And you know, I'll just say that I'm not so precious about duration. In other words, if there's something I want to explore or experience, and there's a possibility that in a few years time it won't be available — I mean, who — you know, I just — I always think of it as a journey of storytelling. So that if what I'm working on at this point in time gives me that opportunity to work with instruments that may be more technology wise about today, or even that eight track that you talked about, that might be part of my score.

So I don't look at limitation at all when I'm creating. I don't look at it through a lens of limitation. I look at it as, okay — it's like when you go in your refrigerator and you're really hungry but you have three things. [LAUGHING] You're like, I'm going to make this work because I'm hungry. This is going to — I know I got just the carrot and the celery, and maybe some iceberg lettuce but I'm going to figure it out. So for me it's not stagnant. It's what is available, and how's that going to serve the narrative of the story that I'm collaborating with.

MCPHEE: I'm going to talk about what we did, and hand it to you on this one. Okay, so this is a really interesting question, and in the ballet world I can tell you I have had some major headaches with a ballet score where the ballet became very successful and the score had an electronic instrument that doesn't exist anymore. And you go through all of these headaches trying to figure out how to find a Yamaha whatever that doesn't exist with the plug ins and the whole thing. And I just — [LAUGHING] so approaching this, and I'm going to give the second half, because it grew with — to Ray.

[1:03:54.1]

So we sat down with a contract, and we said, okay, what's your first vision on this? And the first vision was solo soprano, solo flute, and orchestra. And we said two flutes, you know, piccolo, two oboes — and any changes had to be with the music director's written approval, all right? Parameters are really good things for everybody. However — you want to tell the rest of the story?

RAY: [LAUGHING] So yeah, unfortunately my ideas, you know, grew —

MCPHEE: It wasn't unfortunate.

RAY: [LAUGHING] Yeah, my ideas really grew. I felt like, you know, in telling the story about Black Athena Power, I just somehow — I felt like I needed a choir. And so — and also I felt like rhythmically I wanted to have — I wanted to mix the worlds together. So I wanted someone who was an expert at every African instrument available. And Bashiri Johnson is that guy.

And so I mixed — I paired him with the orchestral percussionist, and mixing those worlds together, it was just — I mean, you guys only heard like just a snippet of it. But those guys were having fun, you know? And that was my purpose. To mix worlds together. And then the choir was just — you know, it was just amazing to mix all of these elements together. So I just — you know, yeah.

MCPHEE: So the end result means you negotiate where you're going to go in this whole thing. So he came back and he's like, "You know, a soprano's just not doing it for me. I need a chorus." And I was like, "Okay." And then we got off Zoom, because this was all through the pandemic that we were developing this, and I thought, okay, my job is to go out and find the money for that, which I did with the help of board members.

[1:06:07.4]

And so I wasn't encouraging you to change a lot. On the other hand, it was like, you know, I wanted to give him the artistic freedom to realize his vision of what the piece was going to be. Luckily, he didn't come up with some Yamaha XY whatever that doesn't exist anymore.

RAY: And also, you know, technology always changes, but I never compose from a place of fear, you know? Or — because it doesn't serve the music. And also, you know, eight track tapes might not be around, but vinyl records are still around, you know what I mean? So even if you feel like something is — oh, it's not going to last, you never know. You never know. Because you know, a piece of music can find its way through the ether, and then all of a sudden some little kid is like, "What's that," you know? So anyway —

HOLLAND: You know, not to be doomsday, but Adolphe Sax created the saxophone in 18 whatever it was, and it's still a special request when you want to add it to a piece. So I think you grab what's available and use it, and as you say, technology advances so much that we can simulate a saxophone if we need to nowadays even if it's not available.

ELI CAMPBELL: Hi, Eli Campbell, I'm annual fund and grants manager at the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. Suzanne and Jonathan, I wanted to ask what kind of internal communication and strategies you have for building that support and cohesion around projects like this, and if you have advice for how sort of more like mid people, mid level people can talk to leadership and lead upward in support of these kinds of projects.

[1:07:55.3]

SUZANNE: Yeah, absolutely. I would say the best way to advocate internally for these projects is to build an advisory board or to build a team or some champions, some partners, in the community with a few other staff members. Because when I go back and I say, oh, the community, right? The community committee said this, it has a certain amount of weight. But if I bring my COO with me, I bring my head of development, I bring my marketing manager with me, and I say, “You know, I really want you to hear firsthand so that we can craft the marketing approach very specifically to this program,” it makes all the difference in the world.

Because they are face to face with the community, and it’s very hard for them to say, “Oh, I didn’t hear that.” Because they heard it, right? And now they’ve got to respond to that, and now they’re accountable to that person in the community. Instead of sitting in the office, door closed, on Zoom, right? That’s very impersonal. When you’re face to face, that’s very impactful. And it changes people. Over a period of time, being accountable to people in the community changes the way that you manage, you create, you curate, and that’s I think really vital to this whole programming approach.

MCPHEE: I’m just going to add to what Suzanne — I mean, to me the most important thing regardless of how big your organization is — Pittsburgh Symphony is huge, okay? But it still comes down to face to face, people. I’m sure — I mean, I’ve got sort of two worlds. I’ve got this Lexington Symphony regional orchestra, but I’ve also been with the big ballet companies, and have always been very active in development and marketing with them too.

And you all keep — in development departments you all keep little notes, you know? So and so loves Sibelius, you know? So and so loves this. And whenever there’s a project that’s a couple of years away that you can play for, and sit down with your development people, and there’s again face to face internally building trust, and say, “Okay, here’s the vision for something that I think is important for us to do, both for what we do in performance and for the community, who do you have on your books who’s got a little flag that says, this is of interest of me, or I happen to work at the children’s museum, or my husband is the chairman of the board for the children’s museum?”

[1:10:47.8]

I mean, all those little connections, sometimes they’ll sit there and they’re just waiting for somebody to come up with the right artistic thing to be able to go and say, “Hey, you’re passionate about this, here’s the intersection between your passion and our passion. What do you think about getting behind it, and do you have friends interested in the same thing?” And so then it’s that one on one that Suzanne was talking about, face to face meetings that builds the excitement. And as you build the excitement, you’re building commitment to be able to support that.

And then it takes away the scariness for the organization that's like, oh my god, are we going to sell tickets to it? Are we going to get the schools to participate? No, if they're excited, that's going to take care of itself. And you're working far enough out so that ideally when you get to that point, it — which happened even with you, it was paid for before we even got to the tickets. And that's what you want. Remove the risk for the organization, and then your CEO was actually going to come back and say, "Hey, that worked, do it again."

[LAUGHTER]

[1:11:58.5]

HOLLAND: Any other questions for the group?

RICHARD LOGOTHETIS: Hi there. Richard Logothetis, audience development person in between gigs in the Boston area. We'll talk later. I do have a question, but I just want to also affirm the concern about digital instruments sort of fading out of reality. We've already kind of solved this in the analog world. I'm also a clarinetist and a saxophonist. The number of times I've been called for a gig where it calls for a basset horn or, god forbid, a bass clarinet in A, or a soprano in F, if you saw Bolero on Wednesday, either the part's fixed, or I'm like, I'll figure it out, it's fine.

Like the solutions are there, and we'll just continue to evolve on that I think, and fudge it where we need to. But the two of you — and I notice in the Hill District piece — I'm not from Pittsburgh, I've never lived here. I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit more about how you created sort of cues for a sense of space.

I'm sure that there are audio and visual cues about like what it means to be in the Hill District, either from the creative standpoint or from like creating the concert experience. And like how you can bring people like me who are not from here, and say like, this is what it means to be in this space. But then also for the people that are from here, and have that kind of, if you know you know kind of thing. Just wondering if you could go into some details about that. Thank you.

SUZANNE: Sure. I'll start and then I'll have Kathryn jump in. The — we started with the tone poem, the narration, the embedded narration from the writer, because she had all of these oral histories done. And so she was kind of the front line of what the story should be about. And we talked a lot about very specific words and what those words meant, and how they came up, and why she put them in there. And we had to cut a lot.

[1:14:03.8]

But it came from that place. So it kind of set the tone for the entire piece based on real life oral histories, right? So that itself was speaking to people who have lived for generations in the Hill District, and this was their feeling about their life there, good and bad. So the artists, we all were on Zoom kind of fighting over words. And it was incredibly painful to have to cut virtually half of the poem that came in that was drawn on those histories.

But then we had kind of an equal conversation about what to highlight in the Hill District, what was important to highlight in the Hill District, what was left in the Hill District, right? After some city promises of building this up, and gentrification, and buildings had not been funded over a period of time and had collapsed literally. You know, like the Crawford Grill, the historic Crawford Grill was, you know, barricaded shut.

So we couldn't go in to film there, but we did have film through Teenie Harris and some other archivists in the area that we could use. So we talked about those words very deeply, then we talked about the spaces in Pittsburgh that were meaningful for history, for also using, again, for the music flourishes to take people on that journey. And then when we talked about it to promote it, there is this sense of pride in Pittsburgh. You know, Pittsburgh is like, if you don't like it here, leave, you know?

[LAUGHTER]

SUZANNE: That's their attitude, you know? We like it here. If you don't, goodbye. There's an incredible pride. There's also this incredible pride in the grittiness of it, like we've survived. The steel industry breakdown and blah blah blah. And we love the Steelers, and we love this. And we love Heinz Hall, and we love the Pittsburgh Symphony. And so we didn't really have to sell we're talking about Pittsburgh, because anything Pittsburgh, people will come to it because they love their city. But I'll let Kathryn talk about composing music around those spaces and words and that sort of thing.

[1:16:25.9]

KATHRYN: Yeah, I mean it was such a wonderful collaborative process, and being that I'm sort of — I was the expat, the Pittsburgh expat, you know, I really relied heavily on honoring those who were native, and really trying to craft the music around what they wanted to evoke and promote. And also I

was going to say that the work I did with August Wilson afforded me another lens about Pittsburgh, and the importance of the Hill District in particular, because most of his plays took place there.

So I already had a sensibility about a lot of music and how it would be crafted. But it was really about collaboration and understanding that I wanted to have a respect and a reverence for this incredible neighborhood and what it's come to represent. And I also, as a writer, and as a composer, I very much — I really trust and rely on instinctuality. I'm a very instinctual composer, and I'm also — being a pianist and a vocalist, it's a performative — it's like a dance. It really is something that I don't overthink when I write. I didn't say I could talk.

[LAUGHTER]

[1:17:58.1]

KATHRYN: But I don't — I mean, there was — it's so rich. It's already so rich with the history of the neighborhood and with what they're telling and talking about. I just try to support that.

HOLLAND: So we have about five minutes left, and I want to give I guess any of you an opportunity to share some final thoughts. Maybe, you know, what you might say to others who are thinking about doing this, both from the creative artist aspect of this, maybe what it meant to you, what's important you feel that composers involved in these processes get to do, and also from the organizations. You know, final thoughts on what you might share with others who are thinking about similar projects.

RAY: Well, one thing I would say is thank you for having me, and I'm so appreciative of the opportunity to compose for orchestra. And I would love to see more diversity in that regard, and really would love to see, you know, more works where you have people from different genres, you know? In the orchestral setting. Because when people talk about hip-hop, you know, sort of like this unknown element. But essentially hip-hop is just — it's just a mix of classical and jazz. That's what it really is, you know?

And at the end of the day, creativity is — starts from improvisation, you know? And these are things, you know — when people say, oh, you play jazz, oh, you're an improviser, to me composition is improvising, you know? It's theme of variation. And so I would love to see the concert hall filled with people who normally wouldn't come, you know?

[1:20:07.0]

And I think the music would be better. And I love Stravinsky, I love Beethoven, I love Bach, I love Duke Ellington, I love Brahms. All of these composers to me are like cousins, and it's all connected. And you know, creating new music doesn't have to be atonal to be new. You can still create new music that speaks to people and speaks to audiences, and music can still have an impact.

MCPHEE: Okay, I'll add to that just a little bit. Ray was playing a couple of blocks away yesterday at four thirty, and we were all sitting there listening to his performance. And all of a sudden he stuck in some Bach with the trio, and it was like, yes! And you know, I'm standing there looking at people and going, I wonder how many people know this was Bach or if they thought he was just, you know, coming up with something really cool to put in the middle of it.

But that connection, that bringing people in, and really, really touching them. I hate to see separate audiences. Because music is just a very broad scope. It can be used for dance, as you saw in the performance that Pittsburgh did — Pittsburgh Symphony did the other day. Did you notice how the audience changed when the dancers came on? I mean, we should be using all of these different advantages to be able to go out and broaden our audience.

Because if we keep doing the same thing the same way, that audience — you know, it's like, well I can only market it this way because I want those people. I mean, in dance we've been through the same thing. Okay, we've got our Nutcracker crowd, we've got our Swan Lake, big story ballet people. And we've got the little teeny, teeny, teeny contemporary ballet group. And if you do too much of one thing you lose the others, so you need that mix that goes in there.

[1:22:22.4]

But looking at the musicians and seeing the opportunities and the richness of each one of those people is important. And I am old enough that I remember going to Juilliard when — and I'm not going to name who the faculty people were, but they were composers who were like, "I don't care if anyone hears the music I'm writing. I'm writing for me, and that's it."

And then I look at, you know, the crowd last night watching Ray play, and they're there because they enjoy the fact that he's telling them a story, and the story goes to the bass player, and it goes to the drums, and it goes to the saxophone, and it comes back to the piano. And people just follow it. And those — that experience should always be part of our symphony experience.

SUZANNE: I'm going to selfishly say everything you need to know is in the superpowers of the education and community department.

[LAUGHTER; APPLAUSE]

SUZANNE: You know, oftentimes education is used as the stepchild to, you know — that has to be done, right? That brings in the money. That brings in the contributed money, and it's the little kid on the poster, you know, having a good time at the symphony that brings in that money. We actually have real conversations with community people, and we're programming — you know, we have a really great relationship with MCG Jazz, with Marty Ashby. We program for that journey, for deep, meaningful, engaging experience.

[1:24:03.8]

And the farther we get away from that, the farther we just say we've been doing this the same way for 127 years. That's how old the Pittsburgh Symphony is. The farther we get away from community and connecting with community and being responsive to the community, right? So I'm going to say if you haven't talked to your education people, go back and talk to them, and learn from them, and use their superpowers.

KATHRYN: Well said. Wow, that's — this is all hard acts to follow. But I also believe that education platform and that outreach, it's essential. Because there has been such an unfortunate compartmentalization of music based on genre, and yeah, there — it is a subjective thing. You have your tastes. Some people don't like — you know, they like what they like, and I'm not being dismissive of that. But I'm talking about the narrative and the belief system that continues to be recycled.

Okay, this is a Euro centric platform. This is an Afro centric platform. This is a — you know, whatever. Whatever the belief system is that has a disregard for the fact that music is universal. It's a universal, vast — it's an ocean of sonic possibility. So just like each of us, yeah, we have our, quote unquote, you know, that's a this, that's a — but the essence is so much more than that. And I think that's where we as educators and composers can restore an appreciation of each other creatively. So that's, you know, for me very important.

[1:26:07.4]

HOLLAND: Thank you all for sharing your experiences, and we're so glad to hear all of it. And thank you all for coming today.

[APPLAUSE]

END OF TRANSCRIPT