

Leveraging Volunteer Power to Amplify Orchestras' Fundraising and Community Outreach

June 15, 2023

Melanie Hausmann: I'm Melanie Hausmann, and I serve as the League's liaison to the volunteer council. Today's session will showcase three examples of terrific partnerships between volunteer organizations and their home orchestras. We are joined by Volunteer President and Executive Directors of the Dallas, Madison and AMarillo Symphonies. I would like to introduce our moderator, Nancy Wrenn. Nancy brings a unique perspective to this session, having served as Volunteer President of East Texas SYmphony's volunteer organization, then as the orchestra's Executive Director for 15 years. She's also served as a member of the League's volunteer council. Nancy is currently Vice President of East Texas SYmphony Orchestra Foundation, and has served as advisor to the President of the orchestra's Women's SYmphony League for the past two years. Would you please join me in welcoming Nancy and our panelists today? [APPLAUSE]

Nancy Wrenn: April, 2023. The estimated value of a volunteer hour is \$31.80. So tally up, kids. [LAUGHTER] That acknowledges the value of individuals who dedicate time, talent and energy. The symphony orchestra volunteers are vital resources. Historically, the league has emphasized the significance of the volunteer, affording conference time to the educating and inspiring of volunteers, from the recruiting and training to the keeping, through valuing specific skill sets and energies. In strong orchestral organizations, volunteers are effective partners of staff and trustee leadership, providing service across a broad range of activities.

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Volunteers promote the mission by sharing their commitment, bringing awareness to the community through their existing networks and connections, and a positive ripple effect. Every member of the symphony orchestra family needs an understanding of the treasured commodities volunteers, resources, can be. Developing policies and plans that are inclusive, and that use volunteer services wisely. Having felt valued as a volunteer within the league structure, then serving on the volunteer council, and subsequently becoming more aware of the broader symphony leadership blueprint, I developed a deep appreciation and respect of management and their challenges. Realizing the exacting intricacies of balancing artistic, fiscal and human resources. Enabled by and immersed in league management training and mentoring, coupled with my own passion for the art and science of performance, I was able to apply my social work training and experience to arts management. Having lived the transition through learned and applied knowledge, I fully appreciate the complex yet

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achievable outcome of collaboration. Mutual respect and clear communication within the symphony family produces a unique harmony of our singers. Our panel today will further relay, and as we leverage volunteers, we realize it's not only complicated, it is also walking a fine line sometimes, and sometimes, a tightrope. [LAUGHTER]

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Which of you wishes to begin our collaborative discussions [LAUGH] on your experiences as a team?

Cabot: Robert? Would you care to?

Robert Reed: I guess so.

Cabot: Okay. [LAUGHTER]

Reed: Good morning, everybody. My name is Robert Reed. I'm Executive Director of the Madison Symphony. By the way, we do have a Texas connection here, because prior to the Madison, I was in Plano, Texas. [APPLAUSE] So we all have this Texas connection. But I do have to say, Madison has far better weather in the summer than Texas does. [LAUGHTER] Yeah, that's right. I have been in this industry now since 1989. I started as a Leake Fellow. And so my perspective is not just from working with the Madison Symphony, but working with orchestras as large as the San Francisco Symphony to as small as the Corpus Christi Symphony. And so volunteers are a crucial part of our livelihood and our life blood. As we all know, some organizations are more challenged because the volunteer structure is different for different organizations. Some are a separate 501c3, some are part of the organization, and they all have their pluses and they all have their challenges, too. And as we also know, the world of volunteerism has changed over the years. When I first started, it was a lot different than what it is today. And then so how we have to adjust to the world of volunteerism has definitely been something that we have to be creative with, but it has been fun to do. And I just think, you know, we would not be where we are if it wasn't for our volunteer corps.

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One of the things I can always say to people, as much as symphonies are about programs and all of those wonderful things, it's about the culture that keeps people coming back to the symphony. And I know people may disagree with me, but if it wasn't for those parties, if it wasn't for all of those things, we may not have that close knit family that we have. And so if anyone says we don't need to do these

receptions, we need to save money, we don't need to do this activity or this activity, I would say, you're wrong. [LAUGHTER] Because all of those things really are important to keep a person part of the family, because many volunteers bring in people to the symphony family. They may start through the, you know, a friend of a volunteer, and then they become donors themselves, and so on and so on. So those volunteers are crucial. I'll pass it over to my colleague, Janet Cabot.

Janet Cabot: Thank you, Robert. We're so glad to have him on board for one year. I'm the only non-Texan on this panel. [LAUGHTER] Proudly representing the Midwest. Chicago suburbs and now Madison. Well, I digress. But I would say the key to leveraging volunteer power starts with creating relationships. So, in our case, our president of our league, whoever that is for that year or two, sits on the board of our symphony. Robert and before him, his predecessor, comes to our, you know, board meetings every month. They report and take questions. So you create a connection. And I think that's sort of the start of it. If you don't share information — I think also, one of the keys to collaboration is viewing volunteers not as just people that are either gonna, you know, host your party or, you know, stuff an envelope, but they're brand ambassadors. So I would say if you're not using your volunteers and thinking of them as brand ambassadors, and making sure that they understand your strategy and your mission, if you're an executive director, you're missing a huge opportunity.

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Because those are people that are out in the community. And also, I think volunteers are like a Venn diagram. We're not just one thing. We're subscribers. We're often donors. We're often people that then become board members. So leverage the connection that you make with your volunteers. But really, it starts with the relationship. And I think that's, you know, one thing that Robert and I know. People in this room who know him know that he's really good at it. Taking time to listen, ask questions, and be open if there's an issue or a problem. So, that's all. [LAUGHTER]

Kim Noltemy: Yeah, sure. Good morning, everyone. I'm Kim Noltemy from the Dallas Symphony. And I came to Dallas about five and a half years ago, and was absolutely stunned and thrilled with how our volunteers contribute to our organization in so many ways. We have multiple groups, and the group that this lovely lady represents is our league. And it's a very, very large group of women, I think it's 700 this year. And they do so many things for us, but primary among them is fundraising for our education and community programs, which is huge. And we've been able to expand our programs dramatically because of the million dollars or so that they contribute to our budget every year. Very independently from us running events and doing activities. Brilliantly and professionally. And it's truly amazing, and such a really huge and important part of our organization. And our other volunteer groups focus more on engagement activities or volunteering at events.

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So I think you can have all of the different groups work together. And I would say our communication and collaboration is extremely strong in order for our groups to be effective, but also for us to serve our groups effectively. It's a two way street.

Panelist 1: I'm sure she was shocked when she came to Dallas and met all the strong Anne Richard types in our group. [LAUGHTER] So, coming from Boston, I think we probably scared her for a second. But she jumped in full force, and embraced it. And I think one of the biggest problems with volunteers in a symphony association would be the mindset on the volunteer side that it can be an us against them. And that is not true. It's just a myth that people conjure up if they don't get what they want. I see both sides. So the tightrope, I even said it, right before you said it. And because I understand both sides. And from what I can see, that it's usually just poor communication on the volunteer side. And I'm not blaming volunteers by any means. It's just great communication. If you have a question or if you have a problem, I'll just text someone. And I won't go straight to Kim. Sometimes, I do. And they're not problems. They're just questions. And I think communication between the volunteer and the associations are key to thriving. And I don't see it as us against them. We are a big family. When you said family, that's exactly how we feel.

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And it's only going to get better and better with the good relationships. And when you have a good relationship, you're more profitable, more — you can get more people. Sometimes — at one point, we had 1,400 women, and a few men. It's not just — they don't wanna sign up, I don't know. [LAUGHTER] But, can't imagine why.

Noltemy: It is 1,100 this year. It's 1,119.

Panelist 1: Oh, it is 1,100? Okay.

Noltemy: We missed that communication.

Larry Lang: Good morning, everyone. I'm Larry Lang, the Executive Director of the Amarillo Symphony. And we're approaching our 100th anniversary next season. And our symphony — [APPLAUSE] oh, thank you. Our symphony guild and Ginger have been part of our history for more than 50 years. They represent 3 to 5% of our budget in terms of bringing in dollars. That's through
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their fundraising efforts. They also provide a courtesy meal at every week of our rehearsals for the musicians, which is amazing. And then they run a lunch and listening program, where they provide box lunches for our audience when they come to listen about the concert for that evening. So — and many, many other things, of course, from serving on board, serving as volunteers, serving as ushers, whatever we need them to do. And we're so grateful to Ginger and her team of over 200 mostly ladies. They started allowing men last year, and I think they have one, so. [LAUGHTER] But we couldn't really survive without them. They're integral to everything we do. We have a very positive relationship, and that discussion, as you mentioned, that communication, is so important.

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Ginger Denney: I'm Ginger Denney, and I am the President of our symphony guild. And this is my second year as president. And I will tell you that the relationships that we have formed with the people that are in the symphony office are absolutely integral in being successful in what we do. We could not do anything that we do on our end to support those in the symphony and their mission. That's what we feel like our job is. Our mission is to support what the symphony's mission is. And so us having a really good relationship with Larry and with other members of the symphony board and the symphony staff really allows us to try and fulfil what that mission is, and to try to really connect with them. We see ourselves as not our own entity, but more of a support system for some of the things that are there. So anything we can do to help our big umbrella is what we wanna do. So like I had a meeting with Larry a couple of months ago that was, okay, what do we need to do, what do you need from us, what do you see as something that we need to do better, what can we do to help support things that you're doing and the mission, especially going into our centennial celebration? How can we be a part of that? How can we help support that with volunteers, with publicity on our websites, on our Facebook pages and Instagram and all of that sort of thing. So I really do agree. I think communication and collaboration is absolutely key to being successful as a volunteer, and leveraging your volunteers to do what the symphony needs them to do.

Cabot: And I think also, you know we collaborate but we also have to be — one of the challenges of being a volunteer is also being respectful of the staff time. Especially we're a group three orchestra, so you know, we have a nice budget. We don't have a big staff. I don't know, 14, 15, that counts maybe the music librarian.

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But of course, when you're a volunteer, you think what you're doing is like, stop everything and help me. Well, we have one marketing director and a marketing assistant, three people. Yeah, so sometimes, you have to remember that, you know, they have a day job that pays them. And it's getting out the season brochure, putting on concerts, and so I think that's something for volunteers to be respectful. You wanna collaborate and include, and you need their help to do things, and you depend on their help. But you have to respect their time and be respectful in how you ask them. And

I'd say, say thank you. It goes both ways. Volunteers like to be thanked, but I think at Madison, we try to always thank the staff. We include them if we're doing a program and we mention who is on the committee, so I say thank you goes both ways.

Reed: I will also add it also goes both ways, and we have to — it's the job as executive director to bring the staff more into the volunteer world, also. So we wanna make sure that our volunteers, when it comes to fundraising, we're gonna make sure our development department is also meeting with the volunteers, because we wanna know what all is going on and who all is being spoken with, and now, our development department has a lot more to do when it comes to raising money for the various activities that the volunteers are doing. And also in marketing, we wanna make sure that when the brand, what is being produced, is also gonna be produced at the highest level. And then, so the marketing team now has a lot more activities with the volunteer group. So it's not just these autonomous groups that are there now. We really all have to work together, because we wanna make sure that there is not something that's going out that's icrr, or there's something that's going to make the organization look bad. Because as far as the public is concerned, it's one.

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And then so, we have to make sure that we are working and making sure the staff members also are not just going, it's the volunteers who have to do all of that now. So our jobs are to really make sure that we're working together.

Wrenn: Well, when timing is everything, which is what we've been saying, how do any of you relay, or would relay to symphonies who have less staff and are unable to coordinate some staff with volunteer efforts? We have one executive director and she has one staff at Tyler, Texas at this juncture. And that is a challenge, not to waste her time, to involve her in the right timing. And we don't have staff really to depend on.

Cabot: How large is the group? Because your volunteer group is very large.

Wrenn: Well, it's 500.

Cabot: Okay, I was just curious. Because that's impressive. [LAUGH]

Denney: I think for us, we're not a large — we're a group five symphony. So I think it's finding those people that are within your volunteer organization, what their strengths are, what their talents are. It

could be what maybe their profession is or what their passion is. If they're someone that is a graphic designer or knows someone who knows someone, it's all of those connections. And we know people who have those connections. And even if your town is a small town, or it's a small symphony, there are people that are experts in certain areas that we can tap into those resources. And in doing that, we're including those volunteers, sharing, allowing them to share their expertise, and potentially having someone who is now a donor or a potential board member or something along those lines. Now, going back to kind of don't overuse those people, I think sometimes if you're a CPA, you're always the treasurer, you know? [LAUGHTER]

Cabot: Yes.

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Denney: And so that might not be the role that they always want to be in, and to be involved in, but letting them know that, hey, we could use you to — we had our marketing director Sammy, she was amazing, and we needed some branding for the symphony guild for some of the things that we've done for years and years and years. And the logos have kind of changed. And we thought, that's ridiculous. We need to have that branding there. And so she was able to kind of coordinate and work with us and point us in the right direction of what we needed to do and who we could go with. And now that's there in that office, so we don't have to redo that over and over and over again, so that if Larry wanted to utilize that, he could utilize that. Or anyone else who comes into those roles in future times. So I think really tapping into your volunteer base and knowing what their strengths are, maybe doing a survey. I know that seems silly, but asking when they're joining or when they're renewing. What would you like to do? Are there things that — if there are needs that you know that need to be met, maybe having them check a box. Like, I'm really good at this. You know, if you know that this is something that you need to do, and that helps you to get to know your volunteers and maybe what they could do to help you.

Wrenn: Well, you do need to know what your skill sets are within your groups. Janet, do you have another comment?

Cabot: No, I think that's a good idea. I think really the volunteers and the symphony together, we're telling the story of our symphony, and now more than ever, it's so important to, you know, reach beyond our halls. You know, we're beyond the days of just we wait and people come to the concert and the hall. So I think one of the challenges for volunteers is to think a little bit differently. I mean, volunteering has changed. The face of volunteering. But how can we do things differently? How can we really support our orchestras in being out in the community and telling the story? So I think sometimes, volunteers get stuck in a mindset of we're very task-oriented.

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You know, we're planning the gala and we've got our committees. But how else can we really be helping to tell the story and share what we all love?

Noltemy: I think that that's a really important point. Once we decided to offer our volunteer groups the opportunity to support education and community programs, then that was a really good focus point for them to be able to talk about those programs, and we would have some of the teachers and the students come and play for them, and they'd get a chance to meet them. And they really could be such an incredible ambassador in addition to everything else that they did, because they really understood and had a personal connection with the people involved who were benefitting from a lot of the fundraising that was being done. And I think that that was really a pivotal point where I saw the level of engagement on a regular basis increase, and I think Marina can speak a little bit more to that.

Panelist 1: I agree. That really helped, and gave it more of a mission driven thing to do. The other thing is that there's always someone there from the symphony association at any function that the league has. And that's hard to do. And a lot of the time, it's Kim, and most of those times, I'm like, my goodness, how did you make it here? Because she's so busy. But the support from the association for the league has really made that relationship flourish and meshed the missions together. The other thing is, so you have timing where all symphonies are going through their challenges. ALI volunteer groups are going through their challenges, and as opposed to spiraling this way and that way, I believe what we've done is we've actually come closer together, which has made everything easier and more effective.

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Reed: I think also in terms of volunteers, one of the things that we can do is that we help the volunteers understand that sometimes, there's an expiration date on various projects that you're doing. Because everything has to evolve and everything needs to continually be fresh. So if you've done the same gala for 25 years, you can still do the gala, but you may need to refresh how the gala is done, because everything will become stale after a while. And then so as we all know, one of the things that we all hate to hear, but we hear it all the time, is, we've done it this way forever. [LAUGHTER] And then so working to keep things fresh, so those projects which are very valuable, you know, are remaining fresh, and the public is enjoying them, versus, you know, after a while, no matter how wonderful it is, if it's the same thing, people are going to lose interest, and the revenue is going to decline. And then one other thing that we were talking about earlier. Fundraising, we know, is all about relationships. And one of the great things about volunteers is because volunteers are representing so many parts of the community, you may also have that volunteer who may be the spouse of some corporate leader or this or that. So those volunteers are very helpful for you as an

organization, because they are also connected to various people in the community that you wanted to be able to have close to you. So the volunteers are absolutely crucial.

Wrenn: Generally, Robert, in the types of orchestras you've dealt with, have you found it easier or more difficult to collaborate with your league based on how many people are on your staff, how many people are in the league, that kind of impulse?

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Reed: I think some of it is — I think it's sometimes more of a challenge when you're your own 501c3, because sometimes that volunteer group may also be raising money for other things beyond just the symphony. So that has its own challenges, and I'm not trying to say anything negative about that. [LAUGHTER] But that has its own challenges. But I think if you have, you know, the relationship with your league president, your guild president, whichever they're called, and that leadership has a relationship with the organization, you're using a communication regularly, and we have found it very complementary, you know, that we all are working together, and that people will — I always laugh, also, is that one of the challenges also is no matter how many members — we have 365 members of our volunteer group. We know that basically 20% are the really active ones. And then so one of the challenges always is — I laugh, you know, when the league board is being created each year. It's like, okay, we have the same people just taking different roles. And then so one of the challenges is just constantly working to keep the league not to burn out, because if you have the same people and some of those people are getting older, and then so you are always gonna have that challenge of, you know, keeping that league members, you know, motivated, because some of the people that are part of the league have not stepped up yet. And so some of the people — I have one of my league people is 92. She's amazing. But — no, she's absolutely amazing. But I keep saying to myself, what are we gonna do after she leaves? You know, not that we ever want her to leave. But it's one of those things that you have to think about.

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Lang: Yeah, I mean, Ginger is a band director. How can she have time to be the president of a symphony guild? And not only that, but the person who was supposed to be president this year backed out. So she's serving again. [APPLAUSE] So I think Robert's right. You have to refresh. You have to find new volunteers. You have to encourage new folks to join. And it's very difficult. And maybe you could talk more about that, because I know it's a challenge for you.

Denney: I think for us, it's of finding volunteers, especially post-COVID, and I think we've had discussion in different areas about how volunteerism has changed and what people are wanting to do, wanting to be involved in, how much time they're willing to give. That's — it's a completely

different ballgame now. And it was becoming challenging before COVID, and I think a new generation of volunteers, they're looking for something that tugs at the heartstrings, something that makes them feel good. And it's not the idea anymore, unfortunately, of what can I give, but what can I get, is a lot of — they want something — I see a lot of head nods. [LAUGH] That's there. But it's needing to get something out of it. If I'm going to give up my time away from my family and away from all of these other things, the things that I'm passionate about in my personal life, speaking as a volunteer, I feel like it needs to be something that's worthwhile in some way, that has some value base for me, like I feel good about volunteering my time. And I think that's what our volunteers are wanting and craving. Something that they're either gaining a skill set that they can take out into, like, the workforce, learning how to serve on a board, so that they can learn how to serve in volunteer other organizations in our community.

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Taking away — whether it's fellowship, getting together with other like minded people, to be able to serve in that capacity. But it's also in finding small ways that they can do things. I think I was talking to someone earlier this morning about the old saying, how do you eat an elephant, one bite at a time. But I think as volunteers, I think there are some of us that are like, all right, well, there's not enough people, so I'm gonna serve myself this gigantic piece. And what it needs to be is everybody has something small that they can contribute, something that they can do.

So finding very task oriented or very time limited kind of volunteer jobs that people can do, and spreading that out, and not letting it be something that is maybe a year long commitment, where they're coming to — they have to come to a meeting every month, and they have to come to — you know, and getting 75 hours, and doing those things for our league, for our guild, that doesn't necessarily work. And I know there are several guilds or leagues out there that do — you have like an hour's requirement. I think if we did that, we would completely disband. There would be no way that we would be able to function. But our volunteers that are there, if we have hey, we need someone to serve on our lunch and listening committee, could you help to serve lunches to people this month? You know, or have two or three people that are a part of that committee that will tagteam that, and so they're just doing that every other month, you know? And so that's not as huge of a commitment, but they still are a part of it, and it still is something that is serving our symphony. So again, I think it's small areas that they can find ways to get plugged in.

And then our big events like fundraising that we all know takes a year in advance, or months in advance for some of our larger fundraisers, finding those people that are really passionate about fundraising and getting them on board and then they have friends. They have friends of friends of friends of friends for us is what we've found. And they seem to, like, gather that and get that done. But that's a whole other animal that we can talk about later. The fundraising component.

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Wrenn: Yeah. I agree with that, but I also think that one of the challenges that the symphony association has is that it's a one year, for the president and the board, and then they're gone. So you essentially have nine months to get to know those people, get to cultivate who they know, and then the slate is wiped clean and it starts all over again. So they're doing a great job making sure that connections don't fall through the cracks.

Cabot: Yeah, I must have been having a mind meld with you, because while you were saying that, I had been thinking, one of the great things about the staff, and one of the challenges they have is, they're constant. They have to keep adapting to all different personalities. So this year, the chair of the event is someone different than last year, the president is different, we all have different styles and personalities. And they have to just keep smiling and adapt to them. [LAUGHTER] And most of us are super nice and easy to work with. But you know, the reality is, yeah, we have a short shelf life in our different roles.

Denney: One of the ways — I'm glad you said that. I actually have a meeting set up with our symphony liaison, and we're going to sit down and write out a, hey, this is what this job would be. This is like a timeline, because that's not there. But here is a timeline. And I was, like, that's amazing. I've done that for other organizations. I do that in my job. Why am I not doing it for this? Duh. But having a timeline so that when my time is up, someone else has, this is exactly what you do in this month, on this, this is what you need to be looking ahead for, this is what you plan. And I think we had that in our organization years ago back when paper was a thing. [LAUGHTER] And now, it's all — somehow is lost, you know? So I'm not sure where that went.

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But I really do think that that is critical. Like, we're gonna sit down and go, okay, here is what your job — how you're working with us. This is — if she ever, you know, left, or was put into a different position in the symphony, whoever took that role would need to know, like, what that interaction should be. So I think that's really critical.

Noltemy: Well, I was just gonna say, you know, it's interesting in large symphonies, in some ways, we oftentimes in the large symphonys are less effective in utilizing the volunteers and the energy and excitement of the volunteers well. And I definitely saw that at my time in Boston. And as I mentioned, I was so thrilled when I came to Dallas and I saw the efficiency and sort of like the really good management practices of the volunteers, which help us manage them better. Because they have their own good practices. But I think a good point was brought up about the constant changing of volunteer leadership does — can create some challenges, because you don't have the continuity of

building. And in our work, we often get better with the more time we get to know people and know their work styles, and especially with so much activity going on. So I think that that's an interesting question to think about. I understand why recruiting volunteers, giving them a one year job, is a really good recruitment tool. But it may be something to think about for all of us in the future that if there was a little bit more continuity, we all could potentially be more effective in managing the change.

Wrenn: Well, I think often volunteers find changes in management a little bit difficult to deal with. I think the culture changes from time to time when management changes. And I wonder how any of you might have, you know, dealt with that when your own management leadership changes?

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Panelist 1: I just wanna say this. I think the one year per president is a good thing, because you can have a great one and run him for five years, and then you can have one that's not as great as that one, and so one year's fine. But — [LAUGHTER]

Wrenn: That was very diplomatic.

Panelist 1: So all kinds of term limits.

Cabot: Yes, well, I had the good fortune to be on the search committee, so I was very excited when Robert came. But I think there's a feeling out period. We wanna get to know them, what's their style. But I think everyone, at least looking at Barbara Burbett, who's our current league president, and Elsworth, our board chair, and I think everyone was excited. You know, because we saw it as, you know, where is the Madison Symphony, you know, 2.0 or 3.0? Where are we going? So we were excited for the change, and to see what someone knew who was a veteran in the field, but would bring different experiences. So I think —

Panelist 1: We were afraid of her. [LAUGHTER]

Cabot: We were not afraid of Robert. He's a good smiler. Maybe we should have been afraid. No.

Panelist 1: Kim came from Boston, and they did not have the volunteer model that we have. So we had thoughts in our head that she was gonna come in and say, oh, get rid of that. And she came in and

instead, she treated the league as if the league was one of their major, major patron donors, which, you know, consistently, we are. So we were pleasantly surprised. [LAUGHTER]

Noltemy: I'm glad I didn't scare you for very long. [LAUGHTER]

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Reed: I think every organization is different. In Madison, we are very fortunate that even the executive directors are usually there for 20-plus years. And then so we have not had the issue of constant change. I know in other organizations that I've been in, that's not been the case. And so especially for some of the smaller groups, when you have a person who's changing all the time, that could be very much of a challenge to not just the volunteers but to the whole organization. And then so I understand the question. I do think that, you know, one needs to learn each other quickly. I'm not gonna disagree with what she has to say, but I sort of think — not Janet, I'm speaking of her. But I think that having a volunteer president, if not all the officers, for two years, is wonderful. It's like a — I've worked with organizations where your board president changed every year, also. That was completely disruptive to me. And so I think having a volunteer council, guild, whatever it's called, for two years, is a lovely thing, with a board that — for us, the board could actually be up to four years. And then, so I think that's what I would recommend, because it really does — you know, it's true. By the time the year is over, they finally know what they're doing. [LAUGHTER] And then so you don't want them all of a sudden to have to step away. And then you have to start from scratch again.

Wrenn: Larry, do you have anything to add to that?

Lang: Yeah, I think we've been talking about a lot of positive things. There's sometimes some negative things, too. [LAUGH] So sometimes the tailw Anglo-Saxon the dog. So for example, the guild started the symphony ball, and many of us have a ball, many, many years ago, and the goal was to raise money for the symphony. What a thought. [LAUGHTER] And so, last year, I mean, they had the most spectacular blal I've ever seen in my life. I was a colonel in the United States Air Force for almost 30 years. I served in Washington, DC and played at the White House and all across Washington, DC.

[00:40:02]

I went to dozens of balls. And this one was better. [LAUGHTER] I mean, they spent a fortune on this ball. And the profit to the symphony was very small. And so, we're — Ginger and I are diligently working on reining that in, because things can get out of control. You can forget why you decided to

work on this project, [LAUGH] and it turns into something totally different, and so I think we all need to be careful of that.

Cabot: You need a 50% rule. You need to have 50% more profit than you have — or 80%-20% is better, but at least 50%.

Denney: And I think one of the things that, over the years, it's sort of got away, we've had some different executive director changes, and some challenges, and I think that speaks to having that consistency. And there wasn't a good relationship previously with the guild and the executive director and that staff. It was almost like they were butting heads, kind of like you said, Marina. Like they felt like they were against each other, or working not together. And so I think that started — you can see that financially, where that trend began. And with Larry coming in, it's been such a different relationship that we have. It's so open. It's so much very inclusive. And I think that makes a huge difference, where he sees the value of what we do, and the untapped potential of what our volunteer base is, and is trying to help us along the way, like, to really do what we need to do to step it up. So we've kind of instituted, there's more involvement in the fundraising planning and marketing and donor base and all of that, with the symphony office, which puts a little bit more responsibility onto those, the very few members that we have in that office. But I think it's hopefully to reap a big financial reward there at the end.

[00:42:00]

And so it's making a difference right now in our planning. Like the planning of this next event, and we have two fundraising events this year. And it's making a big difference in the way that those people that are chairs of those events are looking at how they're going to be getting money, and what that goal is, the ultimate goal. And I think that has a lot to do with this gentleman right here and his leadership and with what we're able to do.

Wrenn: So you're devising how to create a positive relationship with your executive director and how to coordinate, and how to define the roles? Is there another interesting [LAUGH] way to solve these challenges?

Lang: I think there might be questions, too, from the audience.

Wrenn: We were going on to questions and I just wondered if there was something.

Reed: I think also volunteers can be very helpful when it comes to when you're looking at strategic planning, looking at other things, you want — sometimes, I have felt over the years that, you know, people think of the three things that are important, which is the musicians, the board, the staff. And then the volunteers sometimes was more secondary. And so making sure that the volunteers are a four part of that, versus being viewed as less important, is something I think is very helpful, because sometimes the volunteers may be forgotten, eh, you just feel like they're just volunteers. They're not really making the decisions. So, like, involving the members of the league into things in the strategic planning and on the different committees has been very helpful because there's value for them that they are being involved in the governance of the organization — not the governance, so much, but in the direction of the organization. And so I think those things can be done to improve, versus just thinking of volunteers as somebody who's just going to plan a party, or somebody who's just gonna do a decent program.

[00:44:04]

But to recognize that the volunteers are an integral part of your organization and should be treated as such.

Noltemy: So to build on what Robert just said, I think if we look at this philosophically, orchestras are working so hard to get the time of people, right? We want people to come to concerts. What are we asking them for? Money and time. And here, we all have hundreds of people who are giving us money and time, every day, every month, every year. And so we need to think of those people who are already committed and doing all of that as high up on the list of our priorities in our organizations, and if we think about it in that manner, I think that we can truly forge a meaningful relationship, because there's a mutual respect, and we can have honest conversations, as well, because we know that the volunteers are very committed. More committed than 98% or 99% of the population in what we do. And I think that's the thing that we always have to remember.

Wrenn: I have a question for the executive directors. Why do you think that some of the major symms are going away from volunteerism? I believe it was a trend, maybe starting five to eight years ago. Why is it? Well, I don't know about in house. Some just don't have 'em anymore.

Cabot: Yeah, 'cause they say, oh, we can do it like the Utah Symphony.

Wrenn: More efficiency, is that it?

Cabot: Yeah, we can just do it ourselves as the staff. Detroit Symphony, Baltimore, they've all sort of said this.

Wrenn: Why? Why do you think that is??

Cabot: "We don't need you." Which seems silly.

[00:46:03]

Noltemy: Well, I guess y'all have a good —

Reed: I don't — I don't understand, but as we were talking about earlier how integral those volunteers are, I would see that that would not be something that I would recommend for an organization, because, again, time, money, expertise. And as Kim absolutely was spot-on when she said, you know, those volunteers are — you know, we're trying our best to try to reach more people, to bring more people, trying to raise more money. We already have this group of people —

Wrenn: Totally committed to you.

Reed: Who are totally committed, and they're being marginalized. And then so I think that's unfortunate. I don't know — I know it's a challenge in this role at times when you're trying to, you know, direct and manage, because you have — if you have 300, 400, 700 people, 1,100, 1,400, you know, that's a lot of people to manage. It's hard. It's a full time job just to manage the board. [LAUGHTER] And then — yes, I say that with my board president here. [LAUGHTER] It's a full time job, but dealing with the volunteers, and then the staff and all, it's a lot of work to be done. But that's what we're paid to do. To try to get all the people involved within the organization to make the organization run efficiency. So I don't understand that thought of people just getting rid of their volunteers. I do know that with my staff now, I have to have the staff more involved with the volunteers, because it's hard to find someone for your fundraiser. Well, who wants to be the sponsorship chair? That's the one that you always have the hardest time getting. Or silent auction or live auction. So I would involve my staff with that. And the staff members, it's a fine line. Some of them are really happy now that they are involved with these things, so they know that what it's being directive to, and how.

[00:48:07]

But then some are always at the same time, they're saying, this was never my job. And so that is a fine line that you have to dance with. I find it to be quite healthy. Again, with the marketing team to be dealing with the brand. So whatever images are being created, it's being consistent with what we wanted to be done. So I find it to be healthy that the staff and the league are working closer together. The league now knows every staff member. It's not just, oh, you know, the executive director. They know all of the staff. We're a small organization. We're a \$5.5 million group. And so they know all of us. And so I find that to be very healthy.

Wrenn: That sounds like it's workable for you, and workable for any group that tries to make the communication complete. And we would like to hear from the audience with questions that can be directed.

Reed: There's a microphone there.

Wrenn: There's a microphone in the middle there.

[OFF-TOPIC CONVERSATION]

Audience Member 1: You guys are talking about being a small group. We're a Group 7. So we're much smaller. And we're totally board run. We do have an executive director. We have two staff members, an executive director and an admin assistant. Our volunteer group, though, is run by a member of the board, and was pretty much obliterated. So my question is, how do I build that back up?

[00:49:54]

Reed: Well, I'm not a big — well, I understand you have to do what you have to do. But I think of volunteers as —volunteers should be volunteers and not necessarily the governance of the organization. And then so trying to get the organization structure so that the board members are doing their role, which is to govern, and not — I don't really like necessarily — I know I've been in the small orchestras before — to have board members who are actually doing the jobs. But they really are to be governing the organization, moreso than trying to do every aspect as a staff member. I understand with a smaller staff, but you know, try to find ways to create a better structure so that it's not just — the board members won't do what they really need to do if they're doing all the other tasks that you're asking the board members to do. Because, trust me, it's easier to manage than it is to govern.

Cabot: But you might draw on your board members for ideas and say, who do you know that just, you know, really loves the symphony, that maybe you can make an introduction? You know, they come all the time and set up, facilitate a coffee, and you sort of recruit someone, but use your board member to help you make a connection. They know people, they know who comes. So maybe there's someone out there, you just don't know them, that attends your symms, that might be willing, but you need that sort of introduction. So maybe use your board members to create a connection. But then it's relationships. It's like anything. You're gonna have to go ask. If you just put up on your website, who wants to volunteer, you know, no one raises their hand. But if someone comes to you and says, Barbara, oh, would you like to be president? Yeah, you hadn't thought about it. So, but you know what I mean? The same thing with recruiting someone. Would you like to be our liaison and build back our volunteers? So that's one thing I would do is use, leverage the resources you have for ideas.

[00:52:00]

Denney: And as you're leveraging those resources, really take into account what those people are going to be doing, because no one wants to sign up for something that they don't know what it is. So maybe having the board really come up with what that structure is, what is it that you need volunteers to do. And then you're looking for a very specific person or type of person, or someone who's wanting to do a specific type of job to get started back up. And I think maybe that will help.

Cabot: Yeah. Because sometimes, too, you're right, you get someone to do a role, and then once they get involved, then they do more. We laugh. It's like the volunteer, you sort of pull people in, and before you know it, you know, you're first just vltg to, you know, brainstorm an idea, and the next thing you know, oh, could you be the chair of this committee, the next thing you know — so once you get someone involved in one little thing, then it may blossom and I think happen more organically. Because that's the challenge. You can't sort of impose it. It has to come more organically.

Audience Member 2: Hi, thank you for this great presentation, and nice to see Robert and Janet, fellow Madisonian. Yay, Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra and Madison Symphony. My question is, if I give you a magic wand, and you could change or keep the best and maybe the not so great things about your current volunteer group, with no consequences, [LAUGHTER] what would those be?

Reed: I'll let my colleagues answer that first. [LAUGHTER]

Noltemy: I mean, I think what I would like to see is an expansion of the group into younger and more diverse volunteers, because I think that's one of the challenges. Naturally, people who have time are the most available.

[00:54:02]

And so that creates some barriers in and of itself. But it would be great if we could find a way on a significant level, not just in a, you know, here and there, to be able to attract a wider group of people that really wanna get involved with us on a volunteerism level.

Panelist 1: And I think you've made that known, and they've made some strides in the last year. So she's — her magic wand, she'll get what she wants, so.

Reed: I think one thing I would probably do is, for the super volunteers who are already part of your corps, for them to be able to understand and embrace the new wave of volunteers. Because some volunteers come in and they are full time employees of some other organization, and so their time is very limited. They're not like the volunteers who are only focused on one organization. And then so they're not able to come to the meetings and to the coffees all the time. And there are a lot more things that are going to have to be done by Zoom or whatever the case may be. And so, sometimes those newer volunteers don't necessarily feel like they are accepted, because it's different than the staunch volunteers. We've been part of this volunteer group for 30 years and we know how it's supposed to be done. So sometimes, I think that would be helpful if the existing volunteer base could understand that things are changing and that we have to embrace this next wave of volunteerism, and that even though the person might not be exactly like them, that they can bring value to the organization and to the project. And that they should not have to feel like they should run off a person, and even if the person was responsible for something, that person was not perfect in their job, that there is a lot more grace extended to that individual.

[00:56:03]

Because I know when the people go to the concert for the very first time, they feel that stare, they glare at people. And so that happens in volunteerism, too, that, you know, that new wave, if that could be a lot more of we love you, we want you to be involved, and then eventually, hopefully, they will be able to give more time and more effort and more energy and funds to the project, but I guess that's what I would say one of the things I would do.

Cabot: And to build on what RObert said, if I was waving a magic wand for my fellow volunteers, I would say, let go. It's not your — you know, people get very fiercely attached to something, and they start to think that if there's any change to it, it's somehow an attack on them, or it's, you know, you haven't done a good job. It's like, let it go. You know? Mentor the next person, say, you know what, I

enjoy doing this, but let it go. Because people get very proprietary about their projects. And then they don't wanna change. They don't wanna listen and it becomes like their little fiefdom. So for my fellow volunteers, it's like, let go. Bring someone else on and pay it forward. But let go.

Denney: That's the theme from Frozen.

Cabot: I think so, and I don't even sing or, you know, watch Frozen, but yes. Let it go. [LAUGHTER] Let it go. So, yeah. Yeah, sorry. Sorry to put that little earworm in.

Wrenn: Another question?

Audience Member 3: So, my question is in regards to leveraging a volunteer chorus into the fold of a volunteer guild. You know, these are individuals that are rehearsing every week, they're very committed. But how would you think about leveraging a volunteer chorus, to bring them into more like a guild or a league in that manner, really as volunteers, and with a voice?

[00:57:59]

Cabot: Does your chorus have, like, a leader, a president, a chair?

Audience Member 3: Not currently. But it is sort of just sinking in. You know, we just have 80 people that are out in the community with different jobs and different connections, and how do we take that leverage when we come into a volunteer corps of like, an ambassadors group, a guild, or a league?

Reed: First, make sure the chorus is part of the table. So a chorus person should be involved in the board, the league, in some capacity, official capacity. So they have to be part of the table to feel like they are really meant to be there versus just some — they just were asked just to join it. So the chorus has to be part of that. And then find roles for members of the chorus to get involved in. Because, again, chorus, they also have such different skill sets. All the members are all different. So find a role for them. Everyone always says, you know, it's just that there's always this blanket announcement, please join, become a volunteer. But sometimes, it really has to be a lot more strategic, and really going to the chorus and speaking with the chorus, spending time with the chorus and finding out what various people can do to have them then become volunteers. Because many of them are not going to necessarily come until they are personally approached, and brought into the fold, more so than they can then just are gonna respond to a posting or an e-mail.

Noltemy: Yeah. I mean, I think that's a terrific idea. We tend to treat our volunteer corps as more like an extension of staff. So we communicate with them as we do the staff, keeping them informed and trying to offer benefits in that way. But I think that you bring up a really good point, that if that group were made aware of the various volunteer activities beyond their contribution artistically, certainly some of them would be interested and willing.

[01:00:04]

And we've just really never highlighted that part of our work with them. So I think that that's a really fascinating idea, and something that probably a lot of us in this room will think about taking back to our orchestras.

Audience Member 4: You mentioned orchestras are moving away from vltg or having — utilizing volunteers. And I'm personally in a situation where we have some volunteers that may not necessarily wanna, you know, work with the board or work with the cme. They wanna do, like, low level of vltg. Not necessarily the orchestra, but actually our chorus. We have a few people that really wanna volunteer. And they wanna feel like a part of something. But we don't have, like, anything in particular for them to do. What would your argument be for utilizing volunteers rather than the kind of having — looking for —

Denney: Find something.

Cabot: Find something. Yeah.

Denney: Find something. Anything. Whether it's stuffing mailers or making copies or sending out something that, one, they can't hurt or damage your organization. [LAUGHTER] You know, because they're not — you all know. You know. So that it's not something that is vital. Because they're not fully invested yet. You're trying to garner that investment. You're trying to get that investment into that organization. And they don't know. They don't know exactly what's going on within your organization just yet. So giving them, since they want to be a low level volunteer, some of those jobs that maybe the staff is not like — could pass along to them, so that they could get in the office, and then you start building those relationships with the staff. They start hearing the different needs that there are of the organization.

[01:02:00]

And maybe there are some different ideas that can develop, like Janet said, organically, where once you start vltg and you start getting in there, then you start — you get that bug, and you just kind of keep going, and that just sort of facilitates into something bigger. So maybe.

Cabot: I would just say, start with asking. Have a conversation. Invite the — let's say you've got the two people that really wanna keep doing something? Invite them out for coffee and say, let's brainstorm together, the three of us. What are the kind of things you like to do? Let me tell you maybe where we have needs, and have an open discussion about it. I mean, don't try to read their mind and figure out what they wanna do. Don't let them come to you and suggest something that then you — it's awkward to say, yeah, I don't really need you and want you doing that. So I would just say get together over coffee, buy them a sandwich, whatever. But make it informal, not across a desk, and just brainstorm. Here's the kind of things we maybe could use help with. What are your skills? How could we get involved? Let's set expectation. So much of all of this stuff is communication. We're always afraid to be, sometimes honest in the nicest way, to define expectations, and to ask. People love to be asked about their opinions and their thoughts of how they could contribute. That doesn't mean you have to just say, oh, yeah, you wanna do that? You can do it. So that's my two cents, or five cents, or ten.

Audience Member 5: I'm Paula McReynolds with the Waco Symphony. And I wanna go back to the question earlier about refreshing fundraising events. Thank you for saying that. [LAUGH] But one thing I wanted to ask about is how do you take a board's development plan, if your boards do have a development plan, and connect that back to the volunteer organization, to set even more specific expectations?

[01:03:58]

Reed: My first response is, why wouldn't the volunteers be part of that development plan in the first place? Because volunteerism is a lot about raising the funds. So if that's not the case, plans are plans. Plans can be updated. Plans can be corrected and revised. And then so I would — you would need to have conversations with the volunteers and the development folks to figure out if that plan needs to change. Because the volunteers bring a lot, and so that may be something that I would recommend, is to look into that plan, and to see how the volunteerism can be included in that so that the plan can be revised.

Lang: Yeah, our guild is absolutely part of our development plan. I mean, there's a line on the budget, guild support. So much money, we depend on it. So we work with them very carefully to make sure we're doing things together that are gonna bring in that income, and helping them think of new ways to refresh, as you say, Robert. Because — so we do a vintage wine event every couple years with the guild, and it's been very successful. But you know, this year, we're thinking about adding whiskey. You know, why not? [LAUGHTER] People like whiskey. We might even have beer. [LAUGHTER] You know, 520 8th Avenue, Suite 2005, New York, NY 10018 1602 L Street, NW, Suite 611, Washington, DC 20036 americanorchestras.org

because each — obviously, each of those has a different demographic. And so we want — you know, maybe that will be a good idea. We're talking about how we might do that, and so, this is one way to refresh that event.

Reed: We actually — Larry mentioned that they're gonna be celebrating their 100th next year, is it? We're gonna be celebrating 100 in '25, '26. But even in all of that planning, we're involving our league in that planning, because there's gonna be some activities that may happen only that one year, and there may be some activities that will continue on for a while.

[01:05:59]

But you want to make sure that even things like that you're bringing your volunteers into that, because you wanna have a celebratory season, but you also wanna create that structure for certain things into the future. And so we're bringing our audiences, it's not just about us creating events. We wanna make sure that we're manning those activities, and that the volunteers are having their voice into some of those things, because they may say, oh, yeah, you wanna now change the gala to something completely different? We wanna make sure that they're buying into all of these things and that they feel comfortable with it, or they could say, no, we won't recommend that. That's very important to us to know. So make sure you're involving them, as I said. There's a whole strategic planning. Including them in the process.

Cabot: Clbvy.

Reed: Clbvy, yes.

Audience Member 6: We have a guild that doesn't raise much money for the organization. And Robert knows this.

Reed: Oh, do I know it so well. [LAUGHTER]

Audience Member 6: And I want to work with the guild this summer to change that. How would you do that? What would you recommend we do as an organization to try to change our guild's focus so that it is more of a fundraising group and less a volunteer's group?

Cabot: Well, one thing that just comes to mind is, are you the board chair? Oh, you took over for Robert? Big shoes. Big shoes.

Audience Member 6: I offered him his job back yesterday. [LAUGHTER]

Reed: And I respectfully declined, too.

Cabot: Yeah, Robert went on Accuweather and saw the temperature, he's like, nah, I'm not leaving Madison.

[01:08:00]

Seriously, I would say one thing would just do — what I would call like a top to top meeting. Meet one-on-one with your — whoever is the president of your guild and just start having the conversation. How can we — here's where I'd love to go, how can you help us? You know, so create that real relationship, so she or he is bought into it together. And then you can each go back to your respective staffs, board members, the league or, you know, in numbers, and get buy in. But I think this one, to make that kind of change, you need to start top to top. That's at least how I would approach it.

Panelist 1: Yeah, go back and say that it's all our idea. That it just dawned on you at a conference. So that they don't feel like you're asking them to raise money because it's you wanting them, but —

[OFF-TOPIC CONVERSATION]

Denney: I think starting small. So that it's not something that is a huge, overwhelming thing, but a small fundraising idea. Something that maybe can turn into something bigger. I don't know what that would be in your community. But starting with something small that's manageable by a small group of people that maybe don't have a ton of fundraising experience, but they're gonna need to be guided in how to do that by the board, and maybe trained in what that would look like, with marketing and setting a budget and that sort of thing, if that's something that they're not familiar with doing.

Noltemy: I think the other thing is making it known that you need their help in that way. Because I think that people respond to, I really need you to help us raise money, could we start with a plan, and what are your ideas. I have a couple, let's discuss it. But to be needed is — changes the whole motivation, I think, for volunteers.

[01:09:56]

Cabot: Yeah, I think it's about the why. Once people understand the why do you need their help in this way, it's easier to get them on board, when you've told this — you've created this story. I don't know, we were in a meeting the other day, someone said, it's the why, it's the story behind it, it's the — you know, when you're raising money and you have the picture of — I think it was the Pittsburgh Symphony Education Director said, you know, when you know about who you're raising money for, the why, so created in a story that is compelling.

Wrenn: Historically, that's why leagues were created. League management in the '50s sent governance people home to their communities and urged them to create leagues that would raise money to help serve the needs of the orchestra.

Reed: Two other things I would add is, maybe having some members of that league come and get involved with this to understand what others are doing, because sometimes, when you're only in your community, and you only know what you're doing, you think that's all that there is. And then so bring them in this environment, they can see what others are doing, and no matter what their budget size. And the other thing is sometimes speaking in their language. One of the things I know this week, we'll always say, oh, we can't find new members, we all have the same people. Well, because of the way that they're operating, they're not going to get many new members. Because they just want to be an organization who house receptions. That's more of what they prefer to be. And so to help them understand, if you wish to get new members, if you wish to bring more vitality, these are the various things that can be done to create that energy. I wasn't successful in doing that there, because I had other priorities, but that was something that I have in my mind that help them understand sometimes in their language. Go ahead, Larry.

[01:11:59]

Lang: Barry, I would just say we'd be happy to help, too. I mean, you could call us. You could call Ginger. We'd be glad to talk to your guild and league people. I think his idea is good, too. You need to probably refresh and bring in some new people, too. It could be that you need new blood. And that's sometimes challenging. If you know somebody that wants to volunteer or you have someone in mind that you'd like to see be part of your organization, you might ask them to start getting — because it really just starts with one person sometimes, that can really energize everybody else. I know what you mean. I had a guild in Flagstaff when I was there. All they wanted to do was play bridge. [LAUGHTER] And they were just lovely people. And they brought in a little bit of money every year, but really, it was a social club. And getting them to change was very, very challenging. So I created a

couple of events myself, some fundraising events, and asked them to volunteer with that, and that was helpful. So, yeah.

Audience Member 7: Hi. My name's Caroline Eberhart. I'm from the Canton Symphony Orchestra. We're a fellow group five orchestra, and I was wondering, you said that with volunteers, you can't have an hour requirement, because you'll lose your volunteer base. And I was wondering, with volunteers being so busy, having full time jobs and other things going on on the side, what do you do to honor the hours they have served, so that they wanna come back and they feel like they're contributing?

Denney: We do something within our guild where we honor members that have, like, how many — who is like a top member or somebody that is like the member of the year. Or we also do member spotlights on our newsletter. And so we try to find those members that have done something over and beyond, and spotlight them and showcase them in our newsletter and put them online and things like that. So finding ways to recognize them publicly and citizen them even one-on-one, where I'll give them a call — oh, a handwritten note goes a long ways these days.

[01:14:06]

Like, just something that actually goes through the actual post office mail with a stamp. [LAUGHTER] You know? Where, it really does go a long way to do that, and it's not difficult to do. And it's something that makes you feel good, and recognized, because someone took, like you had said, it's about time. They took their time to thank you and to do that. So we try to find ways to recognize those members for that, for their service, and doing that publicly, if it's at an event, thanking the people, obviously, like we all do, thank you to the sponsors and the people that have helped, and if you are part of that committee, please stand so we can recognize you. Those little things throughout the year.

Panelist 1: I'm not a fan of the hours requirement. It's putting the cart before the horse in my mind. But — I'm just opinionated.

Cabot: That's why I like Marina, 'cause I'm opinionated, too. [LAUGHTER] But I agree. I agree. I think when you have the hours requirement, this is how I would feel, then it starts to be like a job. And when it's a job, then you start to get resentful. It's like, well, I'm doing this? I'm not getting paid. You know, I used to work — if you're retired, you're thinking, I used to work for a living, they paid me a lot to do this. Like, it creates a bad cycle. But you can still acknowledge someone's time and say, yeah, top volunteer. You know, they've been on this committee, they've served, you know, and this was a huge project that took months. I think I know where a lot of orchestras are looking to not have printed
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programs, but you still have a program, whether it's a QR code, is also, recognize your volunteers in your program at the end of the year, just say volunteer appreciation, these, you know, orchestra supporters served on committees. Everyone — when people say, oh, you don't need to thank me? No. That means thank me, thank me, thank me. [LAUGHTER] Yeah. That's what they're really saying. So never miss an opportunity to leverage your assets to — whether it's on Facebook, we all have Facebook pages.

[01:16:06]

Or Instagram. I mean, both the symms and the leagues. So acknowledge people that way. Use your resources.

Noltemy: I think that's a good point. And another way that we can acknowledge is through inviting volunteers to events we're already having. So it's not a special event, but there's an event that we're having that it would be fine to have another 20 people or 30 people, invite the volunteers. And then thank them at that event. Oh, and by the way, this evening, we have our volunteer group here. Raise your hands. I cannot be transactional. That's the problem with hours. It becomes transactional. And if you want a relationship, it is not a transaction.

Audience Member 8: And do you have, your organization has hours?

[OFF-TOPIC CONVERSATION]

Audience Member 8: Because I'm on the volunteer council, and a few years ago, we had a submission for one of our awards, I believe it was. And what it was was a party that recognized the people who actually vlted. You know, it was at a special home. And you know, so that they — closed invitation, so to speak, but if you have people in your organization who are — because we don't have hours in our organization. But we definitely have certain people who do a lot of vltg. And so it was just something that — a luncheon or an afternoon of wine and cheese that they were invited to because they had actually vlted.

Cabot: Charlotte, that was actually our Madison Symphony League. So I'm happy to tell you about our event.

[01:18:11]

Audience Member 9: Hi, my question, and I'd like to hear from the executive directors, our group has been told that our — that the orchestra would like us to change our focus from fundraising, which is what we have historically done, sometimes, for many years, our fundraising was integral to the bottom line. But now, we're told that they'd like us not at all on fundraising but on subscriptions. Patron development. And we're kind of at a loss, here. Because we haven't been given much guidance about how we're supposed to go about doing that. There hasn't been any offer of assistance or collaboration in terms of how we're supposed to do that, but we've actually been given quite a large assignment [LAUGH] in terms of the numbers. And I'm just interested in your thoughts about that, and how you would handle a situation like that.

Lang: Run. [LAUGHTER]

Reed: Well, I say, if you still wanna fundraise, we have an organization in Madison, Wisconsin, that we will welcome you. [LAUGHTER] So, everybody in your group that we will gladly accept them. I think, you know, they both work together. As we all know, audience engagement, and the ones who are more engaged are of course the ones who are more likely to become donors. And so you have to maybe help the organization understand, they really are interrelated, and that it's not like it's just one versus the other, because you need to have the fundraising still.

[01:20:04]

I mean, I can't — I'm just having a hard time imagining someone saying, do not worry about fundraising. Never have heard that in my life. [LAUGHTER] Yeah, I mean, are you guys in such a wonderful position that fundraising is not an issue? But still, I think, you know, fundraising is absolutely crucial, but audience engagement is also very important. Everybody's trying to build back audiences, and everybody's trying to get an audience to grow. So it could be the combination of the two things that need to be done, more so than it is just one or the other.

Noltemy: I mean, all I can say is, you all would have a very special connection with lapsed subscribers or people who attend frequently to be able to have a conversation or a dialogue. Those subscribers and those individuals would feel very special. So I'm imagining that that's the psychology of it. Because think about telemarketing that's done. You know, the commercial telemarketing. It's so impersonal, it's so offputting, it's so negative. And I'm giving the positive spin that I do believe that the group that you work with could have an incredible impact. I don't think it's an easy task, but I think that your relationship with people as a peer is probably what they're thinking about, and, you know, I imagine that you all would do a far better job than a lot of other who could be assigned to that. Even staff members. Just because of the nature of it.

[OFF-TOPIC CONVERSATION]

[01:22:14]

Audience Member 9: The organization doesn't want us to focus man hours to assist with the implementation of the fundraiser. And so, they want us to now redirect our focus to selling subscriptions. And it's just really taken us aback. And the reason why I posed this question is because I'm a member of the volunteer council, and I've talked to a number of other fellow members and just people that I've met throughout the course of this conference. So this is not an unusual situation. [LAUGH] You know, I mean, I know we haven't heard a lot about it in the room, but this is what's happening out here. And this is one of the reasons why we proposed this forum, and this dialog, and I really appreciate the effort, the time that you put in to answering our questions.

[OFF-TOPIC CONVERSATION]

Audience Member 10: I just wanna put a pitch in for involving the musicians. We had a musician on our board, and she brought in so much to the volunteer group. You know, any time we had an idea, she's like, oh, I can get you someone to play for that, or why don't we use these musicians and do that, so. And people would love to go to events. The volunteers would love to go to events where they could mingle with the musicians. And so, don't discount that.

[OFF-TOPIC CONVERSATION]

[01:24:01]

Lang: I just think the one thing that's been passed over sometimes is dialogue, of the dialogue. Listen to the volunteers. They may have very creative ideas about solving your problems, too. Don't just go to them and say we need you to do this, but how would you help us handle that? That makes their contribution more valuable. I think that's essential to making this work, is feeling like you're wanted as a volunteer, not just an employee or a gopher or whatever.

Reed: I don't think any of us up here, or many volunteers, take the position of, we just tell the volunteer council what they have to do. We really work together as a team. We may have our thoughts and ideas. We go to the volunteer chair and we talk about it. And so it's neither a situation of us just saying, your budget is xamount for the year to go out and raise that money. We really work together.

Wrenn: Well, thank you all for participating this morning. And each of you from your different perspectives and your different locations outside of Texas, as well. [LAUGHTER]

END OF TRANSCRIPT